

The long-distance animal healer

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When Noora Michael found that one of her cats didn't like the other cats, she decided to go for reiki to change his behaviour. "We approached Sanjuktha M, a healer, who treated him through reiki and now, he has calmed down dramatically; the way he behaves with other cats has changed a lot," says Noor. Following this, Sanjuktha also treated two of Noor's dogs, and even helped find her lost cat. "The thing with reiki is that you have to trust the healer completely. If you doubt, it wouldn't work," she adds.

Like her, quite a few pet owners in the city have started looking at reiki as a healing technique for their pets. And Chennai-based Sanjuktha M, who has a background in molecular biology, is one of the few practitioners in the city. Like everyone else, she, too, started off with people as a reiki healer. But her love for animals and hearing about reiki for animals sparked her interest in this field. "I started out

very recently... just last December. Initially, I started with my own dogs and cats, and with my friends' pets. One of my first few cases was when my friend complained that their cat was peeing in all the wrong places. They wanted to see if that could be dealt with reiki, and that's when it all began. I later set up a page on Facebook, through which I operate," begins Sanjuktha, who says that she's taking this career rather slow. "I've completed second level of reiki training, but I don't like to advertise myself too much. So, I restrict clients through my page and word-of-mouth," says Sanjuktha.

But isn't it quite a task to get your restless pet stay still for the course of treatment? "I don't even have to be in the same location as the pet," she smiles, adding, "I indulge in long-distance healing. For this purpose, the dogs or cats can be anywhere in the world and do whatever they want while I continue the treatment."



Sanjuktha

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3



Stray dog numbers explode as corp'n barks up wrong tree at pounds, ABC faces bite

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Chennai: As residents in most neighbourhoods will attest, and animal rights activists concur, there has been an explosion in the number of stray dogs in the city. A petition under the RTI Act has elicited a response that could explain why.

To begin with, no government department or agency has a fix on the current population of strays. Greater Chennai Corporation has not carried out a headcount for four years in a row; in 2014, it reported 83,000 stray dogs in the city. The corporation and



PACK-OF-BARKS: Stray dogs rest in a pack near a construction site off Cenotaph Road in this file photo

three NGOs had at the time said they had sterilised 82,000 of these dogs under the animal birth control (ABC) pro-

gramme. Things appear to have gone downhill since then, as a reply to an RTI query by activist Antony Rubin reveals.

Animal Welfare Board of India former vice-chairman Chinny Krishna said in the reply that animal welfare charity Blue Cross of India had from the early '90s conducted an effective ABC programme in the city. This slashed rabies cases in the city to almost zero, he said.

"We are going back to the status of more than 20 years ago," he said. "All the good work done by the NGOs has been affected."

Blue Cross of India joint secretary Sathya Radhakrishnan said the stray dog population would not have increased drastically if the organisation was still in charge of the sterilisation programme in south Chennai.

A couple of years ago, the civic body reasserted its authority over dog pounds earlier operated by NGOs in Puliathope, Lloyds Colony and Kannammappet. Blue Cross now covers only three zones in the city. When the NGOs had control of the pounds, they sterilised 50 to 60 dogs a day. The number has fallen to 25 to 30 daily.