



Roadmap for Humane Management of Community Dogs in India for States and Union Territories

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PETA INDIA

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Overview

To effectively address the population of dogs on the streets in India, it is essential to better understand the factors contributing to their numbers and to include them in any population control plan.

In 2023, *The State of Pet Homelessness Report* by Mars Petcare India revealed that there are 62 million free-roaming dogs.¹ In 2024, the updated study reported over 60 million dogs and cats in India are living on the streets, while 8.8 million are in shelters. Those who currently end up in shelters are often animals who become lost as puppies or kittens or are unable to be returned to the streets for some other reason, such as having a severe disability, or who were abandoned by their owners. These animals are usually eligible for adoption, but adoption rates from shelters are extremely low, which creates an enormous resource burden on NGOs attempting to rehabilitate these animals as well as on municipalities that also end up housing dogs. Many such animals endure poor housing in severely crowded conditions at already overwhelmed shelters.

Meanwhile, Mars Petcare India reveals that India has the highest rate of abandonment of companion animals compared to countries such as China, Germany, and the US.² Abandonment is directly linked to pet stores and breeders that sell animals as a business to anyone willing to buy them, contributing to the impulse-buying of living beings. As owners discover that the animals have complex needs, many abandon them. Abandoned dogs end up at shelters or add to the number of dogs already on the streets.

Because of the enormous welfare and homeless animal problems caused by pet stores, the keeping and selling of dogs and cats in pet shops was banned in 14 European Union member states as of 2024.³ Numerous US states also prohibit the sales of certain species from pet stores, and close to 300 US cities and counties have passed retail pet sales ban legislation.⁴ Yet in India, pet stores and breeders are rife, with the majority of them being unregistered with their State Animal Welfare Boards and therefore illegal, according to recent data gathered via the Right to Information Act, 2005. Many of these places also double up as hubs for the illegal wildlife trade, illegally selling birds or other wildlife. These animals, too, are commonly neglected and abandoned.

In recent years, pit bulls, Rottweilers, and other foreign dogs bred for aggression have become increasingly common in the country. These dogs are the most abused breeds, as they are typically used for illegal dogfights, for guarding, and attack. Pit bull-type breeds are also the most abandoned dog breeds in India, contributing to the population of dogs who end up at shelters and on the streets.⁵ At the same time, greyhounds, a foreign dog breed, are used for illegal racing, especially in Punjab. Slow and aging dogs are abandoned. Abandoned “breed” dogs end up mating with community dogs, creating stray crossbreeds.

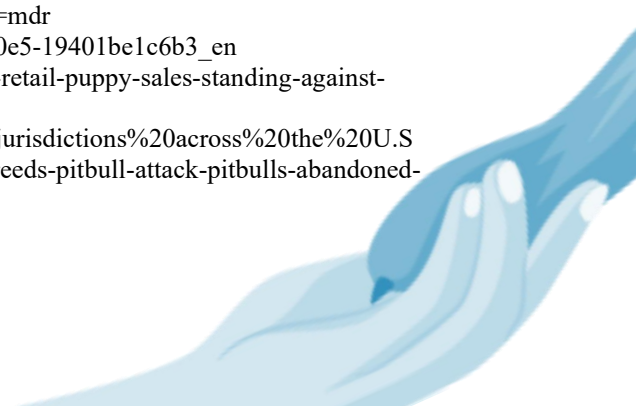
¹ <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/10888705.2024.2374078#abstract>

² <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/india/india-has-80-million-homeless-dogs-cats-has-highest-levels-of-abandonment-mars-petcare-report/articleshow/87916334.cms?from=mdr>

³ https://food.ec.europa.eu/document/download/caf8cd1d-967a-4e60-a0e5-19401be1c6b3_en

⁴ <https://www.aspc.org/improving-laws-animals/public-policy/ending-retail-puppy-sales-standing-against-puppy-mill-cruelty#:~:text=Close%20to%20300%20U.S.%20cities,additional%20jurisdictions%20across%20the%20U.S>

⁵ <https://www.indiatoday.in/cities/delhi/story/delhi-news-pitbull-dog-breeds-pitbull-attack-pitbulls-abandoned-1976103-2022-07-15>



Meanwhile, dog bite statistics generally do not differentiate between “pet” dogs, community dogs, and breeds specifically bred for aggression like pit bulls, so bites from other species can also mistakenly be included in the statistics. In Ernakulam, “pet” dogs were responsible for 75.6% of cases in the first six months of 2015.⁶ Without clear data, most animal bites are unfairly blamed on community dogs.

Jailing dogs is not a solution for controlling their population. The Animal Welfare Board of India’s (AWBI) “Revised Animal Birth Control Module for Street Dog Population Management, Rabies Eradication, Reducing Man-Dog Conflict” explains why. It reads:

Here is what happens when street dogs are taken away or removed from an area:

- 1. Their territories become vacant and street dogs from neighboring areas move in to occupy them.*
- 2. The street dogs which escape the catching squad continue to multiply, and therefore the territorial vacuum is soon filled again.*
- 3. Dog fights increase since every time a new street dog enters a territory; he is attacked by the dogs already in the neighborhood.*
- 4. Dog fights continue to take place over mating.*
- 5. Dog bites also increase as during dog fights passersby may get accidentally bitten.*
- 6. Rabies may continue to spread, if unvaccinated.*
- 7. Street dogs are removed, and their place is taken by unvaccinated dogs.*
- 8. When street dogs are being removed en mass, it is usually the friendlier and sterilized dogs are caught / killed / dislocated first. The street dogs that are left may be unsterilized and unfriendly. This unintended trait selection may lead to an overall change in behavior of the street dog population in that area.*

Thus, this only creates an unstable, constantly changing, rapidly multiplying and rabies carrying dog population. Man-dog conflict ultimately and invariably increases in areas from which street dogs are dislocated / removed / killed.

This Roadmap for Humane Management of Community Dogs in India, therefore, seeks to propose a sensible and compassionate way forward to curb the community and homeless dog population in India. Guided by the principles of *Ahimsa* and *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*, these recommendations are critical steps toward ending the expense, chaos and cruelty that arises from knee-jerk, ineffective and inhumane efforts to reduce community dog numbers.

⁶ <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kochi/stray-dogs-have-data-on-their-side/articleshow/48047003.cms#:~:text=This%20story%20is%20from%20July,expected%20to%20be%20no%20different.>



Discouraging the Breeding and Sale of Dogs

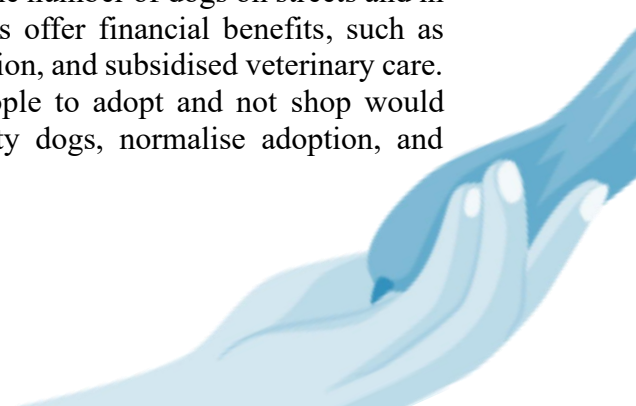
1. **Closing Illegal pet shops and breeders:** Commercial breeders and pet shops are a major contributor to uncontrolled dog population growth and abandonment as well as other forms of animal abuse. They sell dogs and other animals to anyone willing to buy them – including for illegal dogfighting, racing, and guarding (for which dogs are commonly kept on a chain or in a cage) – encourage impulse-buying, and provide little to no care guidance. Breeders and pet stores also often keep dogs (and other animals) in substandard conditions, causing health and behavioural problems that contribute to their abandonment after purchase. Many pet stores also serve as hubs for the illegal wildlife trade, selling protected species of birds, reptiles, and other animals, making enforcement of relevant laws critical not only for companion animal welfare but also for wildlife protection.

Breeders and pet shops that are not duly registered or operating in accordance with the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (PCA) Act, 1960; the PCA (Dog Breeding and Marketing) Rules, 2017; the PCA (Pet Shop) Rules, 2018; and the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, should be shut down immediately. An inquiry is also necessary to investigate how breeders and pet stores “dispose” of animals who are not sold or who can no longer be used for breeding by reason of their age or infirmity. State Animal Welfare Boards and Forest Departments should strictly enforce these Rules.

2. **Ending commercial breeding and sale by the government:** State governments must refrain from the breeding and sale of “breed” dogs and must focus exclusively on implementing the Animal Birth Control Rules (ABC), 2023, and encouraging and facilitating the adoption of dogs already in animal shelters. Pet dogs, including dogs from such state-run or other breeding units, are often permitted to roam on the streets and mate with community dogs when unsterilised.
3. **Prohibiting the breeding, keeping, and sale of pit bulls, Rottweilers, and similar dogs:** Policies are required to prohibit the breeding, selling, and keeping of foreign dog breeds such as pit bull terriers, Rottweilers, Pakistani bully kuttas, Dogos Argentinos (Argentine mastiffs), Presa Canarios, Fila Brasileiros (Brazilian mastiffs), bull terriers, Cane Corsos (Italian mastiffs), and XL bullies, who have been deliberately bred for aggression or illegal activities such as dogfighting. Breeders and pet stores often sell these dogs to unsuspecting buyers who are themselves attacked or are unable to control the animals. Pit bull–type breeds are the most commonly abandoned dog breed in India, and this poses unique challenges for NGOs, municipalities, and the dogs themselves. They mate with community dogs or humans when left on streets, are dangerous to adopt out to families, often fall into the hands of animal abusers, and cannot be trusted around other dogs, whom they often attack. When kept in shelters, these dogs are relegated to excruciatingly cruel and lonely lives.

Encouraging the Adoption of Community Dogs and Responsible Guardianship

4. **Offering government incentives for the adoption of dogs from streets and shelters:** Government incentives to encourage the adoption of dogs from the streets and shelters instead of the purchase of “breed” dogs would reduce the number of dogs on streets and in shelters. This goal could be achieved if municipalities offer financial benefits, such as waived registration fees for these animals, free vaccination, and subsidised veterinary care. Education and awareness campaigns encouraging people to adopt and not shop would promote a fair and positive perception of community dogs, normalise adoption, and promote responsible care.

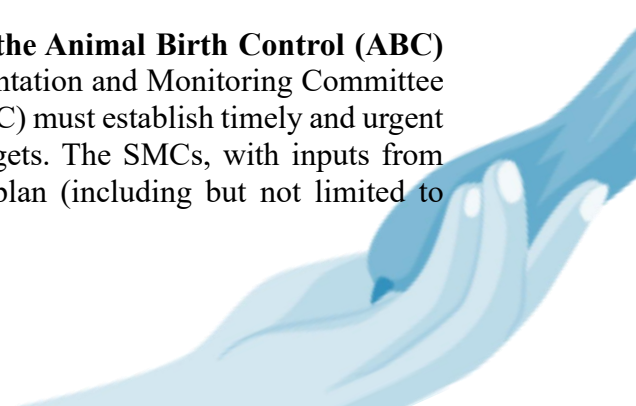


Across India, several civic bodies have already set encouraging examples. The Shimla Municipal Corporation launched a programme encouraging the adoption of community dogs. The dogs offered were sterilised and vaccinated. The adoptions were incentivised with perks like garbage collection fee waivers. Within a year, 155 dogs had been adopted. The Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation has hosted “Indie Puppy Adoption Melas”, through which over 3,000 desi puppies have found homes in the last five years. According to the guidelines issued by the Department of Urban Development of Delhi in September 2025, citizens who adopt Indian dogs are exempt from registration fees and receive free sterilisation and first vaccinations at any Animal Birth Control (ABC) centre. The Hubballi-Dharwad Municipal Corporation in Karnataka found homes for 48 puppies within just 15 days of launching its adoption drive, implemented with 16 NGOs that helped raise awareness, while the corporation provided free veterinary care and check-ups.

5. **Defining responsible “pet” guardianship as including registration, sterilisation, and lifelong care:** Municipal requirements for the registration of companion animals can be used as an opportunity to help enforce new responsible guardianship practices such as mandatory sterilisation (for companion dogs eligible to be sterilised in terms of age and physical fitness), vaccination, and deworming. Mandatory sterilisation is especially necessary, as “pet” dogs often mate with community dogs or contribute to a growing number of “breed” dogs who lack good homes. The registration could also be used to educate guardians and raise awareness of the lifetime responsibility that keeping a companion animal entail, behavioural and other basic needs of dogs, the importance of sterilisation and immunisation, and the consequences for abandoning animals under Section 11 of the PCA Act, 1960. Abandoned companion animals add to the infrastructural burden on local governments and NGOs, as the animals cannot survive well on the streets and need lifetime rehabilitation through adoption or at sanctuaries.
6. **Rehabilitating abandoned companion dogs or dogs who cannot be released back onto the streets:** Suitable sanctuary, cage-free settings should be created in consultation with the Animal Welfare Board of India, State Animal Welfare Board and animal protection NGOs for any long-term housing of dogs who cannot be released onto the streets by NGOs and municipalities. This would include dogs such as companion dogs who are abandoned, those who would not survive due to a disability, and those who were lost and their point of origin is unclear. The settings must allow for freedom of movement, socialisation, enrichment, and play instead of confinement. Kennels must be regarded as appropriate only for temporary surgery recovery or hospitalisation.

Implementing a Structured Animal Birth Control (ABC) Plan.

7. **Conducting comprehensive and periodic census of community dogs:** A district-wide census is essential for establishing sterilisation and vaccination targets, determining the animal birth control (ABC) infrastructure needed, and formulating time-bound plans to achieve these targets. The census should clearly set out the percentage of dogs already sterilised. A periodic census helps track the effectiveness of the ABC programme.
8. **Ensuring time-bound area-wise implementation of the Animal Birth Control (ABC) Rules, 2023:** The State Animal Birth Control Implementation and Monitoring Committee (SMC) and the Local ABC Monitoring Committee (LMC) must establish timely and urgent strategies and deadlines for achieving sterilisation targets. The SMCs, with inputs from LMCs, must submit a “comprehensive district wise plan (including but not limited to



infrastructure, budget, etc. for dog population management in urban and rural areas throughout the state”, as advised by the AWBI’s “Revised Animal Birth Control Module for Street Dog Population Management, Rabies Eradication, Reducing Man-Dog Conflict”. This plan should factor in guidance from this Module, such as “The ABC Implementing Agency must work systematically to sterilize at least 70% of the dog population in a time bound and area based manner”. Furthermore, “considering that the area needs to be completely covered within 2 years, i.e. all dogs need to be sterilized”, SMCs and LMCs may decide to target hospitals, schools, colleges, and other key areas first for a sterilisation drive.

9. **Offering personnel training and capacity building:** The Government and State Veterinary Councils should devise training and certification courses for veterinarians, para-vets, and animal handlers on humane capture and transport, ABC surgeries, vaccination, and other capacity building with the assistance of partner NGOs. Training should be mandatory for municipal staff recruited for ABC procedures.

Creating Friendly Dogs

10. **Promoting community feeding of dogs:** Community feeders play a critical role in maintaining harmony with dogs and supporting animal birth control efforts. Feeders help create calm, trusting dogs, who are easier to catch for sterilisation. Feeding zones should be encouraged everywhere dogs exist, and community feeders should be protected from harassment. Dogs are territorial and need to be fed where they live. Relocating them or denying food causes stress and aggression, increasing the potential for human-animal conflict.

Closing Illegal Slaughterhouses

11. **Curbing slaughter waste:** There are 4,671 licensed slaughterhouses and approximately 32,000 illegal ones, almost all of which pollute surrounding areas with waste that attracts dogs. Strict measures for the immediate closure of slaughterhouses operating without registration under the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006, the Food Safety and Standards (Licensing and Registration of Food Businesses) Regulations, 2011, as well as those that are in violation of the PCA Act, 1960, the PCA (Slaughter House) Rules, 2001 and applicable municipal laws would help to reduce dog density where the slaughterhouses currently exist.

