

Odd jobs

Pet sitter

Kurta-clad, sneaker-sporting, 33-year-old Shalaka Mundada has a perpetual smile. The reason, we assume, is that three years ago she gave up her 9-5 job as an IT professional and decided to make pet-sitting dogs her full time career. She and her father, Satish Holyalkar, have been running Pet Sitters on a sprawling 4-acre property in Hinjewadi. This kennel for hire operates on several levels. While it is a place where owners can leave their dogs while they go on vacations, it is also a place where they bring their dog to socialise—a process in which dogs are conditioned to live peacefully alongside other dogs.

During her stint as an

apprentice to veterinarian Dr Milind Hatekar, she wondered whether there was any place in the city where dogs could live in peace when the air was rent with firecrackers or when their owners wanted to take a vacation. “I immediately researched kennel facilities in the city and was appalled by what I found,” she recalled. “The few kennels that existed were in terrible condition and awfully cramped.” Her response was to start Pet Sitters in 2008.

“I started out with six kennels and only a vague idea about how I was going to manage such a project,” she said. “The first eight months brought with it a giant chunk of problems, the

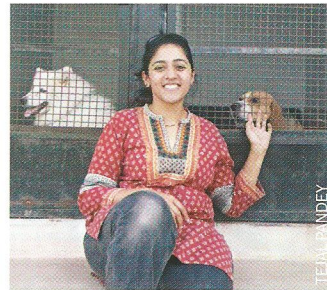
biggest being the immediate overwhelming response.” Mundada hired dog handlers and added 8 more kennels.

A typical day begins with a brisk walk with all the dogs at 5.45am after which all her charges are fed and exercised. “Every dog has a different schedule and regime. All the dogs get plenty of fresh air and exercise. By the time they go home, they’re even healthier than when they came,” she said.

Female dogs on heat, abandoned pets, illnesses and separation anxiety (even in owners) are just some of the events that Mundada has to deal with every day. Although she adds, “I have no regrets about

starting Pet Sitters. I wish I had done it all along.” *Sheena D’Lima*

To contact Pet Sitters, call 98810-76677/94230-09648 or visit www.petsitters.co.in. Day rate between ₹350-450, depending on the breed.



Dog's best friend Shalaka Mundada