

Mumbai: DRI rescues lemur, vervet monkey, exotic cats

TNN | Jun 18, 2019, 05.48 AM IST



MUMBAI: A vervet monkey, a lemur, a civet and exotic cats were among the animals seized during raids held at illegal pet trade shops for a second day across the city. Some of the exotic animals, like the lemur and vervet, were stuffed into cages which were further shoved into bags. Besides, at least 250 exotic birds, including yellow budgies and green conure, were found packed into 20 to 25 tiny cages. Six people have been arrested and Rs 1.09 crore seized from the shops.

Some of the exotic animals and birds are delicate and need to be handled with utmost care, said Dr Jitendra Ramgaonkar, deputy conservator of forests.



Lemur

The raids were conducted at pet shops in Crawford Market, Kurla and Govandi by officials of the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) with the help of the state forest department. Deputy director of DRI, Prashant Kumar, refused to comment. "I can't comment as of now. We are still in the midst of investigation," he said.

The forest authorities cannot file a case against illegal pet traders in this case since, technically, exotic animals are not

classified under the Wildlife Protection Act. “But these exotic animals are being illegally brought into the country and traded. Some of them could also be bred internally. So, DRI officials have initiated action against the traders for violation of the foreign trade policy and have booked them under the Customs Act,” Dr Ramgaonkar said.

The animals have been handed over to the forest authorities and could be handed over to animal welfare organisations for foster care.

Most of the birds are affected and not in good shape, said Dr Priti Sathe, veterinary officer at Thane. “Many birds, including a pair of Rosellas, have contracted a viral infection that causes a discharge from the eyes and makes them shed feathers,” said Dr Sathe.

The environment in which some of the animals were crammed in was “pitiable”, said Pawan Sharma of Resqink Association for Wildlife Welfare, who helped in the veterinary care.

“There was no ventilation and it must have been claustrophobic for the animals and birds,” said Sharma. “They were dehydrated and sitting in their poop. It was stinking badly.”