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Letter to Editor

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Need for greater action against animal abuse

The continuous emergence of animal abuse news in the mass and social media warrants serious attention from the relevant authorities. The shocking number of animal cruelty cases happening quite uncontrollably is just the tip of the iceberg as most cases are never reported.

Cruelty and neglect cross all social and economic boundaries along with media reports suggest that animal abuse is common in both rural and urban areas.

Animal cruelty encompasses a wide range of cruel conduct that includes leaving pets behind unattended during long holidays, chaining up a pet for life without any chance for the animal to relieve itself, scalding an animal with boiling water, abandonment when the animal becomes blind or diseased, and malicious wounding or beating.

Companion animals such as dogs and cats are often abused although smaller animals like hamsters, guinea pigs, rabbits, reptiles and exotic pets that are mostly caged up are often overlooked.

Hoarding behaviour often victimizes animals. Sufferers of a hoarding disorder may impose severe neglect on animals by housing far more animals than they are able to properly house or care for resulting in disease and often death.

Animal cruelty or animal abuse is the intentional harm of animals by humans. Although morally and ethically wrong, animal cruelty incidents are growing in number each year.

Attacks on dogs and puppies are becoming especially prevalent with reports of poisoning stray dogs to the extent of chopping them up and burning them in Selayang, Selangor. Poisoning cases were also reported in Negeri Sembilan and Seremban. There are also reports of dogs dragged to their death, starved and abused.

Regarding cruelty to strays, Sahabat Alam Malaysia (SAM) is outraged by the way stray dogs are captured by local councils across Malaysia.

Animal lovers have stood by and watched helplessly as municipal council workers handle stray dogs with brute force. The cruel and aggressive manner in the recent capture of a stray dog by the Subang Jaya Municipal Council (MPSJ) personnel shows the staff's lack of competence needed for dog catchers.

Persons causing such acts of cruelty should be seriously prosecuted and charged under the Animal Welfare Act 2015.

The Department of Veterinary Services (DVS) has revealed that there has been a 30% jump in animal abuse cases across the country from 510 in 2017 to 662 cases last year.

In view of the rising cases of abuse highlighted by the public almost daily, it is imperative to know how many of such cases have been investigated and how many perpetrators of the crime have been prosecuted in court?

Animal cruelty is a growing phenomenon that needs more awareness so that it is stopped immediately. It is indeed a very disturbing problem.

Perhaps more concerning is how little protection and justice animals are afforded under the law.

Very often, animal abuse is simply ignored by authorities. We should seriously re-think how we treat our animals by means of more awareness and tougher sentences to deter people from cruel acts, as well as for potential pet owners to think carefully before owning a furry companion.

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