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Mass Poisoning Leaves Dogs 'Dying in Terrible Pain' in Russia's Far East

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Stray dogs have long been a bone of contention between Russian animal rights activists and vigilantes who hunt down the animals.

A mass dog poisoning in Russia's Far East has left hundreds of animals dying in agony around the city, including pets that escaped the attention of their owners, environmental officials said.

The large-scale poisoning by unknown vigilantes has been going on in the town of Yuzhno-Kurilsk for three weeks and has led to animals dying "slowly and painfully," the local Kurilsky natural reserve said Tuesday in a statement.

The attack has claimed the lives of domestic dogs kept outside by their owners, a number of friendly strays that hung around near apartment buildings and were fed by local residents, as well as "ordinary" strays, the statement said.

“Dogs have been dying in the center and on the outskirts of the town, their contorted bodies have been found along the seashore and in grass undergrowth near buildings,” it said.

Many local residents have been outraged by the poisoning, though others have remained indifferent or even gloated at the dog's deaths while recalling past recent incident in which residents have been attacked by the animals, the nature reserve said.

Police in Yuzhno-Kurilsk are investigating the poisonings, but a local newspaper refused to print an ad with an appeal to stop the attacks, and the regional administration ignored requests to intervene more actively, the statement added.

The nature reserve has also appealed to local residents to show more compassion, warning them that “fostering cruelty and intolerance is the foundation of nationalism, fascism and the actions of religious zealots — terrorists.”

Stray dogs have long been a bone of contention between Russian animal rights activists and vigilantes who hunt down the animals, but few attacks appear to have reached such heights or inflicted so much pain on the dogs being targeted.

In one case that drew police and media attention, a man in the far-eastern city of Vladivostok was charged with cruelty to animals early this year for feeding food laced with poison to 1,000 stray dogs.

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