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

UTKARSHANAND

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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