

Sick street dogs in Nepal failed by medical donations

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The diseases affecting street dogs are badly understood, resulting in wasteful medication of dog populations in Nepal, according to a study.

The research, undertaken on street dog populations in Nepal's Pokhara valley, found that the most [common diseases](#) affecting these dogs were not always the ones best catered for by medical charities. Because of this, local street dogs remain in bad health and pose a risk to the people in whose communities they live, the paper warns.

The 171 dogs screened for the study commonly suffered from mange (40 per cent), open wounds (18 per cent) and [respiratory tract infection](#) (8 per cent). Rabies was also prevalent among the dogs, said Mohan Archarya, a co-author of the study and veterinarian at the Himalayan Animal Rescue Team.

But less than 10 per cent of medicines donated in Pokhara valley addressed the ailments of street dogs, the study found. "International donors donated medicines for canine kidney disease, diabetes, arthritis, dental care, and obesity - none of which were common among street dogs in Nepal," Acharya said.

The study, which was published last month in the International Journal of Applied Sciences and Biotechnology, states that good information on disease prevalence is important to better target medical care for street dogs.

According to the paper, street dog populations harbour up to 60 zoonotic diseases, which can jump to humans. The researchers point out that the presence of sick dogs can affect the economy as they are unappealing to visitors.

"Street dogs could hamper tourism in Pokhara as they bark at people, fall in traffic accidents, carry and roam with open wounds, pass faeces everywhere and even bite pedestrians," said Acharya.

According to the Humane Society International, a charity concerned with animal welfare, education should also contribute to dealing with street dogs and protecting them from diseases. Raul Arce-Contreras, a spokesman for the HIS, says health care for street dogs can be greatly improved with the help of local communities.

"This can be as simple as giving them food and water and taking them for sterilisation and vaccination," he says.

The paper stresses that more effort should be put into encouraging dog owners to sterilise their pets and not cast out unwanted puppies into the street. This could go a long way towards reducing the number of street dogs and the health risk they pose, the researchers say.

Arce-Contreras concurs that humans, who created the modern dog through domestication, should feel accountable for dog wellbeing. "If humans took responsibility for dogs breeding, health and behaviour, then there would not be dogs on the street," he says.

The article is published courtesy SciDev.Net:

www.scidev.net/global/disease/...dical-donations.html .

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