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Media alert from the Media Scanning & Verification Cell, IDSP-NCDC.

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4828	23.08.2018	23.08.2018	Ernakulam Kerala	Hindustan Times English Newspaper 23 th August, 2018/Page No. 10
Title:	Snake bite cases go up as water recedes in Kerala			
Action By CSU, IDSP -NCDC	Information communicated to DSU- Ernakulam, SSU-Kerala			

Santhosh Kumar was cleaning his flood-hit house on the Angamaly-Paravoor road in Kerala's Ernakulam district when he felt something bit his foot. He thought it was some insect and went to the local medical practitioner who applied some mixture with turmeric around the bite mark. However, Kumar collapsed shortly afterwards and was rushed to the hospital where the bite was diagnosed as of a snake.

"Water had receded and there was a lot to be done. The entire house was dirty. I was cleaning the house when I got bitten," says Kumar, 53, who has admitted to the Medical Intensive Care Unit at Little Flower Hospital in Angamaly.

The hospital, known to treat snake-bite cases for the past 40 years, got more than 50 cases so far during the floods. "Thankfully we have enough supply of anti-venom used to treat snake bite cases. Out of the cases, some 70 per cent were dry bites, which means the snake didn't release venom. Only the rest of the cases were venomous bites," says Dr Joseph K Joseph of the Hospital.

After several cases of snakes being found inside houses from where water had receded, Vava Suresh, a well-known snake handler, was brought in. "I got some 22 calls but most of them were not poisonous snakes. Caught some 5 cobras in different parts of Ernakulam on

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**Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme (IDSP), National Centre for Disease Control,
Ministry Of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India**

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एक कदम स्वच्छता की ओर

Tuesday. One was found inside the wardrobe on the second floor of a house in Kalamassery while another one was inside a shelf in a house," says Suresh.

A number of calls he gets are out of panic, he adds saying he attended to over 50 cases ever since the floods started in Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam, Pathanamthitta, Alappuzha and Ernakulam districts.

"People are scared even at the sight of a hammer-head worm. They think that's a poisonous snake and call me in panic," says Suresh, referring to a photo that was shared widely on social media. "They are so harmless," he says.

An expert in snake matters, Suresh says this is the breeding season for common water snake. "People killed several young ones of water snakes, thinking they are poisonous," he adds.

Apart from Suresh, many other good Samaritans as well as government teams are at work in different parts of the state to save animals and birds affected by the floods.

In the worst-affected Alappuzha district that is mainly agrarian and heavily dependent on cattle for income, the government has formed four teams of veterinary doctors for animal rescue and rehabilitation work. Led by district animal husbandry officer Sunil Kumar, the team has been working in Kuttanad and Chengannur.

"We have been supplying animal feed to panchayats that have dry areas to stock them. Also we went in boats and fed animals that were stranded at places. Right now the focus is on feed and medicines," says Dr George Varghese, assistant director, animal husbandry department, Alappuzha.

There were reports that the loss due to cattle deaths was around Rs 50 crore but Varghese says a figure cannot be arrived at now. "We don't have a clear picture yet," he says adding the neighbouring states of Tamil Nadu and Telangana have been helping with cattle feed.

Save Animals Kerala (SAK), a campaign launched by three animal NGOs — People for Animals, Hands for Paws and Street Dog Watch — has been actively working in rescuing animals and providing relief to them.

"The scenes we saw were so heartening. Pregnant cows that delivered in water, cattle taking shelter in a narrow space between vehicles, stray dogs left to fend for themselves in water, pet dogs and cats distressed due to separation from their parents (owners), birds without food," says Karthikeyan G of SAK who has been actively involved in the rescue work. He says the carcass of dead animals in the receding water may pose a health threat if the authorities don't act immediately.

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