

Issue of Stray Dogs in India

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Why in News?

- The Centre has decided to reach out to the States, local self-governments (LSGs) and Resident Welfare Associations (RWAs) on implementing **the new set of Animal Birth Control Rules** prepared by the **Ministry of Animal Husbandry**.
- The Rules, which came amid increasing instances of stray dog attacks, put the onus of maintaining and controlling the population of stray dogs on LSGs and RWAs.

Population of Stray Dogs in India and Policies to Control them:

- At present, there are over 10 million pet dogs in the country and **the stray dog population is about 35 million.**
 - Dogs are **highly fertile animals**, and reproduce at a high rate if enough resources are available.
 - **Nearly 90% of the dog population** needs to be sterilised over a short period of time to achieve a sustained population reduction over a 10-15-year period.
- **The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (PCA) Act 1960** mandates that every owner of an animal is responsible for its well-being, and it is illegal to abandon pets or allow them to become strays.
- **The Animal Birth Control (ABC) Rules 2001**, based on **the PCA Act 1960**, were first notified by the Union Ministry of Culture.
 - The Rules aimed to control the population of stray dogs through **sterilization and vaccination.**
 - The program is implemented by **local municipalities and NGOs**, with the government providing financial assistance.
- **However**, the government has failed to implement effective measures to control the stray dog population and ensure their well-being

India's Stray Dog Menace:

- The increasing population of stray dogs deprives people of their right to **life, free movement, and a safe environment.**
 - According to the NCRB, there were 4,146 reported cases of dog bites leading to human deaths in India in 2019.
 - According to a study, dogs were the **second leading cause of road accidents** in urban areas.
- **Creates huge conflict between feeders and ordinary residents** who have to deal with packs of dogs roaming around their neighbourhoods.
- Dogs are also leading causes of **harm to wildlife, and cause immense loss of biodiversity.**

The ABC Rules 2023:

- The new Rules prescribe that ABC programmes for sterilisation and immunisation of stray dogs are **to be carried out by LSGs for birth control as well as maintenance of stray animals.**
- The Rules also suggest **euthanasia** for “incurably ill and mortally wounded dogs” as diagnosed by a team appointed by the Local Animal Birth Control Monitoring Committee.
- The Rules want the **RWAs to designate feed spots for dogs** which shall be far from children play areas, entry and exit points, staircase or in an area which is likely to be least frequented by children and senior citizens.

- It also suggests establishment of an **Animal Help Centre** where complaints about dog or cat bites can be registered.
- The local authorities will be held **responsible** for any violation and animal-human conflicts.
- Therefore, **the effective implementation of these Rules** will help in reducing stray dog population while addressing animal welfare issues.

Problems with the ABC programme:

- **It does not seem to have any benchmarks or targets.** Municipalities set targets for sterilisation based on budgets and available facilities.
 - **For example**, before the start of the programme, a municipal corporation would be required to **estimate the base population of dogs to be sterilised**.
 - It would then need to set targets for population reduction within a reasonable time period and then calculate how many would need to be sterilised to achieve this objective.
- **The other major problem is that the new ABC Rules require people to feed dogs.**
 - The concept of feeding animals in India is associated either with **religious beliefs, a false sense of compassion, or a misinterpretation of Article 51G** of the fundamental duty to be compassionate to all living beings.
 - A study conducted in Bengaluru found that roadside eateries and a few households that fed dogs were the main factors responsible for high dog densities.
- **It is cruel to dogs**, since homeless life on the streets is not easy, with accidents, disease, wanton cruelty and constant fear being their normal state.

What Needs to be Done?

- Solving this problem requires a **multi-pronged approach** and some difficult decisions.
- The government needs to **implement effective animal control measures and waste management** to eliminate open litter from the roads.
- **Strict pet ownership laws**, a ban on irresponsible feeding in public places, and encouraging adoption and long-term sheltering of homeless dogs will result in win-win solutions.
- **Individuals** also have a role to play in solving this problem.
- Cities such as **Ooty, Chennai and parts of Uttarakhand, Goa and Delhi** can be showcased as better models in managing stray dogs.
- We shouldn't be turning our best friends into our deadliest foes if the "**greatness of our nation and its moral progress**" is to be assessed by how we treat animals.

Q1) What is the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (PCA) Act 1960?

It is an Act to prevent the infliction of unnecessary pain or suffering on animals and for that purpose to amend the law relating to the prevention of cruelty to animals.

Q2) When was the Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying constituted?

It was formed in May 2019 from the department of the same name under the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare.

Source: [Centre asks States to enforce new rules to check stray dog numbers](#) | [TH](#) | [ToI](#)

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