



**DOG DESK
ANIMAL ACTION**

Global Stray Dog
Crisis Map Project

INDIA: STREET DOG POLICY AT A CROSSROADS

**Sterilisation, Vaccination,
Confinement And
The Question Of
What Happens Next**



Examining India's legal framework, court directives, local responses and the growing need for accountability and traceability.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: STREET DOG MANAGEMENT IN INDIA

A SYSTEM IN TRANSITION

India has an established legal framework for managing free-roaming dogs through sterilisation and anti-rabies vaccination. The Animal Birth Control Rules 2023 place responsibility for dog population management largely on local authorities and provide the framework through which street dogs are captured, sterilised, vaccinated and, ordinarily, returned to the area from which they were collected.

During 2025 and 2026, however, the legal and operational landscape changed significantly.

The Supreme Court has increasingly intervened in the management of street dogs following concerns about dog bites, rabies and the presence of dogs in sensitive public locations. In May 2026, the Court upheld directions requiring dogs to be removed from specified institutional premises including schools, hospitals, sports complexes, bus depots and railway stations and not returned to those locations.

At the same time, the Court has reinforced the wider Animal Birth Control framework and directed States and Union Territories to establish at least one functioning ABC centre in every district and expand sterilisation and vaccination capacity.

Across India, very different responses are now emerging.

Maharashtra has been told by the Bombay High Court to implement sterilisation aggressively. **Delhi** is testing highly traceable neighbourhood sterilisation and vaccination camps. **Gorakhpur** is attempting to introduce individual microchipping and digital records. **Belagavi** is planning permanent sterilisation centres. **Kapurthala** is developing new ABC capacity.

Mumbai, however, is considering a very different response: agencies could be paid to keep some removed dogs for the remainder of their lives.

India therefore faces an increasingly important question.



Can a national system designed around population management, vaccination and return absorb a growing requirement for removal and confinement without creating a second, largely unseen population of dogs in shelters and pounds?

KEY FINDINGS



THE ABC FRAMEWORK REMAINS CENTRAL

Sterilisation and anti-rabies vaccination remain the principal national tools for street-dog population management.



THE SUPREME COURT HAS CREATED EXCEPTIONS TO RETURN

Dogs removed from specified institutional premises are not to be returned to those locations.



HIGH COURTS ARE NOW MONITORING IMPLEMENTATION

The Supreme Court has instructed High Courts across India to oversee compliance within their jurisdictions.



LOCAL RESPONSES DIFFER SHARPLY

Some authorities are expanding sterilisation and traceability while others are planning shelter-based lifetime care.



TRACEABILITY IS BECOMING CRITICAL

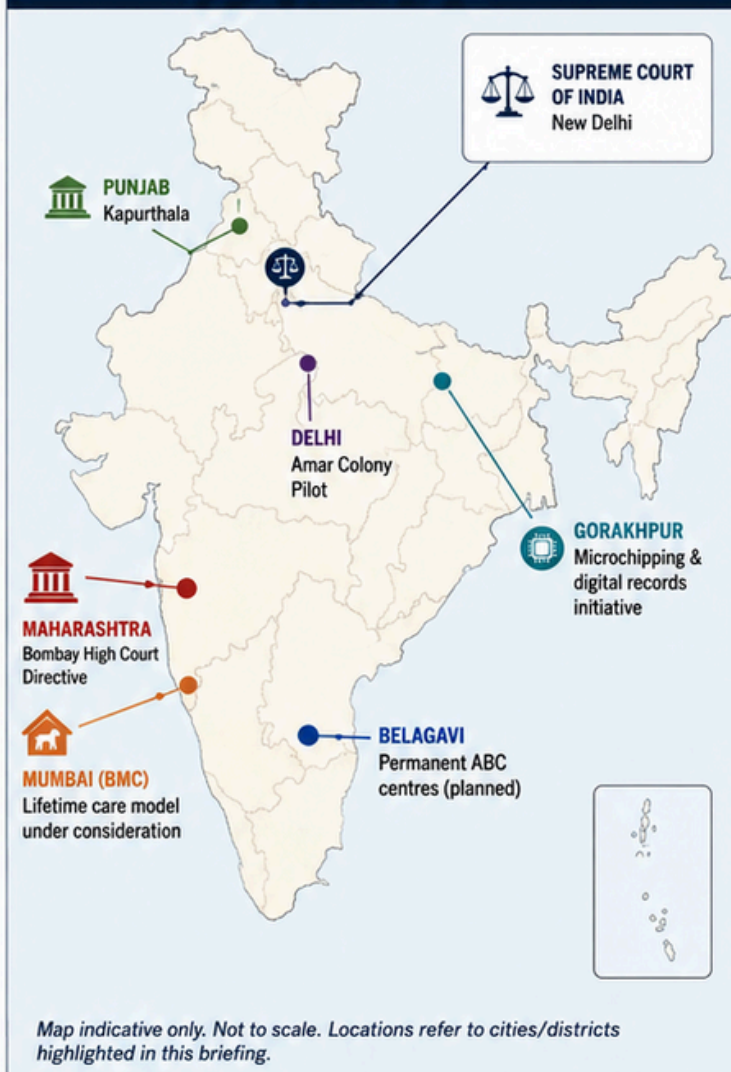
Once dogs are removed rather than returned, knowing where each animal goes and what eventually happens to them becomes essential.



CAPACITY MAY BECOME THE NEXT PRESSURE POINT

Large-scale confinement requires land, veterinary provision, staffing, disease control, welfare monitoring and funding for animals that may remain in care for many years.

REGIONAL OVERVIEW & MAP



MAP LEGEND



Supreme Court of India – national directives



High Court directive (Maharashtra)



Pilot / Localised ABC programme (Delhi)



Microchipping & digital records initiative (Gorakhpur)



Planned ABC infrastructure (Belagavi)



New ABC capacity development (Kapurthala)



Lifetime care model under consideration (Mumbai)

ABC = Animal Birth Control (Sterilisation & Anti-rabies Vaccination)

THE LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

FROM ABC TO A DUAL SYSTEM

10 MARCH
2023



ANIMAL BIRTH CONTROL RULES 2023

The Central Government introduced the Animal Birth Control Rules 2023 under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1960.

The Rules provide the national framework for sterilisation and vaccination programmes and place responsibility for street-dog population management on local authorities.

Under the standard ABC model, dogs are captured, sterilised, vaccinated and normally returned to the locality from which they were collected.

The Government of India has repeatedly described intensive implementation of ABC programmes as the rational and scientific means of controlling street-dog populations and reducing rabies risk.

11 AUGUST
2025



SUPREME COURT INTERVENTION

Initial Supreme Court directions concerning the National Capital Region called for large-scale collection of street dogs and their placement in shelters.

Those directions generated significant concern because they conflicted with the normal return provisions of the ABC Rules.

A larger Supreme Court bench subsequently modified the position.

Sterilised and vaccinated dogs were again to be returned to their original areas, except dogs suspected of rabies or displaying specified aggressive behaviour.

7 NOVEMBER
2025



INSTITUTIONAL AREAS

The Supreme Court created a significant exception.

Dogs found inside specified institutional premises – including educational institutions, hospitals, sports complexes, bus depots and railway stations – were to be removed, sterilised and vaccinated but **not returned to those same locations**.

19 MAY
2026



SUPREME COURT UPHOLDS THE SYSTEM

The Supreme Court rejected attempts to overturn the institutional-removal directions.

The Court found that the ABC Rules do not create an absolute right for street dogs to remain or be reintroduced into sensitive or restricted premises.

At the same time, it strongly reinforced the wider ABC framework and called for expanded sterilisation and vaccination capacity throughout India.

States and Union Territories were directed to work towards **at least one fully functioning ABC centre in every district**, with additional capacity where population and geography require it.

MAY 2026
ONWARDS



HIGH COURTS BECOME MONITORS

The Supreme Court directed High Courts across India to initiate suo motu proceedings to monitor implementation and compliance with its directions.

Street-dog management has therefore moved from being primarily a municipal responsibility into an increasingly court-supervised national programme.

THE SHIFT EXPLAINED

India's street-dog policy has moved from a single system of catch–sterilise–vaccinate–return to a dual system.

The standard ABC model continues to apply in most public spaces.

However, for specified institutional premises, the Supreme Court has created an exception: dogs are removed and not returned to those locations.

This change brings new responsibilities for long-term care, capacity, funding and traceability.

THE STANDARD ABC MODEL



CAPTURE

Street dog is humanely captured.



STERILISE

Dog is sterilised.



VACCINATE

Dog is vaccinated against rabies.



RETURN

Dog is returned to the area from which it was collected.

THE DUAL SYSTEM EMERGING IN INDIA



CAPTURE

Street dog is humanely captured.



STERILISE & VACCINATE

Dog is sterilised and vaccinated.



NOT RETURNED

If from specified institutional premises, dog is not returned to that location.



CARE / CONFINEMENT

Dog is transferred to a shelter, pound or authorised facility for long-term care.



The effectiveness and humanity of India's street-dog policy will depend on implementation, monitoring, transparency and accountability at every stage.

INDIA'S EMERGING RESPONSES

ONE NATIONAL FRAMEWORK. VERY DIFFERENT LOCAL MODELS.

Across India, states and cities are responding to court directions and public concerns in different ways. These examples show how the same legal framework is being interpreted and implemented through very different local approaches.



India's strength lies in innovation at the local level. The challenge is ensuring that every model delivers humane outcomes and remains accountable.

MAHARASHTRA



AGGRESSIVE STERILISATION

On 14 August 2026, the Bombay High Court told the Maharashtra Government to implement the Animal Birth Control programme aggressively.

The Court focused on controlling reproduction rather than repeatedly responding to an expanding dog population.

It also indicated that the matter would be reviewed regularly and that the State should provide continuing data to the Court.



KEY FACTS



14 August 2026



Bombay High Court



Focus: Control reproduction, not just respond to population increase



State to provide regular data to Court

DELHI



TRACEABLE NEIGHBOURHOOD ABC

The Delhi High Court directed municipal authorities to test ward-level sterilisation and vaccination camps.

Amar Colony was selected for an MCD pilot.

Dogs are documented before removal, receipts issued recording the dogs taken, sterilisation and vaccination completed and the dogs returned to the same locality through recognised local representatives.

The model creates a visible chain:



KEY FACTS



Amar Colony pilot



MCD initiative



Documentation & receipts at every step



Dogs returned to same locality



Involves recognised local representatives

GORAKHPUR



MICROCHIPPING AND DIGITAL RECORDS

Gorakhpur Municipal Corporation has been attempting to procure a system for microchipping approximately 5,000 aggressive or abandoned dogs. Each microchip would provide a unique identification linked to records including sterilisation status, anti-rabies vaccination, health condition and behavioural history.

The initiative could provide something frequently missing from street-dog management: **an individual record that follows the dog.**



KEY FACTS



~5,000 dogs targeted



Linked digital records



Health & behaviour information



Permanent identity for each dog

BELAGAVI



PERMANENT ABC INFRASTRUCTURE

Belagavi City Corporation has identified two locations for permanent sterilisation centres. Officials estimate that the city has approximately 20,000 street dogs.

Current sterilisation capacity has reportedly been only around eight to ten dogs per day, with the proposed facilities intended to increase this to more than twenty.

The disparity illustrates one of India's fundamental problems:

building an ABC centre is not the same as reaching sufficient population coverage.



KEY FACTS



~20,000 street dogs (estimated)



Current capacity: 8–10 dogs per day



Proposed capacity: 20+ dogs per day



Two locations identified for permanent centres

KAPURTHALA



BUILDING CAPACITY FROM A LOW BASE

Kapurthala district has begun work towards establishing an Animal Birth Control centre after reported deficiencies in local sterilisation provision.

A municipal tender has also been issued for ABC, anti-rabies vaccination and deworming work under the 2023 Rules.



KEY FACTS



ABC centre in establishment



Tender issued for ABC, vaccination & deworming



Under Animal Birth Control Rules 2023



ONE NATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK. MANY LOCAL PATHS.
Consistency in principles. Accountability in outcomes.



HUMANE IMPLEMENTATION



TRANSPARENCY & TRACEABILITY



PUBLIC SAFETY & COEXISTENCE

THE CONFINEMENT PROBLEM

REMOVAL WITHOUT TRACEABILITY CREATES A BLACK HOLE

When dogs are removed from institutions, schools, hospitals, sports complexes, bus depots and railway stations, they are not returned to those locations.

The Supreme Court has confirmed that these dogs may be sterilised and vaccinated but **do not return**.

That raises a critical question: **where do they go next?**

Some are placed in long-term shelters or pounds.

Some are transferred to facilities run by NGOs or private agencies.

Some are moved to unreported locations.

At present, there is no national requirement for individual traceability of these dogs once they leave their location of collection.

Without individual records, the system can create a black hole: dogs enter the system but their outcomes cannot be verified.



Every dog removed from public view deserves a known and accountable outcome.

WHERE DOES THE DOG GO NEXT?



- Long-term shelter?
- Pound?
- NGO facility?
- Transferred elsewhere?
- Adopted?
- Still alive?
- Deceased?
- Euthanised?

**WITHOUT TRACEABILITY,
THERE IS NO ACCOUNTABILITY.**

THE SUPREME COURT'S COMPLIANCE FRAMEWORK DOES INCLUDE REPORTING REQUIREMENTS



In May 2026, the Supreme Court directed States and Union Territories to provide statistics on:

- ✓ Removal and relocation of dogs
- ✓ Catch–sterilise–vaccinate–return numbers
- ✓ Institutional removals and inspections
- ✓ Adoption and shelter placements
- ✓ Monitoring mechanisms and outcomes

These requirements are important first steps. However, they capture aggregate numbers, not the individual journey and final outcome of each dog.

THE RISK OF A BLACK HOLE



- Overcrowded and unsafe facilities
- Unreported transfers
- Hidden mortality
- Unlawful euthanasia
- Loss of public trust

THE AGGREGATION PROBLEM



AGGREGATE STATISTICS CAN HIDE WHAT MATTERS

Total numbers of dogs removed or sheltered do not show what happened to each individual dog.



NO INDIVIDUAL RECORD = NO VERIFIABLE OUTCOME

Without individual traceability, claims about care, adoption or mortality cannot be checked.



RISK TO WELFARE AND PUBLIC TRUST

Lack of transparency undermines welfare standards, invites poor practice and erodes public confidence.

**WHAT IS NOT RECORDED, CANNOT BE ACCOUNTED FOR.
WHAT CANNOT BE ACCOUNTED FOR, CANNOT BE TRUSTED.**

WHAT NEEDS TO HAPPEN NEXT



Every dog removed should receive a unique identity (microchip or secure ID).



Each stage of the dog's journey must be recorded and linked.



Destinations must be officially recorded and facilities must be traceable.



Outcomes must be reported: alive in care, adopted, transferred, deceased or euthanised.

TRACEABILITY TURNS SYSTEMS INTO PROTECTION.



If we cannot follow each dog from collection to final outcome, we cannot claim the system is humane, effective or lawful.

**TRACEABILITY IS NOT OPTIONAL.
IT IS THE FOUNDATION OF ACCOUNTABILITY.**

MUMBAI: THE LIFETIME CARE MODEL

A POLICY THAT DESERVES CLOSE SCRUTINY

Mumbai illustrates how significantly the new system could develop.

Following the Supreme Court directions concerning institutional locations, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation has been looking for land for additional dog shelters, including sites outside Mumbai.

Officials have also indicated that outside agencies could be engaged to house removed dogs.

Under the proposal reported in August 2026, agencies taking responsibility for these dogs could receive payments according to municipal norms **for the lifetime of each dog** while the animal remains in their care.

The scale involved is significant.

MUMBAI AT A GLANCE



90,757

ESTIMATED STREET-DOG
POPULATION (2024 SURVEY)



~37,000

DOGS STERILISED
OVER ~18 MONTHS



100,000+

ANTI-RABIES VACCINATIONS
ADMINISTERED BY 2026

The city is therefore operating a substantial ABC programme while simultaneously exploring long-term shelter capacity.

Lifetime-care funding may provide a humane alternative where individual dogs genuinely cannot be returned.

But it also changes the incentives and risks surrounding the system.

When payment continues for as long as an animal remains confined, independent verification becomes particularly important.

Authorities need to know not merely that a dog was collected, but that the dog remains where records say it is, that appropriate welfare standards are being maintained and that deaths, transfers and euthanasia are accurately recorded.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR DOGS



A dog removed from a school, hospital or station has not disappeared – the dog's life continues elsewhere.



Long-term care must be humane, transparent and traceable for every dog in the system.

EXPLORING LONG-TERM SHELTER CAPACITY



Sites are being identified, including locations outside Mumbai, to accommodate dogs that cannot be returned to institutional areas.

THE PROPOSAL



Agencies taking responsibility for removed dogs could receive payments according to municipal norms for the **lifetime of each dog while the animal remains in their care.**



Lifetime funding changes the nature of the system. It creates long-term financial commitments – and long-term responsibilities.

KEY IMPLICATIONS



Independent verification is essential.
Records must be accurate, transparent and open to inspection.



Welfare standards must be maintained.
Food, water, shelter, veterinary care, exercise and behavioural support are non-negotiable.



Outcomes must be recorded.
Deaths, transfers, adoptions and euthanasia must be documented with reasons.



Public money requires public accountability.
Oversight, audits and regular reporting are essential safeguards.

LIFETIME FUNDING REQUIRES LIFETIME TRACEABILITY.



Without it, removal can become an administrative outcome rather than an animal-welfare outcome.

TRACEABILITY MAY BE INDIA'S MOST IMPORTANT NEXT STEP

COUNTING COLLECTIONS IS NOT ENOUGH

As India's street-dog system becomes more complicated, individual traceability becomes increasingly valuable.

Delhi's Amar Colony pilot provides one approach. Dogs are documented when collected, a record is created and their return after sterilisation and vaccination is accounted for.

Gorakhpur is exploring another. A microchip could connect an individual dog permanently to vaccination, sterilisation, medical and behavioural information.

Together these approaches point towards something broader.



India has the opportunity to move from counting procedures to **TRACKING ANIMALS THROUGH THE SYSTEM.**

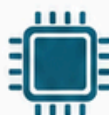
TWO INNOVATIVE LOCAL APPROACHES



DELHI: AMAR COLONY PILOT

- Dogs documented before collection
- Receipt issued recording dogs taken
- Sterilisation and vaccination completed
- Dogs returned to the same locality through recognised local representatives

A visible chain. Every step recorded.



GORAKHPUR: MICROCHIPPING INITIATIVE

- Microchip for ~5,000 aggressive or abandoned dogs
- Unique identification for each dog
- Linked to records on health, vaccination, sterilisation and behaviour

An individual record that follows the dog.

A ROBUST RECORD COULD INCLUDE

- 1** **UNIQUE DOG IDENTIFICATION**
Permanent ID (e.g., microchip number)
- 2** **DATE AND LOCATION OF COLLECTION**
When and where the dog was collected
- 3** **PHOTOGRAPH OR PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION**
Visual record and key physical details
- 4** **STERILISATION RECORD**
Date, type of surgery, facility
- 5** **ANTI-RABIES VACCINATION RECORD**
Date, vaccine batch, validity
- 6** **MEDICAL TREATMENT**
Illness, injuries, prescriptions, follow-up
- 7** **DATE AND LOCATION OF RETURN**
Where and when the dog was released

OR, WHERE THE DOG IS NOT RETURNED

- 8** **RECEIVING FACILITY**
Name and address of facility or organisation
- 9** **TRANSFER HISTORY**
All transfers with dates and reasons
- 10** **ADOPTION**
Date of adoption and adopter details (where applicable)
- 11** **CURRENT STATUS**
In care / adopted / transferred / deceased
- 12** **DATE AND CAUSE OF DEATH**
Veterinary confirmation and cause
- 13** **EUTHANASIA AND VETERINARY JUSTIFICATION**
If euthanised: veterinary reason, assessment and date

THE CHAIN THAT MATTERS



- COLLECTION**
Dog is safely collected and recorded
- IDENTITY**
Unique ID created / verified
- TREATMENT**
Sterilised, vaccinated, treated
- DESTINATION**
Returned or placed in care
- OUTCOME**
Status tracked to final outcome

WHY THIS IS ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT FOR LONG-TERM CARE



When dogs enter shelters or facilities for prolonged or lifetime care, knowing their journey and outcome is essential for welfare, planning and accountability.

Transparency protects dogs and builds public trust.

TRACEABILITY IS MORE THAN A TOOL – IT IS A SYSTEM



MICROCHIPS ALONE
will not provide accountability.



DATABASES ALONE
will not provide accountability.



SHELTER REGISTERS ALONE
will not provide accountability.



The important element is the chain connecting them.



India is increasingly collecting dogs under court-backed policies.



The next question must be whether every one of those dogs can still be accounted for afterwards.

CONCLUSION

India is not abandoning Animal Birth Control.

The current legal direction is more complicated.

The Supreme Court has reinforced sterilisation and vaccination as the foundation of street-dog population management while simultaneously creating circumstances in which some dogs must be removed permanently from particular locations.

High Courts are now overseeing implementation. Municipalities are expanding ABC infrastructure. New models involving local sterilisation camps, digital databases and microchipping are emerging.

At the same time, long-term sheltering is becoming a more significant part of the discussion.

That creates both an **opportunity** and a **risk**.



India could develop one of the world's most traceable large-scale street-dog management systems, connecting sterilisation, vaccination, population monitoring and individual records.



Or dogs could increasingly disappear from public spaces into facilities for which capacity, mortality and long-term outcomes remain difficult to scrutinise.

The difference will depend on **what India chooses to measure**.

“ The measure of a street-dog policy is not how many dogs disappear from view. It is whether fewer dogs are born into danger, fewer people are exposed to rabies and every dog entering the system can still be accounted for. ”



**POLICY TODAY. ACCOUNTABILITY TOMORROW.
A BETTER FUTURE FOR INDIA'S DOGS.**

DOG DESK ANIMAL ACTION CALLS FOR:

1



NATIONAL INDIVIDUAL TRACEABILITY STANDARDS

Every dog entering an ABC, removal or shelter programme should receive a unique record that allows the animal to be followed from collection to final outcome.

2



PUBLICATION OF DISTRICT-LEVEL ABC DATA

Authorities should regularly publish estimated dog populations alongside sterilisation and anti-rabies vaccination numbers so genuine coverage can be assessed.

3



FULL OUTCOME DATA FOR REMOVED DOGS

Where dogs are not returned, authorities should publish the number entering each facility together with transfers, adoptions, deaths and euthanasia.

4



INDEPENDENT MONITORING OF LONG-TERM FACILITIES

Facilities receiving dogs for prolonged or lifetime care should be subject to welfare inspections, capacity limits, veterinary oversight and independent verification.

5



TRANSPARENT LIFETIME-CARE CONTRACTS

Where public money is paid for long-term care, contracts should define welfare standards, reporting requirements, mortality disclosure, inspection rights and procedures for confirming that individual dogs remain in care.

6



ABC CAPACITY BASED ON POPULATION COVERAGE

The success of sterilisation programmes should be assessed against the size and reproductive dynamics of the local dog population rather than simply the number of surgeries completed.

7



CONTINUOUS ANTI-RABIES VACCINATION

Sterilisation and rabies control should remain linked, with vaccination coverage and repeat vaccination recorded and reported separately from sterilisation totals.

8



PROTECTION OF THE RETURN PRINCIPLE WHERE IT REMAINS LAWFUL

Removal from specifically restricted locations should not become a justification for abandoning catch-sterilise-vaccinate-return more broadly where the ABC Rules continue to provide for return.

**THE WAY
FORWARD**



Every dog
matters.



Every record
matters.



Every outcome
matters.

**BETTER DATA.
BETTER DECISIONS.
BETTER OUTCOMES
FOR DOGS AND PEOPLE.**



**DOG DESK
ANIMAL ACTION**



**GLOBAL STRAY DOG
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**EVIDENCE. ACCOUNTABILITY.
COMPASSION. CHANGE.**