

Dog Hunters Suspected in Shelter Blaze

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Speculation is growing that vigilante "dog hunters" may be behind a suspected arson attack on a dog shelter in western Moscow.

Several dogs died in a fire that destroyed the Alma shelter for homeless animals on Ulitsa Prud Klyuchiki in western Moscow in the early hours of Monday morning.

Emergency Situations Ministry investigators said in preliminary conclusions that the fire was started by "careless handling of fire by unknown persons."

But shelter director Lyudmila Bychkova said she believed the fire was started deliberately, saying that a witness had seen a man in a green Lada stop outside the shelter at 12:30 a.m. and throw something into the compound, after which it caught fire.

"The fire service is currently working to establish the cause of the fire. But if the investigation shows signs of arson, a criminal case will be launched immediately," a police spokesman told Interfax on Tuesday.

Officials said about 200 dogs were housed in the shelter at the time of the fire, of which seven died. Bychkova said the fire had killed five dogs and eight cats, RIA–Novosti reported.

Moscow has seen a spate of attacks in the past few months by so-called dog hunters who conceal poison in food and leave it in public places to kill stray dogs.

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