



Stray Dog Management in India: Balancing Public Safety and Animal Welfare

For Prelims: [Rabies](#), [Article 21](#), [Supreme Court of India](#), [National Rabies Control Program](#)

For Mains: Balancing People Rights Vs Animal Welfare

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Why in News?

The [Supreme Court \(SC\) of India](#) issued a **suo motu directive** to remove **stray dogs** in the National Capital Region (NCR), following tragic attacks on children.

- This directive has sparked discussions on the legal and ethical aspects of balancing public safety with animal welfare.

Menace of Stray Dog in India

- India has 62–80 million stray dogs. Over **2.2 million dog bite cases were reported in 2024 alone**. [Rabies](#) from dog bites accounts for 36% of global deaths, primarily affecting children, women, and the elderly.
- [National Crime Records Bureau \(NCRB\)](#) data shows that more than 4000 dog bite fatalities occurred in 2019.
- Delhi alone recorded over 35,000 animal bite incidents in the first half of 2025. The **cost of treating rabies** through **post-exposure prophylaxis** places a financial strain on healthcare systems, with an average cost of Rs 5,128 per case.

What are the Legal and Policy Frameworks for Stray Dogs Management in India?

- **Constitutional Provision;**
 - **Article 246(3):** States manage preservation, protection, and improvement of livestock, prevention of animal diseases, and veterinary training/practice.
 - **Articles 243(W) & 246:** Local bodies are responsible for controlling the stray dog population.
 - **Article 51A(g):** Fundamental duty of citizens to show compassion for all living creatures.
 - **Article 21 (expanded by SC in *Animal Welfare Board of India v. Nagaraja (2014)*):** Right to life extended to animals (*Jallikattu Case*).
- **Legal and Policy Framework:**

- **Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960:** Prohibits cruelty and mandates humane treatment.
- **Animal Birth Control (ABC) Rules, 2023:** Provide for sterilization, vaccination, and release of stray dogs back to their habitats.
- **Rabies Control Efforts:** The [National Rabies Control Program \(NRCPP\)](#), led by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, aims for rabies elimination by 2030 through vaccination, sterilization, and surveillance.

What are the Key Ethical Aspects Surrounding Stray Dog Management?

- **Human Safety vs. Animal Rights:** Rising dog-bite cases and rabies deaths create a moral conflict between ensuring public safety and protecting animals' right to life.
 - High incidence of attacks on children raises ethical concerns of negligence in safeguarding the most vulnerable. ABC Rules prioritise animal welfare over human safety, risking Article 21 rights when aggressive strays are released.
 - **Whereas animals**, as living beings, deserve protection and humane treatment. The removal or abandonment of stray dogs is viewed as a violation of their fundamental right to life.
- **Disparity in Treatment:** Well-bred dogs are often treated as family members or status symbols, while **stray dogs are seen as social outcasts**, raising concerns about unequal treatment.
- **Ethical Dilemmas in Control Methods:** Instances of culling, poisoning, or cruel relocation violate ethical principles of compassion and humane treatment.
- **Corruption and Mismanagement:** Mismanagement and misuse of funds allocated for sterilization, vaccination, and stray dog welfare programs undermine both the effectiveness of these initiatives and the ethical obligation to **ensure humane treatment for animals**.

Ethical Frameworks Guiding Stray Dog Management

- **Utilitarian Ethics:** Sterilization and vaccination serve the greater good by reducing the risk of rabies while avoiding cruelty. This approach often advocates for stricter measures to protect human health, aiming for the overall benefit of society.
- **Deontology:** The State and society have a duty to protect both citizens and animals.
- **Rights-Based Ethics:** Stray dogs are seen as having inherent rights, and ethical action involves protecting those rights and ensuring their welfare.
- **Cultural Ethos of Ahimsa:** Indian tradition emphasizes compassion and coexistence with all living beings.
- **One Health Approach:** Ethical stewardship demands integrating animal welfare with human and environmental health.

Best Practices in Stray Dog Management

- In **Bengaluru**, assessments of the ABC program showed a 10% reduction in the street dog population from 2019 to 2023, with a 20% increase in the neutering rate, reflecting positive results in managing stray populations.
- **The Netherlands** achieved a **“stray dog-free” status** through the **CNVR (Collect, Neuter, Vaccinate, Return) program**, and encouraged adoption.
- **Istanbul, Turkey** the city runs comprehensive Trap-Neuter-Vaccinate-Return programs, tags **sterilized dogs with ear markers**, and engages community feeders.
 - Over the past decade, the stray population has stabilized, rabies is nearly eliminated, and coexistence with humans is maintained.
- **Bangkok, Thailand** replaced mass culling with TNVR. This approach halted rabies outbreaks and significantly reduced community aggression toward dogs.

What Measures Should Be Taken to Balance Public Safety and Animal Welfare?

- **Service Roles for Dogs:** Collective measures should be taken by all key stakeholders to Leverage Dogs' Cognitive and Social Skills for Critical Roles in **Drug Detection, Bomb Sniffing, and Therapy**, while Promoting a Positive View of Dogs in Society.
- **Policy Implementation:** Governments must collaborate with **civil society to enhance vaccination, sterilization programs**, and prevent pet abandonment. **A national policy** should address the human-dog conflict.
- **Dedicated Facilities:** Establishing feeding stations, veterinary healthcare facilities, and supporting animal welfare organizations is key to managing stray dog populations effectively.
 - Additionally, a dedicated helpline must be established for reporting attacks.
- **Public Awareness and Education:** Educate the public on responsible pet ownership, the importance of sterilization, and the safe interaction with animals to prevent dog bites and reduce abandonment.

Conclusion

The ethical responsibility to protect animals must be aligned with **society's duty to safeguard its citizens**. By fostering **compassion**, implementing effective policies, and engaging in public awareness campaigns, India can build a future where **both human and animal rights are respected**, ensuring peaceful coexistence.

Drishti Mains Question:

Discuss the Ethical dimensions in Balancing Public Safety and Animal Welfare in the Context of Stray Dog Population Control.

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