

2 booked for public feeding of stray dogs in Kotturpuram

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Chennai: Two unidentified persons, who were found feeding stray dogs on a public road, have been booked by the Kotturpuram police and issued a Community Service Register (CSR), on charges of violating a recent Supreme Court order restricting such activities.

Muralidharan Sivalingam, a resident of Pondicherry Road in Kottur, lodged a complaint saying he saw two men arriving on a scooter carrying a food container on Sept 7 around 12.49pm.

When a stray dog approached the vehicle, the pillion rider placed food on the pavement before leaving the spot.



The complainant posted the video of dogs being fed on social media and tagged the city police, mayor, GCC, SC and PM's office until action was promised

Muralidharan recorded the incident on his mobile phone and later uploaded two video clips along with the location details.

Muralidharan said he initially approached both the Kotturpuram police station and Chennai corporation officials, but his complaint was not accepted. He later highlighted the issue on social media, tagging the Chennai city police, Greater Chennai Cor-

poration chief secretary, minister K N Nehru, mayor R Priya, the Supreme Court and the Prime Minister's office.

Police confirmed that a CSR was issued based on his complaint, though the suspects were listed as 'unknown persons'.

An officer said, "The complaint has been taken on record, and further action will be considered as per legal provisions."

1.13 lakh dog bite cases, Punjab depts pass buck

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THE TIMES NEWS SERVICE

CHANDIGARH, MARCH 3

Last year, over one lakh people were bitten by dogs in Punjab, many of whom were mauled to death while the rest scarred for life. But the three departments responsible for curbing the stray dog menace have been busy passing the buck.

As many as 1.13 lakh dog bite cases were reported in 2018, suggests data compiled by the Punjab Government. The number is slightly higher than the previous year, which saw 1.12 lakh cases. Almost 50 per cent of the victims are children.

Experts say the number may be higher as not all vic-

STRAY CANINE TERROR ON THE STREETS

YEAR	BITE CASES
2014	22,000
2015	39,000
2016	54,000
2017	1.12 lakh
2018	1.13 lakh

WORST-HIT DISTRICTS

LUDHIANA	15,324
PATIALA	9,936
JALANDHAR	9,839
HOSHIARPUR	9,260
SANGRUR	6,593



SOURCE: NATIONAL RABIES CONTROL PROGRAMME

tims seek treatment at hospitals. But the cases have almost doubled in the past two years. In 2016, only 54,000 cases were reported.

Ludhiana is the worst-hit district with 15,324 cases, fol-

lowed by Patiala (9,936 cases), Jalandhar (9,839), Hoshiarpur (9,260) and Sangrur (6,593).

While such incidents are regularly raised in the Assembly, the three departments — Local Bodies, Rural

Development and Panchayats and Animal Husbandry — jointly responsible for controlling the dog population continue to pass the buck, leaving the situation on the ground unchanged. At the recent Budget session, Minister for Animal Husbandry Balbir Singh Sidhu said his department's role was limited to providing technical support to the Local Bodies and Rural Development and Panchayats departments.

In 2016, then Chief Minister Parkash Singh Badal had asked the three departments to make a time-bound action plan to control the menace.

As per the last Livestock Census in 2012, more than 3 lakh stray dogs were present

in the state and the number is likely to have gone up significantly over the past seven years, say experts.

The birth control programme was started by the government over a decade ago, but its sterilisation rate is dismally low, at under 1%.

The Animal Birth Control (Dogs) Rules, 2001, say that every district has to look after the population control and sterilisation of stray dogs. The Rural Development and Panchayats and Local Bodies departments also have to establish a sufficient number of dog pounds, including kennels/shelters, to keep the captured animals, and get survey of stray dogs conducted regularly.

Dog bite cases cross 1 lakh within three months in T.N.

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

Within the first three months of 2025, Tamil Nadu has reported 1.24 lakh cases of dog bites and four deaths due to rabies, data provided by the Directorate of Public Health and Preventive Medicine reveal.

In 2024, there were 4.8 lakh cases of bites and 47 deaths due to rabies, the directorate said.

The rise in cases of dog bites has been a cause for concern over the past few years. Better awareness has led to an increase in reporting the cases. On its part, the Public Health Directorate has been reiterating the need to get Anti Rabies Vaccine (ARV) soon after a dog bite, and complete the four doses to prevent rabies.

"It is a public health challenge," T.S. Selvinayagam, Director of Public Health, said. Not only rabies, but there is also the possibility of road acci-



Damage control: The Public Health Directorate has been reiterating the need to get anti-rabies vaccine soon after a dog bite, and complete the four doses to prevent rabies. FILE PHOTO

dents due to chase by dogs, he added. "A combined effort by the government and civil societies is needed. It revolves around animal birth control, vaccination, pet dog licensing, minimising community dogs as per procedure," Dr. Selvinayagam said.

The State Action Plan for Dog Mediated Rabies Elimination is a compre-

hensive approach involving multiple departments such as local body administration, veterinary and health departments, he said, adding: "We, at health, provide ARV and wound management. Awareness creation by all is critical." Official sources raised the need to focus on animal birth control and solid waste management.

S. Chandrasekar, profes-

sor and head, Department of Medicine, Government Stanley Medical College Hospital (SMCH), said the number of cases with dog bites was high in January. "We administered 1,300 doses of ARV that month, followed by 1,152 in February and 986 so far in March. We usually administer around 1,300 to 1,500 doses of ARV in a month," he said. Majority

of the persons who suffered dog bites were children and adolescents, he added.

Though the number of dog bite cases remains more or less the same at the SMCH, Dr. Chandrasekar said it had been observed that category II and III bites were becoming more. "We classify dog bites into three [categories]. Category I includes licks on intact skin, category II is minor scratches without bleeding and category III is bites that have penetrated the skin, bleeding, tissue damage, severe bites on the upper and lower limbs and head and neck. Category III bites are indicated for rabies immunoglobulin," he said.

In line with this, he said that the use of rabies immunoglobulin was marginally high now considering more number of category III bites and increased awareness among people.

Stray dogs continued to be the biggest problem, he said, adding: "It is impor-

tant to vaccinate stray dogs against rabies. Dogs can turn ferocious and bite with or without provocation. When dogs act as a pack and attack people, it becomes even more dangerous especially for vulnerable people such as children and elderly."

Non-governmental organisations working towards animal welfare, and animal lovers should understand the gravity of the issue and come forward to take care of stray dogs and promote vaccination against rabies, he said, adding: "Maybe, shelters can be established where stray dogs can be taken care of. Veterinarians have an important role to play in taking forward vaccinations for pet dogs..." Dr. Chandrasekar said that persons who are bitten by a dog should seek medical help at the earliest even if the animal was vaccinated and domesticated. "Wash the bite area under running water for a minimum of 15 minutes," he said.

A review of recent news articles shows that media coverage of stray dogs is **largely focused on dog bites, attacks, public safety concerns, and conflicts between humans and animals**. Headlines frequently highlight the number of dog bite cases, the risks posed by stray dogs, and demands for stricter population control. While these issues are important, **far less attention is given to the challenges faced by the dogs themselves**. Stories about animal cruelty, abandonment, starvation, disease, road accidents, and the effects of human neglect are often underreported. This **creates a one-sided narrative in which stray dogs are viewed primarily as a problem**, rather than as **vulnerable animals that are also victims of human actions and societal neglect**.

Some dogs try to attack people for grabbing food from their hand. If they are fed and taken care of they would not get into this aggressive mode

Stray dogs should be relocated to proper shelters, as dog bites are a growing concern and children do not feel safe playing outdoors freely, especially during early mornings and late evenings.

Stray Dog population in India:

India has one of the largest stray dog populations in the world. Online reports estimate that the stray dog population in India ranges between **35 million and 62 million dogs**, making up a significant portion of the country's free-ranging dog population. The large number of stray dogs is often linked to **poor waste management, rapid urbanization, and abandonment of pet dogs**.

There is also a major difference between estimates provided by the government and those provided by animal welfare organizations and NGOs. Government data estimates around **15.3 million stray dogs**, while several NGOs estimate the population to be much higher, ranging from **60 million to 80 million dogs**. This variation exists because stray dog populations are difficult to accurately count due to constant movement, reproduction, and lack of proper nationwide surveys.

Reason for significant abundance of stray dogs:



One of the main reasons for the large stray dog population in India is **poor waste management**. Open garbage dumps, overflowing bins, and food waste from markets and restaurants provide an easily available food source for dogs. This allows stray dogs to survive, reproduce, and form packs near residential and

commercial areas. Experts often identify **unmanaged waste as one of the biggest causes** behind the increasing stray dog population in urban India.

Another major factor is the **abandonment of pet dogs**. Many people buy dogs from breeding industries and pet shops **without fully understanding the responsibility of pet ownership**.

Foreign breeds are often purchased because of trends or appearance, even though they may struggle in India's climate. When these dogs become difficult or expensive to care for, some **owners abandon them on the streets**.

Unregulated breeding industries and illegal puppy mills also contribute to overbreeding, poor living conditions, and unhealthy dogs. After abandonment, many pet dogs are unable to survive independently, while others join stray populations or end up in overcrowded shelters.

Incomplete sterilization programs also contribute to rapid population growth. India mainly uses the Animal Birth Control (ABC) program, where dogs are **sterilized and vaccinated before being released back into the same area**. However, many cities cannot sterilize enough dogs because of **lack of funding, veterinary staff, infrastructure, and coordination**. As a result, dog populations continue reproducing faster than they can be controlled.

Rapid urbanization has also increased the stray dog issue. Expanding cities create more garbage, construction sites, and abandoned spaces that provide shelter and food for street dogs. Increased human population density also leads to more interaction between humans and stray dogs, which sometimes causes conflicts and safety concerns.

Another challenge is the **gap in policy implementation**. Although India has laws and rules for stray dog management, many municipalities struggle to properly enforce them. Different cities follow different levels of sterilization, vaccination, and waste management practices, leading to inconsistent control of stray dog populations across the country.

The Role of Dogs in the Urban Ecosystem

Dogs play an important role in maintaining the balance of urban ecosystems. Beyond being companions to humans, they contribute to environmental monitoring, community well-being, and biodiversity. Recognizing these roles encourages a more balanced approach to stray dog management.

Community dogs provide **companionship and security** by offering emotional support and acting as natural deterrents to crime. Their barking can alert residents to unusual activity, helping improve neighbourhood safety.

Dogs also act as **biodiversity indicators and environmental sentinels**. Their movements and health can reflect changes in local wildlife populations and environmental conditions. Monitoring stray dogs can help identify pollution, disease outbreaks, or other ecological changes at an early stage.

Finally, caring for community dogs helps **build empathy and social responsibility**. Community feeding, vaccination, and sterilization programs encourage cooperation among residents while promoting compassion, responsible coexistence, and greater awareness of animal welfare.

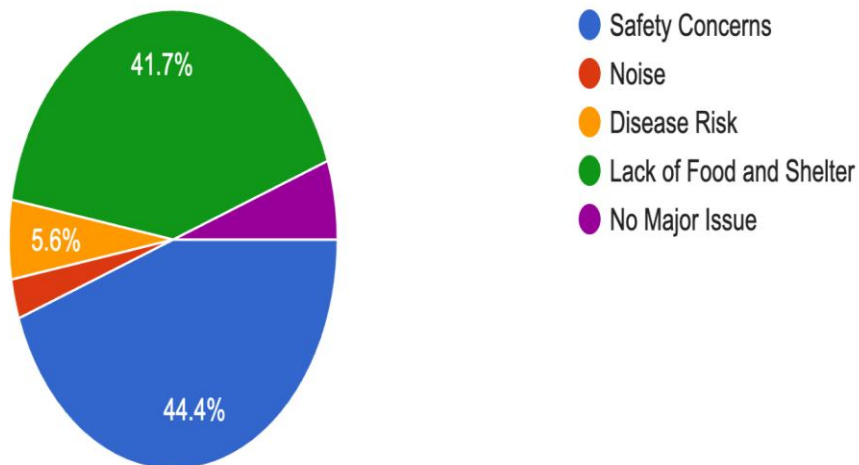
Problems faced by stray dogs:

1. Street dogs in India face many survival and health-related challenges. One of the most common problems is **hunger and malnutrition**. Many stray dogs depend entirely on garbage, leftover food, or feeding by local residents.
2. **Rabies** remains one of the most serious health issues among stray dogs in India. India records one of the **highest numbers of rabies deaths in the world**, and most human rabies cases are caused by infected dog bites. **Lack of vaccination** among stray dogs allows the disease to spread easily within dog populations and to humans. Although anti-rabies vaccination programs exist, many cities are unable to vaccinate enough dogs because of limited resources and infrastructure.
3. Street dogs also frequently suffer from **skin diseases, infections, parasites, and untreated injuries**. Conditions such as fungal infections, ticks, and fleas are common because most dogs do not receive proper hygiene or veterinary care. Many injured dogs are left untreated after accidents, fights, or abuse, leading to severe infections and long-term suffering.
4. **Traffic accidents** are another major cause of injury and death among stray dogs. Dogs often sleep or search for food near busy roads and marketplaces, making them vulnerable to vehicle collisions. Since most stray dogs do not receive medical treatment, even minor injuries can become life-threatening. Extreme weather conditions such as heavy rain,

heatwaves, and cold temperatures also affect their survival, especially for sick, old, or injured dogs.

What do you think is the biggest issue related to stray dogs in your area

36 responses



The Cycle of Abuse and Aggression in Street Dogs

Many cases of aggression in street dogs are the result of a cycle of abuse rather than natural behavior. When dogs experience physical abuse, neglect, or cruelty from humans, they develop fear and begin acting defensively to protect themselves. As a result, frightened or cornered dogs are more likely to bite when they perceive a threat. These biting incidents reinforce the public belief that all stray dogs are dangerous, leading to further mistreatment and violence against them.

Breaking this cycle through humane treatment, sterilization, vaccination, and public awareness can reduce aggression, improve human safety, and promote better coexistence between people and community dogs.

Problems caused to humans due to stray dogs:

- India is responsible for **36% of global rabies deaths**. The majority of cases occur from unvaccinated dogs. (Affects both dogs and humans negatively)
- In January 2025 alone, the Indian government cites that **4,29,624 dog bite cases** have been reported.
- In 2024 **37,15,713 dog bite cases** were reported in which **54 cases of death** due to rabies were also identified.

What is rabies:

Rabies is a deadly viral disease that attacks the **brain and nervous system of mammals**, including dogs and humans. It is usually spread through the **bite or saliva of an infected animal**. In dogs, the virus affects the **brain, causing major changes in behaviour and physical function**. Infected dogs may become unusually **aggressive, restless, fearful, or disoriented**.

As the disease progresses, they can experience excessive drooling, difficulty swallowing, paralysis, and loss of coordination. Once symptoms appear, rabies is almost always fatal. This is why vaccinating dogs, especially stray dogs, is essential to prevent the spread of the disease and protect both animals and humans.

Symptoms of Rabies

The incubation period for rabies is typically 2–3 months but may vary from one week to one year, depending on factors such as the location of virus entry and the viral load. Initial symptoms of rabies include generic signs like fever, pain and unusual or unexplained tingling, pricking, or burning sensations at the wound site. As the virus moves to the central nervous system, progressive and fatal inflammation of the brain and spinal cord develops. Clinical rabies in people can be managed but very rarely cured, and not without severe neurological deficits.

Advanced Neurological Symptoms (appears within 2 weeks of first symptoms) Rabies causes brain dysfunction (encephalitis), leading to:

Category	Symptoms
Mental/Behavioral	Anxiety, confusion, agitation, hallucinations, irritability, aggressive behaviour
Classic Rabies Signs	Hydrophobia (fear of water due to throat spasms when swallowing), hypersalivation (excessive saliva/foaming at the mouth)
Neurological	Seizures (convulsions), muscle spasms, unusual postures, weakness or paralysis, insomnia
Sensory	Extreme sensitivity to bright lights, sounds, or touch
Autonomic	Dysphagia (difficulty swallowing), autonomic instability

How does Rabies spread:

The rabies virus spreads to humans and animals in a few specific ways:

Animal Bites: The most common route of transmission. Dogs are responsible for up to 99% of human cases worldwide, though other mammals like bats, raccoons, foxes, and monkeys can also transmit it.

Scratches: The virus can be transmitted if an infected animal scratches you, as their claws are often contaminated with saliva.

Mucous Membrane or Wound Contact: If infectious material—such as saliva, tears, or nervous tissue—makes direct contact with your eyes, nose, mouth, or an open cut, the virus can infect you.

Human-to-Human Transmission: This is extremely rare. However, the virus can be transmitted through organ or tissue transplants from an infected donor.

Key facts about rabies transmission:

Aspect	Details
Main route	Bite from a rabid animal (most common)
Other routes	Scratches, or saliva contact with eyes/nose/mouth/open wounds
Virus entry	Through wounds or mucous membranes; cannot penetrate intact skin
Infected animals	Mostly mammals: dogs (in many countries), bats, raccoons, skunks, foxes
Human-to-human	Extremely rare: only via organ/tissue transplantation
NOT transmitted through	Blood, urine, feces, or contaminated objects (clothes, bedding)

How can Rabies be stopped and prevented

Vaccinating dogs

Vaccinating dogs, including puppies, through mass dog vaccination programs is the most cost-effective strategy for preventing rabies in people because it stops the transmission at its source. Culling free-roaming dogs is not effective in controlling rabies.

Awareness

Public education for both children and adults on dog behaviour and bite prevention, what to do if bitten or scratched by a potentially rabid animal, and responsible pet ownership are essential extensions of rabies vaccination programmes.

Rabies can be prevented if treatment is started immediately after a bite. After being bitten by a suspected rabid animal, the wound should be washed thoroughly with soap and water for at least 15 minutes, and medical attention should be sought as soon as possible. Post-exposure vaccination is

usually given in multiple doses over several days (commonly on Days 0, 3, 7, and 14), and severe exposures may also require rabies immunoglobulin. Early treatment is highly effective at preventing the disease.

Government rules and regulations:

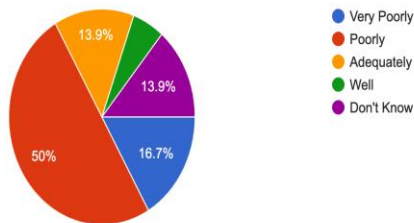
India's stray dog management system is mainly governed by the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960 and the Animal Birth Control (ABC) Rules, 2023.

1. The **Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (PCA) Act, 1960** is India's main animal welfare law. It makes it illegal to harm, torture, poison, or abandon animals, including stray dogs, and promotes their humane treatment. It aims to prevent cruelty and promote the humane treatment of animals.
2. The **Animal Birth Control (ABC) Rules, 2023** focus on controlling stray dog populations through sterilization and anti-rabies vaccination. Stray dogs are sterilized, vaccinated, and released back into the same area. The rules prohibit mass culling and place responsibility on local authorities to manage dog populations humanely.
3. The **Dog Breeding and Marketing Rules, 2017** regulate commercial dog breeding activities in India. These rules require breeders to register with the appropriate authorities and maintain proper standards of animal welfare, including adequate housing, nutrition, sanitation, and veterinary care to reduce unethical breeding practices and prevent overbreeding.
4. The **Pet Shop Rules, 2018** require all pet shops selling animals to be registered and comply with minimum welfare standards. Shop owners must provide suitable living conditions, food, clean water, and medical care for animals in their care. These regulations were introduced to control illegal pet trading and reduce the number of animals bred and sold in poor conditions.
5. India also regulates the **import of pet dogs** through rules administered by the Department of Animal Husbandry and other government agencies. Imported dogs must meet health and

vaccination requirements and obtain the necessary permits before entering the country.

These regulations help control disease transmission and ensure that imported breeds are legally brought into India through monitored channels.

How well do you think local authorities handle stray dog issues in your area
36 responses



Another major issue is weak implementation of regulations. Although laws exist, many illegal breeders continue operating without registration or proper inspections. Animal welfare groups and experts argue that poor enforcement

reduces the effectiveness of these rules. Similarly, sterilisation programmes often fail to cover enough dogs to significantly reduce population growth. This creates a cycle where stray dog populations continue increasing despite government intervention.

Breed Dogs:

Breed dogs enter and spread within India through three main channels: **imports, licensed breeding facilities, and backyard breeding**. Together, these systems contribute to the availability of pedigree dogs in the country and can indirectly influence issues such as overbreeding, abandonment, and pressure on animal welfare systems.

1. **Imported Dogs** are brought into India from other countries by **breeders, pet businesses, or individual owners**. Imported breeds are often valued for their appearance, or rarity. Popular imported breeds include Huskies, Saint Bernards, Golden Retrievers, and various toy breeds. However, some imported dogs are not well suited to India's climate and living conditions. As a result, owners may struggle with the high costs of care, grooming, and medical treatment, increasing the risk of abandonment when the dog becomes difficult to manage.
2. **Licensed Breeding** refers to breeding operations that are registered and regulated under government guidelines. Licensed breeders are expected to follow standards related to animal

welfare, housing conditions, veterinary care, and responsible breeding practices. These breeders usually maintain pedigree records and health checks for breeding animals. While licensed breeding helps improve accountability and animal welfare, enforcement can vary across different regions, and monitoring challenges sometimes allow poor practices to continue.

3. **Backyard Breeding** is an informal form of breeding carried out by individuals without proper registration, training, or regulatory oversight. Backyard breeders often breed dogs primarily for profit and may lack knowledge about genetics, animal health, and responsible breeding practices. A related issue is the operation of **puppy mills**, which are **large-scale breeding facilities that prioritize profit over animal welfare**. In many puppy mills, dogs are kept in an **overcrowded and unsanitary condition** with **limited access to veterinary care and nutrition**. Female dogs are often **bred repeatedly** with little recovery time between pregnancies, leading to **serious health complications**. Puppies produced in these facilities may suffer from **genetic disorders and behavioural problems**. When these dogs become difficult to sell or care for, they are sometimes **abandoned or surrendered to shelters**.

Together, these three pathways increase the supply of pedigree dogs in India. When demand for specific breeds rises, breeding activity increases as well. However, without responsible ownership, proper regulation, and public awareness, many dogs may eventually be abandoned, surrendered to shelters, or contribute indirectly to the broader stray dog problem.

Solutions:

Addressing the stray dog issue requires a combination of **compassion, proper law enforcement, and humane population control**. Treating stray dogs with kindness instead of violence helps reduce fear and aggression, allowing humans and community dogs to coexist more peacefully.

Public awareness programs can also educate people about responsible behavior around stray animals.

The government must ensure the effective implementation of laws such as the **Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (PCA) Act** and the **Animal Birth Control (ABC) Rules**. Enforcing these laws can prevent animal cruelty, protect stray dogs, and ensure that municipalities carry out their responsibilities effectively.

Finally, **sterilization and mass rabies vaccination** are the most effective long-term solutions. Sterilization gradually reduces the stray dog population by preventing uncontrolled breeding, while vaccination protects both dogs and humans from rabies.

Together, compassion, proper enforcement of animal welfare laws, and large-scale sterilization and vaccination programs provide a sustainable solution that benefits both humans and stray dogs.

Rather than relying on cruelty or culling, these measures address the root causes of the problem and promote a healthier, safer, and more humane society.

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