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Animal cruelty cases still prevalent despite penalties

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Veterinary Dept finds mistreatment and abuse not only confined to pet dogs and cats but wildlife as well

KUALA LUMPUR: Despite the steep penalty, including jail term, for animal abuse under the Animal Welfare Act 2015, such cases remain prevalent with some people ill-treating animals in full view of the public.

It is not just pets and stray animals like dogs and cats that are at the receiving end of abusers, but also wildlife.

On June 27, several wild monkeys were found dead in Paya Terubong, Penang, purportedly due to poisoning.

Department of Veterinary Services (DVS) enforcement division director Zaharinan Abd Aziz said as of September, his department received 276 complaints pertaining to 13 categories of animal cruelty and neglect, Bernama reported.

"During the same period, we also carried out 5,597 operations involving the inspection of pet shops and animal breeding centres, boarding places and shelters, and also investigated 39 cases.

"Among the categories of abuse reported were pets not being given food and water, abandoned after the owners moved elsewhere, kept in filthy cages, tied to a short leash, and exposed to the sun and rain," he said at a recent webinar on "Animal Welfare: What is the Level of Awareness among Malaysians?" organised by the Malaysian Veterinary Medical Association.

The 39 cases investigated by the department comprised 30 animal abuse, two poisoning cases and seven involving cockfighting and fish fighting.

The cases involved 28 dogs, nine cats, 116 roosters and 27 fighting fish.

Eight of the cases were settled in court with action taken against the perpetrators under the Animal Welfare Act 2015.

Zaharinan said the Animal Welfare Act has specific sections dealing with these offences, namely Section 29 pertaining to animal cruelty, Section 30 (killing of animals), Section 31 (administration of poisons) and Section 31 (animal fighting ventures).

"Any individual convicted (of an offence under the Act) can be fined not less than RM20,000, with a maximum fine of RM100,000, or face maximum three years' imprisonment or both," he said.

Meanwhile, DVS regulatory division director Dr Muhammad Razli Abdul Razak said animal abuse is still widespread in the country due to low level of awareness of animal welfare among the public.

Universiti Putra Malaysia veterinary officer Dr Syamira Syazuana Zaini said the public must understand the five basic needs that must be met to ensure the welfare of animals.

They are providing them with appropriate environment; protecting them from pain, suffering, injury and illnesses; placing them together or separately; allowing them to exhibit natural patterns of behaviour; and providing them with appropriate diet.