

Shri Parshottam Rupala
Minister of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying
Room No 234, B Wing
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Dr Rajendra Prasad Marg, New Delhi
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19 July 2022

Respected Minister,

In response to the recent news that an elderly woman in Lucknow was mauled to death by her son's pit bull, I am writing from People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) India requesting that an urgent amendment be made to the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Dog Breeding and Marketing) Rules, 2017, to prohibit keeping and breeding foreign breeds of dogs bred for fighting, racing as well as foreign brachycephalic dog breeds. Brachycephalic dogs, such as pugs and French Bulldogs, are bred to have extremely short noses and flattened faces, due to which they face difficulty breathing and suffer from other deformities. Legal amendments are required to safeguard these breeds from abuse and suffering.

In India, inciting dogs to fight is illegal under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (PCA) Act, 1960. Yet organised dogfights are prevalent in Punjab, Haryana, and other parts of north India, making pit bull-type dogs the most abused breeds. They are purposely chosen for aggression as they belong to the so-called "bully breeds", originally bred for bull- and bear-baiting (a form of "entertainment" in which dogs are incited to attack a captive bull or bear). Such dogs are now commonly bred for illegal fighting and kept on heavy chains as guard and attack dogs, resulting in a lifetime of suffering. Many endure painful physical mutilations such as ear-cropping – an illegal process that involves cutting part of a dog's ears to prevent another dog in a fight from grabbing their ears. In a fight, the dogs are encouraged to continue until both dogs become exhausted and at least one is seriously injured or dies.

The Animal Welfare Board of India (AWBI) – the statutory body established under Section 4 of PCA Act, 1960 – states that greyhound races commonly held in Punjab are also illegal. In a letter addressed to the chief secretary of the government of Punjab, dated 11 November 2014, the AWBI advised that greyhound and other dog races should be stopped in the state – yet they continue. Dogs used for racing invariably spend almost all of their time caged in small, barren kennels, are denied adequate veterinary care, and suffer painful and often lethal injuries, such as broken backs and limbs. Uncompetitive dogs and those who slow down with age are often abandoned by the time they are three. Commercial dog racing is prohibited in most countries.

Another crisis occurs with brachycephalic dog breeds such as pugs, popularised in India by the popular Vodafone commercials, who suffer severe respiratory problems such as brachycephalic obstructive airway syndrome (BOAS), for which they often require surgery, and eye and skin disorders. These dogs can be heard rasping for breath, their tongues hanging from their mouths. Due to their shallow eye orbits, pugs and other brachycephalic dogs like Pekingese, Shih Tzus, and

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Lhasa Apsos are also predisposed to proptosis – a condition in which the eye bulges out of its socket and that requires emergency surgery. Cavalier King Charles Spaniels, also a brachycephalic breed, suffer from syringomyelia, a condition in which a dog's skull is too small for their brain as they are bred for an unnaturally small head.

In the UK, it is illegal to keep Pit Bull Terriers, Japanese Tosas, Dogo Argentinos, and Fila Brasileiros, strictly because they have been traditionally used for illegal fighting and are bred and trained for aggression. They are also commonly abused as status symbols by drug dealers and other criminals. Similarly, in Australia, the breeds prohibited in the UK as well as Perro de Presa Canarios are restricted breeds, and in Germany, Pit Bull Terriers, American Staffordshire Terriers, and Staffordshire Bullterriers cannot be imported. Now, there are calls in the UK and elsewhere to ban flat-faced breeds such as French Bulldogs and pugs considering the severe health problems they face. In Norway, the selective breeding of British Bulldogs and Cavalier King Charles Spaniels is banned for the same reason. The Oslo District Court has acknowledged that breeding for certain physical traits is cruel and results in “man-made health problems” for dogs, such as difficulty in breathing.

Appropriate breed-specific protective amendments in legislation would outlaw the breeding of dogs used for fighting and racing and prohibit breeds bred for traits that cause them immense suffering. PETA India would be pleased to work with the government on drafting these amendments. For the sake of dogs and humans who face the risk of being attacked by dogs bred for aggression and fighting, we hope your good office will please consider this with all due haste so as to prevent future tragedies.

We hope that you will take prompt action in this urgent matter. Please inform me of the communication issued by your office in this regard. I can be contacted on 9910817382 and at ManilalV@petaindia.org

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Manilal Valliyate
Chief Executive Officer
PETA India

Cc: Dr Sanjeev Kumar Balyan, Hon'ble Minister of State of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying

Shri Atul Chaturvedi, Secretary (AHD), Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying

Dr O. P. Chaudhary, Chairman, Animal Welfare Board of India, Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying

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