

Makeshift shelter for stray cats needs help

KULAJAYA: A spot near the Hutan Bandar recreation park here has been turned into a dumping ground for unwanted cats.

Maintenance workers at the park have set up a makeshift shelter comprising large cages to house more than 30 cats they rescued since last year.

However, due to the lack of resources, the shelter has received brickbats from animal lovers, who said it was not well maintained and that some of the cats were sickly.

Maintenance worker Azman Yusoff, 44, said he found 10 stray cats last week alone, adding that he and his colleagues have been picking up strays in the area frequently.

"We decided to set up a shelter to house the strays as we love cats. Besides, we cannot allow them to run around the park," he told the *New Straits Times*.

The shelter, located in a nursery near the park, used to house about 50 cats. Now, there are 30.

Azman said some of them had been adopted, while others had died.

"We can only provide the cats with what we can afford," said the Kulajaya Municipal Council worker.

He said the cost of feeding the cats was about RM500 a month.

But the biggest challenge faced by Azman and his fellow workers is medical costs, as some of the cats have health problems.

Johor Baru Society For Prevention Of Cruelty To Animals deputy chair-



Azman Yusoff with some of the **stray cats at the shelter** in Kulajaya, Johor. Pic by Chuah Bee Kim

man Dr Edwin Singam, who visited the shelter recently with society committee member G. Rajakupal, said many of the cats were in need of medical attention.

Dr Edwin said some of the felines were suffering from sporotrichosis, a fungal disease which can infect humans.

"I will alert the state Veterinary Department to check on the cats," he said, adding that such an animal shelter was an opportunity for vet-

erinarians, veterinary students and animal lovers to help out.

"We share a common love for animals, regardless of which non-governmental organisations we come from."

He said there were more than 20 privately-funded animal shelters in Johor Baru, half of them in deplorable condition.

He urged the community to support those shelters.

"Instead of criticising these oper-

ators, let's lend a helping hand. Animal lovers should help to re-home the strays as a shelter is only a temporary place for them."

Meanwhile, state Veterinary Services Department director Dr Ida Muhid said shelter operators had the responsibility to ensure that all animals under their care were well-fed.

"If an animal is sick, it should be given immediate medical treatment."