

IPM sans anti-rabies vaccine

On An Average, 200 Dog Bites Are Reported Per Day At IPM Here

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Hyderabad: With over 1.4 lakh unsterilised stray dogs roaming the streets, an outbreak of rabies is waiting to happen in Hyderabad. And compounding the problem is non-availability of the anti-rabies vaccine and apathy on the part of the officials despite a series of rabies deaths rocking the coastal districts.

According to a recent survey conducted by the GHMC, there are 3 lakh stray dogs within its limits of which 1.6 lakh have been sterilised. On an average, 200 dog bites per day are reported at the Institute of Preventive Medicine (IPM) at Narayanguda, the only government hospital where free anti-rabies vaccine is dis-

tributed. The daily cases of dog bites are reported mostly from Old City, Kukatpally, Alwal, Malkajgiri, Chilkalguda, Anandnagar Colony, Bakaram, Begumpet and Rakshapuram Colony near Kanchanbagh. With only 13 veterinary doctors with the GHMC, it will take them months to sterilise the 1.4 lakh stray dogs in the city during which time the number almost doubles due to breeding.

Of the 200 victims who rush to the IPM at Narayanguda, most of them are denied the anti-rabies vaccine for various reasons.

"Either it is out of stock, or there has been a delay in the floating of

tenders for procurement of the vaccine. As a result, those dog bites victims who can afford buy the vaccine in the open market at Rs 300-400 per dose of 1 ml. But the poor patients have nowhere to go. At least 10

deaths are reported in the GHMC area every year all of which are poor victims who have been denied the anti-rabies vaccine," said an official.

Incidentally, the state government has allocated Rs 198 crore for purchasing anti-rabies vaccine vials this year but sources said the supplies have not come so far.

To make matters worse, the cost of the vaccine has also gone up from

Rs 198 to Rs 280 per vial which is causing a severe burden on the state exchequer as each dog bite victim requires four to five doses of the vaccine to ensure rabies does not occur.

However, the authorities denied that there is a shortage of vaccine. "Over eight per cent of the total allocation for purchase of various vaccines has been spent on anti-rabies vaccine. The problem is lack of awareness among the poor who seek treatment too late," said Dr PV Ramesh, principal secretary, health.

Faced with all round criticism, GHMC authorities said they are going to set up a sterilisation centre at a cost of Rs 1.6 crore at Amberpet where the stray dogs would be transported and sterilised.

