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Moscow Takes Up Fight Against City's Squirrel Poachers

By The Moscow Times

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Tired of not being able to get what they want in pet shops, some Muscovites have seemingly turned to the wrong side of the law in a bid to quell their desire for companions with bright eyes and bushy tails.

Moscow's ecology control department recently received numerous reports of people trying to snatch squirrels in the city's parks, most likely so that they can sell them, RIA Novosti reported.

City Hall responded last month by pledging to deploy more security guards in Moscow's green areas in an attempt to fend off poachers, who could be fined up to 20,000 rubles ($570) if caught.

Strutting around town with a scrawny frightened-looking dog hanging out of your handbag may be considered chic in some circles — and met with general indifference in others — but the idea of plucking squirrels from their habitat and domesticating them is too much for true

animal enthusiasts to bear.

The fine "should be 500,000 rubles for this kind of poaching," said Alexandra Mishenko, a retiree who feeds the squirrels in Moscow's parks, The Associated Press reported.

"We should gather people together and pelt the person who does that with snow," she said, her eyes welling with tears.

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