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Ensure safety of stray canines, dog lovers: HC to govt, police

UTKARSHANAND

NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 18

UPHOLDING the right of dog lovers and animal rights activists to get protection from intimidating neighbours, the Delhi High Court on Friday asked the Delhi government and police to locate sites in 11 police station areas where stray dogs could be fed without any hassles.

Justice V.K. Jain said feeding dogs is both lawful and helpful and assists the municipal animal birth control programme in which dogs are sterilised and vaccinated area-wise.

"Feeding dogs makes them friendly and easier to handle," the court held. "Citizens are free to feed dogs in areas to be mutually decided by the Animal Welfare Board of India and the feeder."

As per the court's directive, station house officers of 11 police stations — including Defence Colony, Vasant Kunj, Saket, Mehrauli, Geeta Colony, Kalkaji and Kamala Nagar — are required within two weeks to zero in on some sites in their localities where animal lovers could feed the strays without hindrance from abusive neighbours.

Delhi government's counsel Meera Bhatia told the court that the department would do the needful in coordination with the Animal Welfare Board at the earliest and let the court know about the developments in the next report.

In August, the court had received seven petitions, including the main petition filed by the NGO 'Citizens for the Welfare and Protection of Animals', that complained of "repeated and continuous intimidation, abuse and threats, physical assault by residents of locality with an intention to



Earlier HC order, laws for protection of stray animals

In its judgment in the Maneka Gandhi vs MCD/NDMC case in 1992, the High Court had held that street dogs were a part of the city and just being classified as strays did not mean they should be killed. The court had accepted that sterilisation and vaccination of dogs was the only scientific and humane solution of the so-called problem of street dogs.

☛ Harming, killing or subjecting any animal to pain and suffering is an offence under Section 11 of Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, and Sections 428 and 429 of the IPC. Punishment for these crimes includes a fine and imprisonment of up to five years, or both.

protects their "life and limb," the petitioners had also accused the police of "apathy" in acting on their complaints of harassment.

While the police had earlier claimed that they could do little, as it was essentially the civic body's (MCD) job, the petitioners had cited the Stray Animal Control Rules (Dogs), 2001, meant to protect street dogs from cruelty.

There are around 5 lakh stray dogs in Delhi, and MCD, in coordination with various NGOs, sterilises these stray canines.

Jasmine Damkewala, an advocate and a petitioner in the case, welcomed the verdict. Damkewala said the order meant protection for those

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You can pet a stray dog and feed it too

DOGGED SUIT Court orders creation of designated areas in all colonies for feeding and tending to stray dogs

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NEW DELHI: It's great news not only for the capital's stray canines but also for those who care for them. Till now, dog lovers were threatened and even beaten up by locals when they moved around feeding and sterilising the strays.

The Delhi High Court on Friday ordered creation of designated areas in all colonies of the capital for feeding and tending to stray dogs. There, the animal lovers will be provided protection, if they require it.

Justice VK Jain was hearing petitions seeking protection by animal welfare NGOs and dog lovers from Vasant Kunj, Defence Colony, Kalkaji, Neb Sarai, Saket, Geeta Colony and Nangloi.

These activists work with the MCD to sterilise stray canines, to control their population. As per the latest MCD survey, there are some 2.6 lakh stray canines in Delhi. Their density is nearly five per km and the sex ratio is 51:49 (1,34,000 male to 1,28,000 female dogs). However, only about half of them have been sterilised.

The activists contended before the court that feeding of dogs forms a necessary part of rabies control. "It is necessary

BITE THIS

2.6 lakh

The number of stray dogs in the city

5

Average number of stray dogs per sq km of area

50%

Ratio of sterilised dogs in Delhi

WHAT THE COURT HAS ORDERED

• Designated space for feeding stray dogs in seven colonies

• Model to be replicated across Delhi later
• Protection for dog lovers



• Activists say befriending stray dogs is a rabies control measure.

to confine dogs to their territories by befriending and partially domesticating through feeding them", said Sonia Ghosh, founder of the non-government organisation Citizens for Welfare and Protection of Animals.

Ghosh said the locals in various areas saw it as a nuisance and attacked them. Complaints

to the police often fell on deaf ears.

The court said, initially, the areas would be marked in the petitioners' colonies, and later replicated in other colonies.

Delhi Police counsel Meera Bhatia told the court, "We will ensure that there is no law and order problem in a particular area during the dog feeding."

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Earmark area for feeding strays: HC

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Adopting an innovative approach to the proliferation of stray dogs and threat of rabies, the Delhi High Court on Friday came up with the idea of earmarking an area in each locality where people could feed those animals as that would in turn make it easier



CANINE CARE

for authorities to monitor their sterilization and vaccination.

On petitions filed by stray dog feeders from 10 localities, Justice V K Jain directed the Animal Welfare Board to identify such areas in those localities with MCD's within four weeks and report the same to the court in a week thereafter.

Since the provocation for the petitions was the harassment of stray dog feeders by other residents, Justice Jain made it clear that the feeding of those animals was both lawful and helpful.

This is because the Animal Welfare Board had agreed be-

fore the court that earmarking of areas for feeding stray dogs would not only avoid inconvenience to residents but also help implement the Municipal Animal Birth Control Programme which required all dogs to be sterilized and vaccinated locality-wise.

The counsel for Animal Welfare Board, Anjali Sharma, had commended stray dog feeders as their compassionate activity was a big help to the authorities in combating rabies. The message that came out from the case was that the threat of rabies would aggravate if the stray dogs were not befriended and partially domesticated.

The rationale behind the high court order is that if stray dogs in each locality get accustomed to gathering at one spot for food, it would help the authorities check their proliferation and the spread of rabies.

Justice Jain reiterated his earlier direction that none of the stray dog feeders who had moved the court, including a teacher, lawyer and doctor, should be subjected to any kind of harassment by other residents and the respective resident welfare associations.

In one particularly shocking incident, which took place ironically on October 2, advocate Jasmine Damkewala was assaulted and her car smashed by residents for feeding stray dogs in her neighbourhood.

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