

# Revive defunct SPCA to curb cruelty to animals, NGOs urge Kovai collector

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Coimbatore: A horse, severely injured after being hit by a speeding vehicle on Mettupalayam Road on Saturday, succumbed to its injuries. The animal lay unattended on the road, bleeding for several hours. When a few animal rights activists informed the city corporation, it sent a vehicle and took the horse to a shelter run by it at Seeranaickenpalayam, where the animal had to be euthanized as its chances of survival were bleak.

With an increasing number of animals getting killed in accidents like this, city-based NGOs have requested district collector Archana Patnaik to revive the district chapter of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA), which has been defunct for over the past 16 years. They have launched an online petition in this regards, addressed to the collector.

"Several animals get hit by vehicles regularly on Mettupalayam Road. We get at least 10 such calls daily. The SPCA is ought to enforce several laws to tackle the issue, but the body is inactive. Only the SPCA can take action against violators and see to it that the government takes action. NGOs can only rescue animals," said Mini Vasudevan of Humane Animal Society (HAS).

Madhu Ganesh of HAS, who launched the online petition, said after petitioning the district collector several times since 2012, a meeting of SPCA was convened but after that measures were not taken to revive it. He also alleged that the body hasn't held general body meeting for over a decade. "The SPCA has immense powers to implement, enforce and punish the violators. It should propose projects and get funding for the projects form the Central and state governments. The society should also discuss with local NGOs and enforce laws," Madhu Ganesh said.

However, the SPCA seems to be short-staffed. Fredrick Vimalan, inspector of SPCA, said he was the only inspector in the

district. "There are 11 taluks and I am in-charge of only one of it. The other inspector posts are vacant. Moreover, we neither have enough machinery, manpower or facilities to implement anything," he said.

Vimalan, however, refuted the allegations that executive meetings weren't taking place regularly. "Executive meetings are held regularly with the participation of core members comprising government officials. Despite the challenges, we have set up a shelter at Seeranaickenpalayam and seized several trucks transporting animals illegally," he said.

Kalpana Vasudevan of People for Animals Unit II, meanwhile, alleged that the SPCA was not functioning to its full potential. "The officials cannot function independently due to political pressure. We are trying to revive the SPCA and hope that the body would soon function to its full capacity," she said.