

## Issue of Stray Dogs in India

### 1) Introduction

- A dog is considered to be man's best friend, but there is, unfortunately, a dark side to having dogs on streets.
- Post-independence, dogs continued to be killed by local authorities – both regularly and in response to complaints.
- More than a hundred years of street dog eradication, however, did not make much of a difference to dog population sizes and the incidence of human rabies.

### 2) The present situation

- The country is home to about 30 million stray dogs, which amounts to 1 stray dog per 42 people in the country.
- An estimated 20,000 people die each year from rabies infections in India. No other country has more annual rabies deaths.
- In India, sterilizing dogs has not worked well so far because of the sheer number of dogs and lack of resources.
- There is extreme polarisation on this issue between the advocates of human rights versus animal rights.
- They are also the victims of mass killings and public distrust.
- When certain stray dogs bite humans, they infect those people with rabies, a viral disease that causes acute inflammation of the brain.

### 3) Why does India have a stray dog problem?

- A common characteristic of India's cities encourages stray dog populations — open garbage.
- Stray dogs are scavengers, so they rely on garbage on the street as a source of food.
- India has fewer government and NGO services that deal with stray dogs.
- India has fewer large-scale interventions and organizations to deal with stray dogs.
- Organizations like People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals argue that one of the main causes of dog attacks is stray dog migration and breeding.
- Because of the number of dog attacks reported in the media, people often see strays as dangerous animals that should be killed.
- Prevalence of an incomplete and flawed understanding of street dogs, their interactions with people, and the risks that may emerge from these interactions.
- it is logistically and operationally challenging to sterilise 50 millions dogs

- Unsterilized dogs will always “spill over” into areas where sterilisation has been done.
- Infrastructure needed for such large-scale surgical interventions do not exist.
- India has never framed a rational, scientifically valid, and widely implementable dog ownership or population control strategy

#### **4) cost of the dog problem in India**

- treatment of 20 million bite cases annually runs to hundreds of crores of rupees, and results in the loss of 38 million man-hours (2003 survey)
- A large number of vehicle accidents result from collision with or avoidance of dogs.
- The cost of the Animal Birth Control (ABC) programmes implemented across the country alone runs into several crores

#### **5) What has India done to deal with stray dogs?**

- India’s all-too-common solution for dealing with stray dogs is mass killings. However, a 1993 law prohibits this practice.
- In 1960, the government passed the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, which aimed to prevent unnecessary pain or suffering to animals.
- The Act also established the Animal Welfare Board to advise the government on animal welfare laws and promote animal welfare in the country of India.
- Despite this act, the government continued its mass killing of stray dogs.
- the government amended the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act with the Animal Birth Control Rules 2001
- In 2015, both the Kerala High Court and Bombay High Court passed orders to reduce the stray dog population by killing strays as humanely as possible. Both orders faced significant backlash.
- In November 2015, the Supreme Court asked all states and union territories to follow central rules, which ban killing stray dogs in India.
- In 2014, the New Delhi Municipal Corporation (NDMC) announced training strays to work with police as guard dogs.
- The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) issued a call for a public debate on street dogs in India.

#### **6) What should be done in the future?**

- There are better ways to deal with India’s rabies epidemic than mass killings of stray dogs.
- many animal welfare organizations believe that the spay-and-neuter model — where both male and female dogs are taken from the street, sterilized, vaccinated, and returned to their original area — can be successful

- Since sterilized dogs are returned to their original area, dogs will not migrate to and fight over that territory.
- Sterilized females cannot breed, which decreases their aggressiveness.
- Organizations push for increased adoption, which is far less popular in India than in parts of the United States.
- Greece's collective adoption, where communities and the Greek government collectively care for and treat local dogs.
- A key part of government's work will be changing the public's idea of stray dogs in India.
- promoting the adoption of stray dogs and ensuring that people do not support mass killings
- National campaigns by the government can help create this systemic change in the public's mindset.
- Thus, a multi-pronged approach that addresses these multiple factors is required, and not one that focuses narrowly on managing dog populations.
- **effective public health programme to tackle dog bites and rabies will have to include**
  - a) proper waste management underpinned by appropriate infrastructure
  - b) public education and behaviour change with regard to live safely with free-living dogs and what to do when bitten
  - c) systematic and carefully-designed neutering and vaccination programmes
  - d) Adequate facilities for post-exposure prophylaxis and treatment.
- We need to call for holistic town planning. We have to plan for dog walking paths