

Guest column | 'Paws' for thought on community dog conflicts

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Mar 03, 2024 06:34 PM IST

Play to Win

In the context of this duty, it is disheartening to observe a rise in retaliatory actions against dogs, and those who care for them and feed them have unfortunately borne the brunt of conflicts arising from the unbridled growth of stray dog numbers.

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Article 51-A (g) of the Indian Constitution, which outlines the Fundamental Duties of Indian citizens and stresses the obligation to preserve and enrich the natural environment, encompassing forests, lakes, rivers, and wildlife, establishes a direct link to the pressing issues stemming from the uncontrolled proliferation of community dog populations.



These regulations advocate for resolving conflicts between individuals and stray dogs in a humane manner without resorting to relocating the animals. (Representational Image/HT File)

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In the context of this duty, it is disheartening to observe a rise in retaliatory actions against dogs, and those who care for them and feed them have unfortunately borne the brunt of conflicts arising from the unbridled growth of community dog numbers. Inflicting harm on dogs and their caregivers has regrettably become a prevalent and recurrent problem.

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duty to safeguard the natural environment and wildlife but also to cultivate a compassionate society that values and safeguards all living beings, including our canine companions.

Addressing these issues necessitates a collective endeavour to promote coexistence, empathy, and humane treatment of animals, in alignment with the ethos of Article 51-A (g).

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Let us understand why some dogs turn aggressive. When there are too many street dogs in a vicinity, they compete for food and space, which can make them more territorial and aggressive. Street dogs also get stressed when they are abused, mistreated, and forced to move. Sickness, hunger, and the instinct to protect their puppies can also provoke defensive or aggressive responses.

To tackle this challenge, the recently introduced Animal Birth Control (ABC) Rules 2023



heighten human-animal conflicts, as dogs are territorial creatures that move in groups. Arbitrarily relocating these animals not only violates the law but also exacerbates harm to both animals and humans, intensifying the likelihood of canine aggression and perpetuating a cycle of unforeseen events.

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The ABC Rules, 2023, outline clear protocols for sterilising and protecting community dogs through animal birth control programmes. Local groups, town councils, and other organisations bear the responsibility of ensuring the successful execution of these programmes. Collaboration with groups recognised by the Animal Welfare Board of India is essential for the success of these programmes.

These regulations advocate for resolving conflicts between individuals and community dogs in a humane manner without resorting to relocating the animals. Specific strategies are outlined to manage such conflicts without disrupting the animals' habitats. Local authorities and animal welfare organisations operating in the region are tasked with managing the community animal population and may face repercussions for non-compliance, which could lead to issues between animals and humans.

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Community engagement is integral to these efforts. The rules suggest that communities designate safe zones for feeding community dogs away from areas frequented by children and elderly individuals to ensure safety for all.

Improving waste management practices is also vital, as dogs often scavenge for food. By effectively managing waste disposal, we can deter dogs from venturing beyond their territories. Educating the public on compassion towards animals and supporting initiatives aimed at enhancing living conditions are essential steps. As responsible citizens, it is imperative not to inflict harm or intimidation upon dogs or any animals, as such actions can provoke defensive behaviours and potential aggression.

The rules also underscore existing laws protecting animals; for instance, harming or killing an animal is prohibited under IPC Sections 428 and 429. Feeding community dogs within and outside residential areas is legally safeguarded. Threatening individuals who feed dogs contravenes their fundamental duty under Article 51A(g) of the Indian Constitution.

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Guidelines provided by the Animal Welfare Board of India, bolstered by judicial decisions, safeguard feeders and caretakers. The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act (PCA), 1960, along with relevant rules such as the Animal Birth Control (Dogs) Rules, 2023, shield community dogs from harm and promote their well-being.

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Animal Birth Control Rules of 2023 represent a significant stride towards ensuring harmonious coexistence between dogs and people. By collaborating within our communities, let us strive to create a harmonious environment characterized by compassion towards all living beings.


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Individuals, caregivers, and organisations advocating for the welfare of street animals are encouraged to utilize the services provided by nearby Animal Birth Control centers. These facilities offer surgical procedures and postoperative care at no cost. In the Tri-city region, citizens have access to the Raipur Kalan center, spanning 2.50 acres with 400 kennels for this purpose. Additionally, the ABC cCntr in Sector 38, Chandigarh, stands ready to assist in these efforts.

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(The author manages retail campaigns at the India Animal Fund (IAF). Views expressed are personal.)

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