

## Move to shift animal sterilisation facility evokes protest

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Rescued street dogs at the animal shelter run by Humane Animal Society at Seeranaickenpalayam in Coimbatore. Photo: M. Periasamy

*Corporation to identify new place at Vellalore for the programme*

Following directions from the Coimbatore Corporation, the Animal Birth Control programme at Seeranaickenpalayam, run by Humane Animal Society (HAS), an NGO, with the support of the Corporation and Animal Welfare Board of India (AWBI), was suspended temporarily from February 3.

This comes amid mounting public complaints about the ineffective functioning of the Government-funded Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) and increasing menace of stray dogs in many areas.

According to Corporation Commissioner T.K. Ponnusamy, the action was taken based on suggestions by Corporation Council members and complaints received from the public.

They had complained of stench emanating from the centre and that the activities under the animal birth control programme caused disturbance and posed health hazards to students studying in the Corporation Primary School and Corporation Higher Secondary School situated nearby, he said.

The Corporation would identify a new place at Vellalore for the programme, after thoroughly examining the issue, he said.

A visit to the place would prove that the centre was maintained well. But, the sewage canal in front of it was blocked and was open at many places.

Waste materials had piled up in the area adjoining the compound of the Corporation Higher Secondary School, Seeranaickenpalayam.

The residents in the area said they wanted the animal shelter to be shifted.

Their other grouse was that there was unbearable stench from the blocked sewage.

The problem worsened during monsoons as it overflowed. "We had been complaining about this for a long time, but no action has been taken yet", said K.K. Swaminathan who runs a tailoring shop near the centre.

According to the Commissioner, steps would be taken soon to clean up the area.

Members of HAS, said that they would welcome the move to shift the centre away from the schools but, it should be done only after a new facility was put in place.

Stopping the animal birth control programme, even for a short time, would reverse the results achieved in the last five years.

Now the centre had been sterilising over 300 dogs a month and had sterilised around 9,200 dogs since its inception in 2006, said Abhilash Arjunan, Resident Veterinarian, HAS.

Mini Vasudevan, Managing Trustee, HAS, said putting up a new centre with the required facilities would take at least a year and till then some alternative should be ensured so that the programme was not interrupted.

The Corporation had spent around Rs.20 lakh and HAS had spent another Rs.20 lakh to set up the centre.