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Stray dogs, cats and Malaysian paranoia

FIRST, we have the problem of stray dogs and cats that could be a threat to humans.

Next, we have the problem of the Health Ministry suggesting that animal-friendly NGOs like PAWS should take in the strays or the ministry will put the animals to sleep.

Then, we have PAWS, for example, voicing their utter shock at this Health Ministry move that is said to be akin to "holding NGOs at ransom".

Why can we Malaysians not take an informed, decisive stand on matters in the interest of human well-being and care for animals, especially domesticated cats and dogs?

Firstly, stray dogs and stray cats reflect human failure. Pet owners who disown their pets and drive them into the streets are devoid of human values. They have zero compassion!

Secondly, those who feed their souls by feeding stray dogs and stray cats at eateries are actually doing more harm than good. It's like giving alms to beggars but not bothering the least bit about giving a quality life to them.

Third, organisations that claim to have compassion for animals and to stand up against cruelty to animals are not endowed financially nor do they have the capacity to house and care for the exploding stray population.

Fourth, it seems that neutering is the best way to plug and eradicate the stray nuisance in the long haul. But the fees charged are far too high, and who is going to foot the bill to neuter them anyway? We are talking about strays, and strays mean no one wants to claim responsibility of ownership.

Fifth, whether you neuter or do not neuter, considering the growing rampant stray cat and dog pop-

ulation in the country, are we not bothered about hygiene or health-related outbreaks affecting humans?

And because of our misplaced paranoia and weak philosophical anchoring, this issue about stray dogs and cats remains a seasonal public debate and nothing more.

Meanwhile, the problem remains, waiting to resurface when there is news about some disease spread by stray animals like rabies.

Perhaps the solution is ensuring every dog and cat is licensed by owners. Enforce it. Keep the fee low. Make the process easy. Give a stringent period of, say, three months for pet owners to comply.

On the expiration of this period, haul up pet owners found to have pets without a license. No compromises. Expose the story in papers.

Meanwhile, give NGOs that are genuinely committed to caring for animals the option to apply for a

grant, limited to the number of strays they are willing to shelter.

The media can publicise animal adoption CSR efforts by conglomerates too, to help increase the crowd funding pool to pay for housing strays.

And where the offer to NGOs fails or is not taken up, then the Health Ministry must go all out to put to sleep the stray dogs and cats.

The bottom line is simply this: If we humans do not want to carry the burden of being responsible for these animals, then the government must exercise its responsibility for the well-being and safety of citizens. And that means putting to sleep all strays over an extensive, intensive scale and extended period of time to wipe out this nuisance caused by none other than us citizens.

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