

Supreme Court Orders Permanent Removal of Stray Dogs from Delhi-NCR Streets

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Stray Dog Ban Latest News

- The Supreme Court has directed Delhi, Noida, Gurgaon, and Ghaziabad authorities to urgently round up and shift stray dogs to shelters, stressing the need to protect children from rabies attacks.
- The Bench emphasised that safety must outweigh sentiments and citizens should feel confident moving freely without fear of dog bites.
- While the order offers relief to many, experts note that without making pet owners accountable, the problem may persist, as stray dog issues in India are largely linked to irresponsible pet ownership.

India's Stray and Pet Dog Population: Scale, Risks, and Industry Growth

- India has over **60 million stray dogs**, many succumbing to disease and accidents.
- Dog bites occur every 10 seconds, totaling 3 million annually, with around 5,000 fatalities.
- Rabies alone kills at least two people every three hours.

- Strays also pose environmental hazards, discharging 15,000 tonnes of feces and 8 million gallons of urine on roads and fields daily.
- In contrast, the **pet dog population stood at 30 million in 2024**, growing 10-15% annually alongside the expanding dog food market.
- The Rs 300 crore pet dog industry is set to double by 2030, with rising demand for luxury services like dog hotels, grooming parlours, and pet insurance from firms like Bajaj Allianz and Future Generali.

Why India's Stray Dog Control Efforts Have Failed

- India's past attempts to **tackle stray dogs**—through killing by electrocution, poisoning, shooting, or clubbing—proved ineffective, as partial elimination only reduced competition and spurred breeding.
- Since 1992, sterilisation under the **Animal Birth Control (Dogs) Rules, 2001** has been the preferred method.
 - Animal Birth Control (ABC) Rules, 2023 replaced the earlier 2001 rules.
- However, without sterilising at least two-thirds of the canine population within 6-12 months, the effort fails.
- With limited NGO capacity, cities rarely meet this target, and even when achieved, stray numbers may still rise due to abundant food sources.

How Irresponsible Pet Ownership Fuels India's Stray Dog Crisis

- With no national law mandating pet registration, sterilisation, or vaccination, many owners abandon unwanted dogs or let them breed with strays.
- This uncontrolled breeding adds significantly to the stray population, turning most "Indian street dogs" into crossbreeds.
- Experts suggest targeting pedigreed pets in Animal Birth Control (ABC) drives, offering incentives for registration and sterilisation, and imposing heavy taxes on breeding pets.

Feeding Strays Without Ownership Worsens Aggression and Attacks

- The growing trend of **feeding stray dogs without adopting them makes them territorial and aggressive**, often leading to attacks on non-feeders.
- Abandoned pets or proxy-fed dogs behave more aggressively than true strays, worsening public safety risks.
- Experts link this behaviour to irresponsible pet ownership and stray feeding, urging accountability for both pet owners and neighbourhood feeders.
- The Supreme Court has warned that anyone obstructing its stray dog removal orders will face legal action and may extend accountability to feeders in upcoming hearings.

Key Highlights of the Judgement

- **Mandatory Capture & Detention:** Strays to be picked up from all areas, prioritising vulnerable localities; resistance will invite contempt of court.
- **Infrastructure & Personnel:** Authorities must set up shelters/pounds for at least 5,000 dogs within 6-8 weeks, with adequate staff.

- **Sterilisation & Immunisation:** All captured dogs to be sterilised and vaccinated.
- **Permanent Confinement:** Strict CCTV surveillance of shelters; no dog to be released — violation will attract stern action.
- **Public Safety Focus:** Emphasis on protecting infants and children from rabies; no sentiments to interfere with public safety.
- **Rapid Response Mechanism:** Helpline to be created; all dog bite incidents must be acted upon within **four hours** of reporting.
- **Victim Support:** Authorities to ensure immediate medical assistance and maintain data on anti-rabies vaccine availability and usage.

Source: TH | IE | N18

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