



Mains Practice Question

You are the DM of Rampur. The issue of stray dogs has created a lot of controversy in the area. After several incidents of dog-biting in the area, people have taken several radical decisions to fight the menace of stray dogs. There have been instances where stray dogs have been tortured by the people. Several local vigilante groups have started distributing airguns to the people at subsidized rates to kill stray dogs. The National Human Rights Commission has taken cognizance of media reports on the stray dog menace and observed that "prima facie, it is of the view that Human Rights should weigh above animal rights in a situation where human lives are at risk due to attack by animals"

On the other hand, several international NGOs including PETA have filed a petition in the Supreme Court to provide protection to the stray dogs.

- a. Identify the stakeholders and the ethical issues involved in the case.
- b. What measures will you take to amicably solve the issue of stray dogs considering all parties involved?

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Approach

- Highlight stakeholders and their interests.
- Highlight ethical issues involved in the case.
- List out measures that could be taken by the DM along with pros and cons.
- Highlight best measures based on such ethical concerns and dilemmas.

Introduction

The Menace of Stray Dogs is a common sight in India. Though it has been the most loyal animal to humans, incidents of dog bites, dogs attacking childrens, spread of rabies etc. creates insecurity among local residents to walk safely on streets. With human rights, animal rights have also been recognised and there is increasing pressure to treat them humanely.

Body

Stakeholder	Interest
District Magistrate (DM) and Local Administration	Check cases of dog bites, ensure human safety, animal rights, curb inhumane killing of stray dogs.
Local Residents	Safety from dog bites, quick and just

	actions from a dministration, early access to medication and vaccination after dog bites
Local Vigilante Groups	Take matters and law into their hands and provide quick solutions, Vested political motives.
Airgun producer	Profiteering from increased and illegal sale of guns
Human Rights body like NHRC	Protect and further human rights
NGOs like PETA	Protect animal rights, expand protection to stray dogs
Judiciary/Courts (Supreme Court)	Provide Justice, balance human and animal rights.

Ethical Issues involved in the case

- **With respect to DM**

- Whether he should allow for killing of dogs unabated by local people in an inhuman way or take strict action against those taking to illegal and immoral ways of doing things by themselves: Issue of balancing human moral values.
- Whether to give preference to human rights or animal rights or to seek balance between them: Issue of applying correct knowledge and empathy towards Humans or Dogs.
- Take quick action based on NHRC observations or wait for the Supreme Court decision: Issue of fast action and ethical governance

- **With respect to Local Residents and vigilante Groups:**

- Whether to take action by themselves or wait for corrective steps by administration: **Issue of responsible citizen participation, empathy towards animals or revenge.**

- **With respect to Supreme Court, Human and Animal Rights bodies**

- Seek balance between human and animal and right course of action in such situations: **Issue of upholding Constitution, and various International Covenants related to human and animal rights with best practise**

Following options can be exercised to deal with such situation by the DM

- **Let people kill as many stray dogs as possible and with time situation will get normalised**

- **Pros:** Biting cases of dogs will reduce; people will get satisfied with their safety.
- **Cons:** Relinquishing responsibility in discharging duties; allowing immoral treatment of

animals for vested interest of few; people will lose confidence in administrative capabilities and may resort to such instant action/justice in future also.

- **Follow advice of NHRC and allow for culling of stray dogs in district by people themselves**
 - **Pros:** Doing duty in a legal way; quick results and check on dog bite; increased confidence among affected people towards governance; uphold human rights.
 - **Cons:** Not an example of ethical governance as mass killing; suppression of animal rights; letting people take actions gives signal that state does not have capacity and means.
- **Wait for Supreme Court Judgement and then take action**
 - **Pros:** Action based on sound legal and ethical basis;
 - **Cons:** Affected people may get disillusioned towards governance; rise in biting cases; not an example of effective governance.

Considering above cases and ethical values and issues involved DM should take following steps:

Short term measures

- Identify hotspots where such cases have been reported and cross check with local authorities and hospitals for such cases and their gravity.
- Ensure dog-bitten people are given due care at public hospitals.
- Issue advisory to public to not kill animals unless administration allows for otherwise face penalty and also helpline to report cases of aggressive dogs/dog bites.
- Mobilise local concerned authorities to such reported cases and take actions in rapid and concerted ways based on:
 - signs of rabies infected dogs; kill it.
 - signs of aggressive dogs; capture it.
- Also check on illegal selling of airguns.

Medium and Long term Measures

- Educate people by awareness with help of animal rights NGOs and civic bodies to identify hotspots of stray dogs, not feed unnecessarily, report to authorities and treat animals as humanly as possible.
- Mass scale sterilization and vaccine of anti-rabies among stray dogs.

Conclusion

NHRC has rightly observed when it comes to threat to human life such animals can be killed. But it is also a fact that animals too have rights, instinct and may get aggressive due to varied reasons like protection of puppies, rabies infection. It is important that undesirable cases that could harm humans in future like rabies should be eliminated while those without such symptoms should be treated as humanly as possible as they proliferate near humans not on their own but due to love and care from humans.