

News

The Supreme Court amends the August 11 ruling, directing the release of stray dogs following vaccination, designating feeding areas, and creating national policy.



The Court ordered dog lovers and non-governmental organizations to pay Rs 25,000 and Rs 2 lakh, respectively, for public infrastructure, noting that animal welfare was a component of Indian jurisprudence but that it needed to be balanced with public safety.

The Supreme Court amends the August 11 order, which mandates that stray dogs be released following vaccination, designates feeding areas, and creates national policy guidelines regarding stray dogs. It makes clear that captured dogs must be sterilised,

dewormed, and vaccinated before being returned to the same areas from which they were collected, with the exception of those who are exhibiting aggressive behaviour, have rabies, or are suspected of having the disease. The Court also signaled the need for a unified national policy on stray dog management by outlawing the public feeding of stray dogs on the streets and requiring the establishment of special feeding locations.

Public safety is crucial, but the problem calls for a "holistic approach" that strikes a balance between human interests and animal care, according to a three-judge bench made up of Justices Vikram Nath, Sandeep Mehta, and N.V. Anjaria. Justices J.B. Pardiwala and R. Mahadevan's August 11 ruling, which mandated that all stray dogs rescued in Delhi-NCR be kept in shelters permanently rather than being put out on the streets, was overturned.

The Court broadened the issue's focus to include all of India, ruling that local governments nationwide must make sure that only vaccinated and sterile canines are brought back to their original locations. Animals that are severely violent or rabies may be housed in shelters or placed under quarantine. The Bench ordered that **"dogs that are picked up shall be sterilised, dewormed, vaccinated, and released back to the same area."**

This is a major change from the August 11 order that prohibited releasing stray dogs in any situation. The Court emphasized that in order to comply with the Animal Birth Control (Dogs) Rules and to develop a workable framework for cohabitation, the previous order had to be modified.

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The Bench further mandated that, in consideration of the dog population, each municipal body provide specific feeding areas for stray dogs in each ward. It must be made very clear on notice boards that only in these locations is feeding permitted. It will not be allowed to feed on streets or public roads.

Helplines must be established for reporting infractions, the order stated, adding that **"anyone found feeding dogs in violation of this direction shall be liable to action under the relevant framework."**

The Bench urged other States, Union Territories, Secretaries of Animal Husbandry departments, and municipal corporations to adhere to the ABC Rules, extending the dispute beyond Delhi-NCR. Additionally, it stated that any comparable cases that were still ongoing in High Courts would be moved to the Supreme Court, opening the door for the creation of a

thorough national stray dog policy.

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There will be a judgment: Numerous stories may find closure as a result of the SC Special Bench's stray dog ruling.

The creation of shelters and dog pounds with sufficient space, personnel, CCTV surveillance, and medical amenities was requested of municipal agencies. According to the Animal Welfare Board's 2022 protocol, the Court ordered that adoption be promoted, overcrowding be prevented, and vulnerable canines be kept apart.

The Court also mandated financial contributions from the parties and organizations involved in the case. To fund the development of infrastructure for the management of stray dogs, each petitioner must deposit Rs 25,000 and each NGO Rs 2 lakh with the court registry.

Additionally, anyone who want to adopt dogs can apply to the local government. Adopted pets must be permanently cared for, labeled, and prohibited from returning to public areas.

After the Court took notice of a news article captioned "City hounded by strays and kids pay price" on July 28, the suo motu proceedings got underway. On August 11, Delhi-NCR was directed by Justices Pardiwala and Mahadevan to remove stray dogs from the area within eight weeks, place them in shelters, and make sure none were returned.

The Bench stated in its comprehensive ruling that although Indian law requires sympathy for animals, citizens' safety, especially that of children, the elderly, and those who are blind or visually handicapped, cannot be jeopardized.

Animal rights organizations widely protested the decree, and there were worries that it would break with previous Supreme Court decisions that prioritized sterilization and compassion above removal.

Attorneys brought the conflicting decisions to Chief Justice **B.R. Gavai's** attention on August 13, and he quickly formed a special three-judge bench. The Bench issued the updated instructions following a hearing on August 14 and reserved order.

The Bench stated in its comprehensive ruling that although Indian law requires sympathy for animals, citizens' safety, especially that of children, the elderly, and those who are blind or

visually handicapped, cannot be jeopardized. It further emphasized how important coexistence is to both international animal welfare standards and constitutional ideals.

Additionally, the Court reaffirmed that it would be considered contempt to obstruct municipal authorities during dog-catching operations. It said that **"no person or organization shall obstruct the effective execution of these directives."**

The directives demonstrate the Court's goal to develop a national regulatory framework that strikes a balance between animal rights and public safety. The Court has tried to reconcile divergent legal viewpoints and advance a consistent policy by expanding the case throughout India, outlawing public feeding, requiring demarcated areas, and insisting on sterilisation-and-release rather than permanent refuge.

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