

# Failed by rescue mechanisms, deserted animals take to roads

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**Chennai:** When a home-grown pedigree dog is deserted, his/her instant defence mechanism is to start running for life. While at times, he keeps to the corners, at other times he's racing between vehicles, like Beera, the five-year-old pug, who was found by TOI past midnight last week at the Ashok Pillar junction.

"It's alarming to see the number of pugs that have been abandoned. People picked them up as puppies in the early 2000s when Vodafone made them fashionable, but ignorant of their high vulnerability to health complications, they abandoned them later. This is true of any exotic breed," says Dinesh Baba, animal



**IN SAFE HANDS:** The pug Beera, was found with a severe skin infection common to his breed

activist and founder of Cloud No 9 Kennel and Nursing Care.

This pug too, was found with a severe skin infection — common to his breed — that had led to excessive loss of fur, and scaled skin on his body,

which was diseased with mites.

Baba was among the few people — of the dozen that TOI tried to reach — who offered to keep Beera at his home for the night, until he could be moved to his nursing centre next morning. Beera is now being treated at the centre. No activist or animal shelter — including the Blue Cross of India which has a 24-hour helpline — responded when there was a need. While a few shelters who did respond, asked for the dog's photographs to be sent before they could decide if he was fit to be taken in, some others promised to take him in once their shelters opened next morning, but remained inaccessible throughout the following day.

A shelter's onus lies in

having its doors open at all times, believes Shiranee Pereira of People For Animals (PFA), who referred us to people who could help the dog that night. However, what is also true is that several shelters in the city are saturated with abandoned, diseased and injured animals, at times even lacking the funds to cater to them all.

"There are two sides to this," says Pereira. "PFA takes in animals any time of the day. But we don't go for 24-hour rescues, because we don't have the funds that afford us an ambulance. And that is why, the least we expect of the rescuer is to drop the animal off at our shelter in Red Hills. This kind of a service is successful only when both parties meet halfway," she says.

# Meet city's only woman dog trainer

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**Chennai:** Leaving a high-paying engineering job to follow where your heart lies has always been a difficult call.

But that is exactly what Sharmila Jayaram Sharma decided to do in 2015 when she gave up her job at HCL Technologies to become possibly the city's only professional woman canine trainer.

In a country where 'dog trainers' usually pass off without much screening, Sharmila is one of the few who hold a certification from the International Association of Canine Professionals (IACP).

"There is a definite grey area when it comes to regula-



**DOGGONE IT:** Sharmila Jayaram who completed her 8-month long training course from the city-based Woodstock Dog Training School, got her certificate from the International Association of Canine Professionals in the US

tions on pets in India. There is no certification that one can avail here, which is why I had to get mine from the US-based IACP," says Sharmila.

For the 30-year-old, who is practising canine behavior training by the book, it took 8 months to complete her course from Woodstock Dog Training School in the city, where she now works as a full-time trainer, handling all kinds of canines — from furries to Indies. Then she applied for the certification.

A typical session at the city school starts as early as 7am and she works around the clock, giving behavior training to not only the doggos — but also their owners/parents.

"We don't teach how to shake a hand or any such parlor tricks. This is a training to ensure the dog becomes absolutely reliable and trustworthy, knowing his/her boundaries and helping in time of an emergency," she says, explaining the training involves reading material and follow-ups.

Explaining her job further, Sharmila said, "There was some hesitation at the beginning, my family and friends didn't understand why I'd quit from a position as a manager to go train dogs. But if you're a good trainer with a certification from a recognised international body, you can make a good living out of it."