

Revival of SPCA need of the hour, say animal activists

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The Humane Animal Society (HAS), an animal welfare organization in the city was flooded with calls last weekend. Reason- a horse was hit by a speeding vehicle on Mettupalayam Road, and was left gravely injured, with both its hind legs severed. The horse deemed as Coimbatore's own Shaktimaan was later euthanized as the chances of its recovery and survival were grim. After the distressing incident, animal welfare organizations approached the district administration with the request to revive the defunct Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) in the city.

So, how can revival of SPCA help?

SPCA is an authorised body to rescue injured, stranded or orphaned animals and rehabilitate them. Mini Vasudevan, managing trustee of HAS tells us, "The revival of SPCA can make a huge difference in animal welfare. Unlike the NGOs that cannot take any major decisions regarding animals, SPCA can enforce ownership and responsibility among people as it is a law enforcement agency. They cannot be ignored. For instance, if SPCA spots a stray horse on the road, they can immediately take it in their custody. They can even seize trucks transporting animals illegally. The owner has to then show up at the SPCA to get hold of the animal. SPCA can enforce laws and take action against violators, unlike NGOs that only rescue and provide immediate relief measures. Since, SPCA directly comes under the district administration; it can go a long way in protecting animals. It's sad that Coimbatore that boasts so many achievements has such a defunct SPCA and it's been the same for more than a decade. "

Nothing has changed in four years

Vinod Srinivasan, who had filed a petition in 2012 to the then district collector along with many others, about the revival of SPCA Coimbatore and re-constitution of the society, tells us it's unfortunate that nothing has changed in the last four years. "The idea was not to blame the SPCA at that point of time. It was the pain that I felt for the animals that were suffering and the

fact that there was absolutely no place to report about the problem. The phone number at SPCA was never answered and the office was kept closed most of the time. You cannot complaint about a dog at the police station; you can seek the help of fire service only if an animal has fallen into a well. So, the need was to have an authorized body to report animal-related problems. And the solution was to either shut down the defunct SPCA or revive it and make it function in a proper manner."

Online petition launched

Animal activist Madhu Ganesh has now started an online petition to revive the SPCA in Coimbatore with a new functional board. He says, "The SPCA in Coimbatore has not been active and effective on many aspects and we needed a fully functional governing board. The petition was an effort to renew the cause. NGOs are not capable of dealing with big animals like cows and horses and we need a more effective organization for that. Moreover, there's a huge piece of land that is left unused at the Coimbatore SPCA and we want that land to be put to good use. We want the NGOs to be an active part of SPCA, so that we can all function together."

Public needs to be more pro-active, too

Recalling the accident on Saturday, Mini tells us, "I got around 60 calls from 6 am in the morning. When our team reached the spot, we realized that none of the passers-by had actually provided any help to the animal in distress. We had to put stones around the animal to prevent unwanted attention and begin the treatment. When it comes to larger animals, there needs to be a more organized effort from the public. But unfortunately, people just walk away from the animal or call an NGO." Madhu Ganesh adds, "We have got only around 450 signatures so far despite having started the petition a week ago. It looks like the general public only responds to emergency situations that have an immediate impact on them."