4/5/15

By VIJENTHI NAIR vijenthi@thestar.com.my



HE Veterinary Services
Department (DVS) has denied
that the Kuala Lumpur
Veterinary Hospital (HVKL) was
understaffed and blames increasing demand, for its poor service.

HVKL recently came under fire for bad service and lack of manpower that has forced unscheduled closures, turning away pet owners

and their sick pets.

Retired DVS director-general Datuk Dr Mohamed Azmie Zakaria, who ended his service in April, said HVKL staff were overloaded with work.

He admitted that the decision to put up a "Klinik Tutup" (Clinic Closed) sign at the gate to inform the public was uncalled for.

He said, "The method of communication was wrong. In this day and age, there are ways to disseminate information effectively such as via SMS.

"The information of all pet owners are recorded and their mobile numbers can be used to send out messages. It could have prevented some who had taken leave from work or come from far to seek treatment for their pets.

"However, the days that HVKL were closed was unprecedented because many staff were on leave or on medical leave. There were also meetings on those days. It was

an exception.

"Out of a total of 20 positions at HVKL, 19 are filled. All six positions for technical personnel are also filled, which are two veterinary assistants, two veterinary assistant officers and two veterinary officers. The one vacant position is for support staff.

"The problem now is that we failed to meet the increasing demand from the public.

"I totally agree that there is a problem with the management in HVKL that needs attention. It will take time to manage this but the department is looking at other pos-

Staff overloaded with work, says ex D-G

Increasing demand for veterinary services at government-run facility cause of poor service



Plans for the future: Dr Mohamed Azmie says reorganising HVKL will help improve the services of the government-run facility.

sibilities to improve the services on . a short-term basis.

"One of the plans is to only accept animals by appointment unless there is an emergency. Many pets come in for vaccination and deworming, which can be done by appointment.

"Appointments will not only make sure that the hospital has enough supply of vaccines and deworming pills but also ensure that the waiting time for the emergency cases will not be long," he said.

He also suggested a revolving fund be introduced to manage the hospital.

"If there is a revolving fund, the hospital can charge a little extra for services and medicine, and the





April 15.

surplus could be used to run the facility without solely relying on the Government's allocations.

"The hospital can also hire parttime workers.

"However, this idea will not be well received because the money would then be handled by the hospital and might be subjected to abuse." he said.

Commenting on the reduction of the registration hours by 30 minutes for the morning session and another 30 minutes in the afternoon session, last year, despite the increasing demand for its services, Dr Mohamed Azmie said time was needed to treat the animals.

"HVKL attends to between 70 and 100 animals a day. The staff needs an extra hour to treat the animals so that they can finish within their working hours which end at 5pm.

"As a long-term measure, the department is looking at the possibility of opening a veterinary hospital in Putrajaya to relieve some of HVKL's workload." he said.

Dr Mohamed Azmie said HVKL was built to serve the poor with basic treatment for their pets. "It was never meant to be a full-fledged veterinary hospital.

"A proposal has been submitted to improve services, not only in HVKL but in other states as well, to the Agriculture and Agro-Based Industry Ministry. It is not easy and there are many procedures to follow before changes can be made.

"I do not want to go into the details but I hope the people will be patient," he said.

The proposal, which was submitted in March, includes the reorganisation of HVKL.