

The Geek who Snuggles up to Byte

Meet the mascots of the three Lemon Tree Hotels in the city. In keeping with the company's Pooch Policy, the three branches have adopted a stray dog each

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Meat My Byte. Her designation: Associate, K9 Squad, Lemon Tree Hotels. Or at least that's what her visiting card would've read — if she carried one. Instead, what she has is a wig and a fringe that can charm the pants off all the Google Chromeys in the world. Byte is a golden Labrador pup who lives in the Lemon Tree Hotel in Electronic City. She was adopted one-and-a-half years ago, when the hotel's General Manager, Mahesh Varma, was returning from a room and found her abandoned on the road. Byte is now an integral part of the hotel and a member of the K9 Squad — that's what the hotel's dogs are called.

At the other end of the city, in Snuggles and Eat Tree, a black and white stray, which resides at group hotel near Ulsoor Lake. Not surprisingly, her name reflects her attitude and snuggles, we are told, loves to cuddle.

At their third outlet in the city, in Whitefield, is Mr Geek, a tan-and-white Customer Analytics Specialist. According to the hotel staff, this "genius boy" is known to be observant, analytical and interprets data. "He excels in collecting information about our guests and helps the team deliver customer delight. He loves to meet and interact with people. You will always find him snuggling his tail at the sight of friendly faces and who



Byte
Associate, K9 Squad

better to let us know about guests than him," says Archana Lal, Vice President, Corporate Communications & Sustainability Initiatives, The Lemon Tree Hotel Company. Lal also gives us a tip — Geek can be won over with a good hammy and Geek was an abandoned three-month-old pup when he came to live at the hotel.

Lal understands, these strays would have had to fend for themselves on the city's streets scavenging for food and shelter like thousands of their counterparts. But a Pooch Policy came to their rescue.

Lemon Tree Hotels' Pooch Policy was initiated by the group's founder, Pata Kowari, himself a dog lover. Under this policy, all 27 hotels of the group across 16 cities have adopted a stray. The adopted strays are named, inoculated, fed and get their daily dose of exercise. They are fed three to four times a day, which includes a diet of milk and dog food as well as vegetables and non-vegetarian meals. Since Byte is a baby, she is fed Cereal and boneless meat.

The dogs are taken care of by a security personnel who also walk the dogs at least four times a day. Though there is a dog shelter built within the

hotel premises, the dogs are free to pick their favourite spots. Geek, for instance, can often be found — relaxing — in the back office or on the couch in the GM's office.

Each member of the K9 Squad follows a daily schedule — which mostly involves, eating, walking, sleeping, playing, cuddling up, being petted and day-dreaming — that's strictly adhered to. Although no specific budget has been set aside for their upkeep, around Rs. 200 a day is spent on the dogs.

The staff and sometimes, hotel guests, enjoy playing with the dogs too. "Strays, who are dog lovers, are very happy to see the dogs and enjoy playing with them. Dogs are stress buster," Lal says.

The Pooch Policy came into existence 12 years ago, when their first hotel in Udyog Vihar, Gurgaon, adopted a stray, Sparky, the first stray dog to be adopted, was picked up by Pata Kowari's son Aditya at a

park in Delhi in 2002 (incidentally, it's the year Lemon Tree was founded). The pup was kept in the office in an empty computer box lined with old clothes, before moving into the house (located in a village). Sparky went on to become a mascot of sorts for the hotel.

Sparky Kowari (now the vice-chairman and senior food critic of Lemon Tree Hotels, Lal says). Sparky embodies their "Values of Positivity, Fun and Spirited Energy".

Since Sparky is the wilkiest in the K9 Squad, she has an assistant's appearance — Arifaces (Polypichuan Kousaraka Street Aditya, executive assistant to the vice-chairman). This amicable but, black, brown and white male pup definitely has "some feisty blood in him".

"The dogs represent team work, fun and play at work and a zest for life," Lal says. The K9 Squad works in agreement. Interestingly, Lemon Tree Hotel has a no-pet policy for guests.

Photos: Prashant Kulkarni/Rediff.com



Geek
Customer Analytics
Specialist, K9 Squad



Snuggles aka Eat Tree
Member, K9 Squad