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Sacred but Stray: Balancing Cow Welfare and Public Safety- Bridging Legal Gaps in Stray Bovine Management in Rajasthan

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In Rajasthan, the cow is more than just an animal; it is a sacred symbol of motherhood, faith, and cultural identity. Yet, the state today faces a striking paradox: while cows are worshipped as Gau Mata, many are left abandoned on streets, where they battle hunger, plastic-filled garbage, and speeding traffic. This not only causes immense animal suffering but also creates serious public hazards, from road accidents and crop damage to sanitation and health risks. Despite a strong legal framework, ranging from constitutional duties to state welfare commissions, the gap lies in weak enforcement, a lack of owner accountability, and poor infrastructure. This paper explores these contradictions, tracing how reverence often fails to translate into responsibility. Drawing lessons from states like Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh, which have turned stray cattle care into sustainable community-driven models, it argues that Rajasthan must move beyond ritual respect to practical reform. Recommendations include strict liability for owners, digital tracking of cattle, biogas and dung-based economies, mobile veterinary units, and highway shelters. Only by combining compassion with accountability, and tradition with innovation, can Rajasthan protect its cows while also ensuring public safety, transforming a cultural duty into a model of humane governance.

Keywords: cow welfare, stray cattle crisis, public safety, enforcement gaps, animal law.

INTRODUCTION

In Rajasthan, cows are highly valued as both cultural and religious icons and representations of the local identity and agrarian community, in addition to being considered sacred creatures in Hinduism. Their spiritual function is emphasised by temples, festivals, and daily rituals; for many communities, protecting cows is seen as a moral obligation. Despite this respect, Rajasthan is dealing with an increasing problem: the increase in stray cows in both urban and rural areas. Throughout the state, stray cattle cause traffic jams, accidents, and health and sanitation issues.¹

The objectives of this study are to explore the growing number of stray cattle in Rajasthan, evaluate the effectiveness of current legal measures, look at urgent welfare concerns, evaluate the threats to public safety, and provide remedies to close gaps in legislation and enforcement.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What legal provisions currently exist for cow protection and stray cattle management in Rajasthan?
2. Where are the enforcement gaps in current laws and administrative practice?
3. How can laws be strengthened to balance cow welfare and public safety?

COW AS A SACRED ANIMAL IN INDIA

The cow is revered in India as a sacred symbol of life and respect, and its significance is firmly ingrained in the country's social, cultural, and spiritual fabric.² The cow is a symbol of divinity and purity in Hinduism, and it is often connected to gods like Lord Krishna, who is often referred to as “Govinda,” or cow guardian.³ Beyond Hindu customs, compassion and non-violence toward all living things are also valued in Jainism, Buddhism, and Sikhism. As a result, cows and other

¹ Rahul Ghai, ‘Understanding ‘culture’ of pastoralism and ‘modern development’ in Thar: Muslim pastoralists of north-west Rajasthan, India’ (2021) 11 *Pastoralism* <<https://doi.org/10.1186/s13570-020-00190-1>> accessed 06 August 2025

² Bibhudatta Dash et al., ‘Animals in Hinduism: Exploring Communication Beyond the Human Realm in Sacred Texts and Practices’ (2024) 7(3) *Journal of Dharma Studies* <<https://doi.org/10.1007/s42240-024-00181-0>> accessed 06 August 2025

³ Yamini Narayanan, ‘Animal ethics and Hinduism’s milking, mothering legends: analysing Krishna the butter thief and the Ocean of Milk’ (2018) 57 *Sophia* <<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11841-018-0647-8>> accessed 06 August 2025

bovine animals are unrivalled in India in terms of their religious holiness, cultural identity, and moral obligation; as such, their protection is both a legal and a spiritual requirement.⁴

CURRENT LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Central Laws –

Constitution of India (Directive Principles & Fundamental Duties): Cattle protection and welfare are explicitly emphasised in the Indian Constitution through the Fundamental Duties of Citizens and the Directive Principles of State Policy. According to Article 48⁵, the State must forbid the killing of cows and calves, restructure animal husbandry following scientific principles, and take action to preserve and enhance cattle breeds. Cattle are acknowledged in this clause as both a living legacy of India’s rural culture and as an economic resource. In addition, Article 51A(g)⁶ requires all citizens to protect the environment, especially animals, and to have compassion for all living things. Together, these constitutional clauses create a twin responsibility: citizens are legally and morally obligated to defend the ideals of compassion, coexistence, and care for these precious animals, while the State is tasked with developing and implementing protective measures for cattle. It is clear from this constitutional framework that protecting cows in India is a constitutional imperative for both governance and civic duty, rather than only a question of religious passion.⁷

Bhartiya Nyayasanhita (BNS) 2023: According to Section 325 of the Act, willfully killing, poisoning, maiming, or rendering useless an animal is a crime that carries a maximum five-year jail sentence, a fine, or both.⁸ Among the acts covered are:

Killing: Taking the life of the animal,

Poisoning: Giving toxic substances,

⁴ Uttara Kennedy et al., ‘The Sheltering of Unwanted Cattle, Experiences in India and Implications for Cattle Industries Elsewhere’ (2018) 8(5) *Animals* <<https://doi.org/10.3390/ani8050064>> accessed 06 August 2025

⁵ Constitution of India 1950, art 48

⁶ Constitution of India 1950, art 51A(g)

⁷ Sangeeta Taak, ‘Animal protection laws in India and one right approach: an analysis’ (2023) 11(1) *Forensic Research and Criminology International Journal* <<https://medcraveonline.com/FRCIJ/animal-protection-laws-in-india-and-one-right-approach-an-analysis.html>> accessed 06 August 2025

⁸ *Bhartiya Nyaya Sanhita 2023*, s 325

Maiming: Causing permanent disability, and

Rendering Useless: Preventing the animal from functioning naturally (e.g., blinding or crippling it).

Since injured or neglected animals frequently pose a risk to public safety in urban settings, the offence is significant since it not only protects animal welfare but also advances public safety.

The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1960 (PCA Act): By placing obligations and sanctions on persons who care for animals, the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960 (PCA Act) seeks to protect animal welfare. While Section 11(1)(h) penalises owners who fail to provide adequate food, drink, or shelter, and Section 11(1)(i) penalises abandoning animals in situations that are likely to cause starvation or thirst.⁹ Section 3¹⁰ requires that everyone responsible for an animal make sure the animal is not subjected to needless pain or suffering. The Act strengthens accountability by outlining punishments for abuse and neglect, including abandonment. It also resulted in the creation of the Animal Welfare Board of India (AWBI) in 1962, which is crucial in directing Animal Welfare Organisations (AWOs), granting funds, and supervising welfare initiatives.¹¹

Transport of Animals Rules 1978:¹² Under the Rules of 1978, framed under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1960, the transport of bovine animals, such as cows, bulls, bullocks, buffaloes, and pigs, is permitted only under humane conditions that help alleviate suffering and injury. Only healthy creatures certified fit by a veterinarian can be transported, while sick, veritably youthful (below six weeks), and advanced pregnant creatures are banned. Overcrowding is rigorously confined, with specific space conditions laid down- for illustration, not further than ten adult cattle per road cart, and vehicles must have proper partitions, non-slippery gentled bottoms, and acceptable ventilation. The cornucopias of cattle are to be limited or padded to avoid injury, and they must be fed and doused before lading, with suitable arrangements made for food, water, and rest during long peregrinations. Creatures must not be

⁹ Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1960, s 11(1)(i)

¹⁰ Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1960, s 3

¹¹ Ishita Choudhary, 'Animal Rights in India: The Unheard Pleas of India's Stray Sentinels' (*Legal Service India*) <<https://www.legalserviceindia.com/legal/article-16166-animal-rights-in-india-the-unheard-pleas-of-india-s-stray-sentinels.html>> accessed 06 August 2025

¹² Transport of Animals Rules 1978

tied cruelly or beaten, and the use of rounded sticks or harsh running is interdicted¹³. These safeguards reflect the law's intent to ensure that the transport of bovines is carried out in a manner that upholds their well-being and prevents gratuitous atrocity.

KEY OVERSIGHT & WELFARE MECHANISMS

The Animal Welfare Board of India (AWBI) provides funding for animal rescue, shelter, and ambulances, monitors and assists welfare organisations, and advocates for humane behaviour.¹⁴

Rajasthan-Specific Laws –

The Act of 1995:¹⁵ It aims to protect bovine animals, including cows, calves, heifers, bulls, and bullocks, by outlawing their slaughter, as well as the export of bovines for slaughter and the possession, sale, and transportation of beef and beef products. In order to ensure efficient implementation, the Act gives authorities the authority to seize vehicles used in the unlawful transportation of bovines under provisions such as Section 6A.¹⁶ The seized animals may then be placed under arrest and given to gaushalas or authorised animal welfare organisations for treatment. Additionally, it imposes severe penalties for harming bovine animals. Section 9¹⁷ stipulates that causing hurt or bodily harm can result in up to three years of rigorous imprisonment and/or a fine, while Section 10¹⁸ stipulates that purposeful infliction of grievous injuries, such as fractures, emasculation, or organ loss, can result in one to seven years of rigorous imprisonment and fines of up to ₹7,000.

The Act of 1960,¹⁹ **along with the Rules of 1964,**²⁰ establishes, regulates, and maintains gaushalas, shelter facilities devoted to the care and protection of cows, by providing a legal framework. These regulations guarantee that Gaushalas are properly run and have access to the funds, such as grants or government funding, necessary to perform their duties. The Act aims to

¹³ *Ibid*

¹⁴ Kennedy (n 4)

¹⁵ The Rajasthan Bovine (Prohibition of Slaughter and Regulation of Temporary Migration or Export) Act 1995

¹⁶ The Rajasthan Bovine Animal (Prohibition of Slaughter and Regulation of Temporary Migration or Export) Rules 1995, s 6A

¹⁷ The Rajasthan Bovine Animal (Prohibition of Slaughter and Regulation of Temporary Migration or Export) Rules 1995, s 9

¹⁸ The Rajasthan Bovine Animal (Prohibition of Slaughter and Regulation of Temporary Migration or Export) Rules 1995, s 10

¹⁹ The Rajasthan Gaushala Act 1960

²⁰ The Rajasthan Gaushala Rules 1964

create a safe environment for stray, elderly, or abandoned bovines and advance their well-being by regulating the establishment and financing of such shelters.²¹

The Act of 1995:²² Its regulations established the Rajasthan Cow Welfare Commission (GosevaAyog), a central body responsible for supervising and coordinating a range of welfare and cow protection initiatives throughout the state. The Commission is tasked with formulating policies, overseeing gaushalas, and carrying out programs pertaining to the nutrition, health, and conservation of cows. In order to guarantee that bovine welfare programs are efficiently overseen and carried out, it serves as a liaison between the government, animal welfare groups, and local authorities.

District-level Animal Welfare Organisations: The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (PCA) Rules, 2001 mandate that each district create an “Animal Welfare Organisation” following court orders. Individual activists who have been registered by the District Magistrate may continue to operate in the meantime.²³ These organisations, once registered with the Animal Welfare Board of India (AWBI), can also intervene in prosecutions and enforcement actions.²⁴

The Act No. 5 of 1959:²⁵ The Veterinary Council legislation that governs veterinary practices and guarantees professional standards in animal healthcare, which focuses on managing and preventing the transmission of diseases among animals.

The Cattle Fair Act regulates cattle fairs to stop exploitation and illicit commerce, and laws that forbid animal sacrifice to stop animal abuse and maintain moral treatment of animals. These laws work together to provide Rajasthan with a thorough framework for protecting the welfare of cows and other animals.

JUDICIAL ORDERS & COURT MANDATES

Rajasthan High Court (2025): Issued directions for municipal bodies to conduct drives removing stray cattle and dogs from public places, with instructions to minimise animal harm

²¹ Kennedy (n 4)

²² The Rajasthan Go-Seva Ayog Act 1995

²³ *Gau Raksha Dal Seva Samiti Rajasthan v The state of Rajasthan & Ors* (2015) DB Civ WP (PIL) No 2009/2014

²⁴ Kennedy (n 4)

²⁵ The Rajasthan Animal Diseases Act 1959

and publish contact details for citizen reporting.²⁶ Directed highway authorities (NHAI and state) to patrol and keep roads clear of stray animals.²⁷

Suomoto Action (August 2025): Brought attention to the danger that stray cows and dogs bring to traffic safety, affecting municipal, transportation, and urban development organisations. The court asked if the Rajasthan Road Safety Bill, 2022, which contains measures for controlling stray animals, had been passed into law.²⁸

KEY ISSUES & FINDINGS

Problems Faced by Innocent Bovine Animals –

Despite their revered importance in Rajasthani society, stray and abandoned bovines encounter a number of difficulties. Once they stop producing milk or serving a farm purpose, owners frequently mistreat and abandon unproductive, elderly, or sick cows and bulls, leaving them to suffer without food, shelter, or safety. Lacking access to clean water and suitable feed in metropolitan settings, many end up famished or malnourished and are compelled to live on waste dumps where they consume plastics and polythene, which frequently results in agonising deaths. Another serious problem is road accidents, where cattle are regularly struck by cars on city and highway routes and are not properly treated by an emergency veterinary system.²⁹ Their situation is made worse by incidents of cruelty and harassment, when stray cows are occasionally beaten, driven away, or even used for begging through adornments, which reflects lax implementation of the laws aimed at preventing cruelty to animals. Furthermore, the gaushalas (cow shelters) that are supposed to care for them are frequently overcrowded, badly kept, and underfunded, which leads to unsanitary conditions, insufficient veterinary care, and further suffering for these defenceless creatures.³⁰

²⁶ ‘Raj HC orders action against stray animals’ *The Times of India* (13 August 2025) <<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/jaipur/raj-hc-orders-action-against-stray-animals/articleshow/123265989.cms>> accessed 14 August 2025

²⁷ *Ibid*

²⁸ ‘Stray dogs, Cows major threat to road safety: HC’ *The Times of India* (02 August 2025) <<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/jaipur/stray-dogs-cows-major-threat-to-road-safety-hc/articleshow/123051438.cms>> accessed 06 August 2025

²⁹ Bhupendra Kumar Sahu et al., ‘A population estimation study reveals a staggeringly high number of cattle on the streets of urban Raipur in India’ (2021) 16(1) PLOS ONE <<https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0234594>> accessed 06 August 2025

³⁰ *Ibid*

Problems Faced by the Public: In addition to being an animal welfare issue, stray cattle in Rajasthani streets are a serious public problem that has an impact on day-to-day living. In terms of road safety, cows and bulls sitting or unexpectedly wandering on roadways have resulted in numerous collisions, several of which have killed two-wheeler riders. Driving at night is particularly dangerous. Aggressive bulls or scared animals have hurt bystanders in towns and residential areas, putting the elderly and children at the worst risk. The issue also affects sanitation: open defecation contaminates roads and marketplaces, stray animals searching through trash exacerbate urban waste management, and the possibility of zoonotic illnesses like anthrax, brucellosis, and tuberculosis presents a subtle but dangerous health risk.³¹ Stray cattle pose a threat to farmers in the fields, where they destroy crops and cause significant losses, escalating the tension between respect for the animal and the harsh reality of livelihood destruction. On the financial front, towns spend enormous sums of money attempting to control the threat, frequently without long-term answers. Road closures, transportation delays, accident-related medical expenses, and auto repair costs all add up. This leaves citizens frustrated, as repeated complaints bring little relief, turning what should be a shared duty of compassion and care into an ongoing struggle for safety, health, and governance.

Religious Sentiments & Public Trust in the System: A deep sacred-cultural dissonance results from cows' obvious suffering in public places, whether they are wandering hungry, eating plastic, or lying hurt on the highways. This is because cows are revered in Rajasthan as “Gau Mata,” a symbol of motherhood and divinity. In addition to causing mental distress, this sight erodes the faith of those who regularly worship these creatures in temples.³² People feel that the State and local authorities are failing in both their legal and ethical duties to protect these revered creatures, as well as their legal obligations under animal welfare laws, as a result of the contradiction between ritual reverence and practical neglect. Since bovine welfare in Rajasthan is inextricably linked to the religious sentiments, cultural identity, and collective conscience of its people, such neglect extends beyond the suffering of the animals and affects the public as well, undermining respect for the rule of law, eroding trust in governance, and even igniting social unrest.

³¹ *Ibid*

³² Ghai (n 1)

MAJOR ENFORCEMENT GAPS AND LOOPHOLES IN THE CURRENT SYSTEM AND LAWS

Owners as the Root Cause of the Stray Cattle Crisis: The persistence of stray cattle in India can be traced primarily to their owners, who often treat bovines as economic assets rather than living beings. Cows become financial problems once they cease producing milk or become sterile because they need care and feed, but don't pay, especially because most states forbid the killing of cows. This explains why more than 5 million stray cattle are free to roam the streets and fields of India, according to the 20th Livestock Census.³³ The situation is no different in cities: for instance, the Nagpur Municipal Corporation captured 1,074 stray cattle between 2023 and 2025, collecting fines worth ₹11.3 lakh, yet the menace persisted—showing that mere capture without accountability does not resolve the crisis.³⁴ Accounts from the ground show how commonplace abandonment is in Rajasthan. Farmers like RoshanYadav and her son Amit protect their wheat fields at night in Paota village, which is close to Jaipur, because stray cattle may destroy crops “in minutes,” even shattering barbed-wire fences.³⁵ In Churu district, villagers admit that urban breeders dump non-milking cows on rural roads rather than feed them or send them to shelters, a practice encouraged by fear of losing animals to vigilantism.³⁶ Councillor Swati Parnami revealed how dairy owners in Jaipur city release their calves right after milking, sometimes tagging them before letting them go, only for the animals to return to the roads a few hours later.³⁷ These instances demonstrate that owner indifference directly contributes to the problem of runaway cattle, regardless of whether it is motivated by the financial strain of maintaining unproductive animals or the desire for profit from solely milking cows. The cycle is only made worse by inadequate shelters, lax regulation, and political sensitivities; yet, the

³³ Dr. D K Sadana, 'India needs to look beyond gaushalas to address its stray cattle problem' *Down To Earth* (05 April 2021) <<https://web.archive.org/web/20211225080450/https://www.downtoearth.org.in/news/wildlife-biodiversity/-india-needs-to-look-beyond-gaushalas-to-address-its-stray-cattle-problem--76189>> accessed 06 August 2025

³⁴ Proshun Chakraborty, 'Stray cattle menace grows on city roads, 1,074 caught in two years' *The Times of India* (05 August 2025) <<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/nagpur/stray-cattle-menace-grows-on-city-roads-1074-caught-in-two-years/articleshow/123103230.cms>> accessed 06 August 2025

³⁵ Harsha Kumari Singh, 'After Cow Shelters, Rajasthan's Rs 16-Crore Plan For Stray Bulls' *NDTV* (18 February 2018) <<https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/after-cow-shelters-rajasthans-rs-16-crore-plan-for-stray-bulls-1814003>> accessed 06 August 2025

³⁶ Syed Intishab Ali, 'Gau Raksha & stray cattle menace keep villagers on edge' *The Times of India* (12 November 2018) <<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/jaipur/gau-raksha-stray-cattle-menace-keep-villagers-on-edge/articleshow/66584605.cms>> accessed 06 August 2025

³⁷ 'Moo've Over: Cattle menace makes city residents see red' *The Times of India* (29 August 2024) <<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/jaipur/cattle-menace-in-urban-areas/articleshow/112879764.cms>> accessed 06 August 2025

practice of owners' reckless abandonment is the underlying cause. India's roadways, farms, and public areas will continue to be dangerous and overrun by stray cattle unless the owners are held responsible.

Weak Enforcement Undermines Strong Laws in Rajasthan: The Federal Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act of 1960 and the Rajasthan Bovine Animal (Prohibition of Slaughter and Regulation of Temporary Migration or Export) Act of 1995 both have explicit legislation about the care and protection of cattle. Yet, on-the-ground enforcement lags: municipal by-laws and duties to impound or rehabilitate strays are unevenly applied, leaving cattle on roads and public spaces.³⁸ This disparity is highlighted by recent court orders that the Rajasthan High Court had to order highway authorities and local governments to build shelters, remove stray animals, and establish complaint procedures, signalling ongoing implementation shortcomings.

The result is a law-in-books, not law-in-action problem that keeps the stray-cattle crisis alive despite robust legal tools. Example- From a fiscal oversight standpoint, the state's flagship cattle welfare initiative, Nandishala, which allocated over ₹650 crore and envisaged constructing shelters at the Panchayat Samiti level, is yet to yield proportionate results. Although 73 such shelters have been established across 19 districts, the underutilization and lack of proper audit mechanisms continue to plague their effectiveness.³⁹

No Systematic Identification or Registration of Cattle: A Major Policy Gap: In stark contrast to companion animals like dogs, cattle face no mandated system for tagging, registration, or traceability, allowing owners to abandon unproductive or infertile animals with ease and without accountability. The absence of a comprehensive cattle census or tracking mechanism severely undermines the enforcement of anti-abandonment laws and hampers the planning and execution of welfare measures.⁴⁰ Although Rajasthan experimented with an ear-tagging initiative to support cattle e-markets collecting data such as breed, vaccination history, milk output, and pricing, the scheme remains limited in scale and scope, restricted primarily to

³⁸ Sahu (n 29)

³⁹ Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying, 'Stray Animal Welfare' *PIB* (11 March 2025) <<https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2110271&utm>> accessed 06 August 2025

⁴⁰ Kennedy (n 4)

Jaipur district and focused on market facilitation, not on stray management or enforcement.⁴¹ In contrast, Madhya Pradesh implemented UID tagging for over 250,000 cattle, setting a more structured approach to livestock tracking. However, this did not equate to a nationwide mandate or a legal enforcement framework to curb abandonment.⁴² Without a robust, enforceable cattle identification system, authorities are left powerless to trace abandoned animals back to their owners, enforce penalties, or effectively manage welfare initiatives. A legislative and technological push toward mandatory livestock registration is essential to plug this critical loophole.

Poor Road and Public Safety Mechanisms in Rajasthan: Rajasthan’s roads continue to remain dangerously unsafe due to the persistent presence of stray cattle, despite repeated High Court interventions. In August 2025, the Rajasthan High Court took suo motu cognisance of the issue, directing municipal bodies and highway authorities to launch special drives to remove stray animals from city streets and highways. The court instructed regular patrols, mandated the filing of FIRs against individuals obstructing removal operations, and required that animal feeding occur only at designated shelters, not on public roads. Authorities were also asked to publish helpline details and report on the state of gaushalas and disposal infrastructure. Yet the reality remains grim. In Sikar, an 18-year-old student was critically injured when a stray bull suddenly crossed his path, impaling his chest with its horns. This alarming incident highlights how reactive approaches fail to offer real protection.⁴³ Meanwhile, on the Jaipur–Delhi Highway near Daultpura, a 56-year-old PWD engineer, Avinash Sharma, lost his life after colliding with a stray bull, underscoring how these animals compromise the safety of even experienced road users⁴⁴. Compounding the danger, sections of National Highway 123 near Dholpur are regularly lined with stray cattle, creating constant accident hazards, especially during the day when these animals cluster on the road, obstructing traffic and risking collisions. Together, these incidents

⁴¹ ‘Rajasthan govt to tag cattle to develop e-market’ *The Times of India* (01 February 2020) <<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/jaipur/state-govt-to-tag-cattle-to-develop-e-market/articleshow/73818129.cms>> accessed 06 August 2025

⁴² ‘Madhya Pradesh completes UID tagging’ *Deccan Herald* (25 March 2018) <<https://www.deccanherald.com/archives/madhya-pradesh-completes-uid-tagging-1926467>> accessed 06 August 2025

⁴³ ‘Rajasthan: Stray bull impales student’s chest in Sikar, in critical condition’ *India TV* (11 January 2025) <<https://www.indiatvnews.com/rajasthan/rajasthan-stray-bull-impales-student-s-chest-in-sikar-in-critical-condition-2025-01-11-970779>> accessed 06 August 2025

⁴⁴ ‘PWD engineer dies after bike collides with bull’ *The Times of India* (04 August 2025) <<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/jaipur/pwd-engineer-dies-after-bike-collides-with-bull/articleshow/123081692.cms>> accessed 06 August 2025

reveal a fundamental failure in public safety systems: there are no dedicated cattle patrol squads, no preventive frameworks, and no integration of bovine-related risks into road safety law enforcement. Stray cattle remain a lethal hazard; despite court directives, the system remains reactive and fragmented, leaving citizens exposed to avoidable tragedies.⁴⁵

Public Awareness and Citizen Participation Lag – Fueling the Stray Cattle Problem in Rajasthan: Public awareness and citizen participation in addressing the stray cattle crisis in Rajasthan remain woefully inadequate, further entrenching the issue. Despite the escalating menace, many residents remain reluctant to report abandoned animals. Even when complaints are filed, they frequently go unanswered, creating widespread frustration. A glaring example: in Jaipur, councillor Swati Parnami revealed that dairy owners often release cattle onto roads after milking—but despite repeated public complaints, authorities fail to act.⁴⁶ Similarly, in the Walled City area, residents complained that even captured stray cattle are quickly reclaimed via affidavits by their owners, rendering removal drives almost symbolic.⁴⁷ Meanwhile, the social contradiction remains stark: cattle are venerated in ritual and worship, yet their real-life suffering—abandonment, starvation, healthcare neglect—goes largely ignored. Although the High Court has mandated municipal bodies to publish complaint helplines and ensure citizen grievances are addressed, these systems are still not widely functional across urban and rural areas.⁴⁸ In essence, the lack of a robust public grievance mechanism, combined with cultural hypocrisy, significantly hinders citizen-driven accountability and perpetuates the stray cattle crisis across Rajasthan.

COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

Chhattisgarh’s Gaudham and Godhan- NyayYojana: By constructing well-equipped cow harbours, or “Gaudhams,” on government land alongside roadways, Chhattisgarh has enforced a two-pronged result that gives original caregivers jobs, safe fencing, and access to electricity and water. In addition to keeping cattle off the roads, which lowers accident rates, the program also

⁴⁵ Moo’ve over: Cattle menace makes city resident see red (n 37)

⁴⁶ *Ibid*

⁴⁷ ‘Stray menace persists despite action’ *The Times of India* (12 November 2024)

<<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/jaipur/stray-cattle-crisis-in-jaipur-residents-demand-effective-solutions/articleshow/115228307.cms>> accessed 06 August 2025

⁴⁸ ‘Rajasthan High Court asks civic bodies to remove stray animals from all public places’ *The Times of India* (13 August 2025) <<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/rajasthan-high-court-asks-civic-bodies-to-remove-stray-animals-from-all-public-places/articleshow/123267304.cms>> accessed 14 August 2025

works in tandem with the GodhanNyayYojana, in which the government buys cow soil and urine from growers and converts it into organic disease and pest-control products, generating value chains and livelihoods while guarding cows.⁴⁹

Madhya Pradesh’s Self-Sustaining KamdhenuNiwas: Madhya Pradesh approved the KamdhenuNiwas(2025) policy to make large-scale, long-sustaining cow harbours, each accommodating at least 5,000 cattle. Drivers admit government land(up to 125 acres), and the harbours can support marketable enterprises like biogas, organic waste, Panchgavya product, and dairy processing – making them economically feasible while providing humane care for stray creatures.⁵⁰

Uttar Pradesh: Shelter Expansion, ISO Standards & Strong Enforcement: Uttar Pradesh is enforcing a multi-layered enterprise:

- A statewide crusade to relocate stray cattle to harbours (e.g., harbours house over 12 lakh cattle, and families admit ₹ 50 per beast for casing abandoned cows).⁵¹
- Establishing cattle sanctuaries on timber department land, offering natural grazing, and addressing fodder deficit.⁵²
- Three cow harbours in Varanasi now hold ISO 90012015 instruments for excellence in care, hygiene, veterinary services, fodder operation, and eco-friendly practices like vermicomposting and biogas product, creating marks for quality⁵³.

⁴⁹ Jayprakash S Naidu, ‘Chhattisgarh’s latest scheme aims to get stray cattle off the roads’ *The Indian Express* (11 August 2025) <<https://indianexpress.com/article/india/chhattisgarhs-latest-scheme-aims-to-get-stray-cattle-off-the-roads-10180185/>> accessed 12 August 2025

⁵⁰ ‘Govt approves policy to establish self-sustaining cow shelters’ *The Times of India* (13 January 2025) <<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/bhopal/govt-approves-policy-to-establish-self-sustaining-cow-shelters/articleshow/121811649.cms>> accessed 06 August 2025

⁵¹ ‘Statewide drive to move stray cattle to shelters from Nov 1’ *The Times of India* (12 October 2023) <<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/lucknow/statewide-drive-to-move-stray-cattle-to-shelters-from-nov-1/articleshow/104358261.cms>> accessed 06 August 2025

⁵² Vatsala Gaur, ‘UP government mulls 100-day plan to take 50,000 additional stray cattle off roads’ *The Economic Times* (16 April 2022) <<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/india/up-government-mulls-100-day-plan-to-take-50000-additional-stray-cattle-off-roads/articleshow/90868660.cms>> accessed 06 August 2025

⁵³ ‘3 cattle shelters in Kashi earn ISO certification for excellence in care’ *The Times of India* (23 June 2025) <<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/varanasi/3-cattle-shelters-in-kashi-earn-iso-certification-for-excellence-in-care/articleshow/122010019.cms>> accessed 06 August 2025

- Enforcement drives include deadlines set by the CM for quarter adjudicators to clear slapdash cattle, a cow weal cess to fund harbours, and a dedicated helpline to report slapdash beast issues.⁵⁴

Goa's Stray Cattle Management Scheme: Goa's program showcases strong NGO-government collaboration –

- NGOs like Dhyam Foundation and external bodies run harbours with veterinary care, feeding, and delivery operations involving citizens via a dedicated reporting hotline.⁵⁵
- The government supports these efforts with substantial subsidies up to 90% for cattle transport vehicles, ₹5,000/m² for chalet construction, and hires for caretakers- performing in a robust public-private frame.⁵⁶

Tamil Nadu (Madurai) – Integrated Cattle Pound: Madurai is constructing a ₹60 lakh cattle pound offering free fodder, water, veterinary care, and medication for up to 50 cattle. This integrated model reduces stress and transport costs, especially post-Jallikattu events, and treats even goats, dogs, and cats—demonstrating a humane and scalable urban animal rescue initiative.⁵⁷

WHY THESE MODELS WORK?

Long-Term, Sustainable Infrastructure: These models, which range from Gaudhams to KamdhenuNiwas, demonstrate how long-lasting effects can be achieved with permanent shelters supported by economic sustainability.

Economic Integration: Welfare and income are combined through the use of bovine by-products (dung, urine) for organic farming, biogas, and Panchgavya.

⁵⁴ Statewide drive to move stray cattle to shelters from Nov 1 (n 51)

⁵⁵ 'The Goa Stray Cattle Management Scheme: A Visionary Approach to Animal Welfare' (*Incredible Goa*, 24 December 2024) <<https://www.incrediblegoa.org/focus/the-go-a-stray-cattle-management-scheme-a-visionary-approach-to-animal-welfare/>> accessed 06 August 2025

⁵⁶ *Ibid*

⁵⁷ 'Madurai to get ₹60 lakh cattle pound with vet care, free boarding' *The Times of India* (12 August 2025) <<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/madurai/madurai-to-get-60-lakh-cattle-pound-with-vet-care-free-boarding/articleshow/123244560.cms>> accessed 13 August 2025

Robust Governance & Funding: Credibility and efficiency are provided by grants, cess funds, and accountability (such as ISO standards).

Community Engagement: Helplines, caregiving positions, and NGO involvement enhance public ownership and response.

Safety & Quality Enforcement: Using sanctuaries on grazing land, providing technical assistance for shelter facilities, and rescuing animals quickly during festivals demonstrate strategic vision.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTED REFORMS

Turning Cattle into Multi-Utility Assets Beyond Milk: The primary problem with the current strategy is that cattle are simply considered to be “milk machines.” They are abandoned when they cease to yield. However, cattle are naturally multipurpose resources; their dung may be utilised to make eco-friendly vermicompost, organic fertilisers, dung logs that can be used in place of wood, and even urine-based herbal items. The state can turn “unproductive cattle” into resources that generate revenue by educating farmers and offering training in these related fields. This lessens the stress of desertion while simultaneously sustaining livelihoods.⁵⁸

Subsidies for Biogas and Profitable Dung Economy: The villagers of Rajasthan are sitting on an unexplored treasure trove of cow manure. When correctly directed, it can produce revenue through dung-based products and power homes through biogas plants. For rural households to establish such units, the government must intervene by providing specific subsidies, simple loans, and technical assistance. Dung-based energy can lower carbon emissions, lessen reliance on LPG, and create new sources of rural income, as demonstrated by successful models in Gujarat and Maharashtra. The economic burden is immediately transformed into an economic opportunity by this legislation.

Mobile Veterinary Units and Helpline Vans: Taking Care of the Animal: A startling number of cattle are left behind because their owners cannot afford to take care of them after

⁵⁸ Rahmad Ferdinanto et al., ‘Dairy Cattle Waste Management as an Effort to Increase the Income of Producer Cooperative Members (Case study on KPSBU Lembang, West Pava province)’ (Proceedings of the International Conference on Economic, Management, Business and Accounting ICEMBA 2022, TANJUNGOINANG, Riau Island, Indonesia, 17 December 2022)

they become ill or are hurt. This dynamic can be altered in each district by deploying mobile veterinary units with onboard physicians and rescue helpline vans. These units would act as rapid reaction teams for cattle-related traffic incidents in addition to providing doorstep care. By doing away with the justification of “lack of medical access,” this reform targets the root cause of needless abandonment.

Highway Gaushalas and Safe Corridors: Protecting Roads and Lives: Cattle are common along Rajasthan’s highways, which makes them lethal to both people and animals. The answer is to provide walled safety lanes that prevent animals from entering high-speed areas and specific highway gaushalas spaced along main routes. These shelters would serve as secure locations to pick up rescued livestock and clear roads of straggling animals. This is a revolution in public safety as well as animal welfare that has the potential to save thousands of lives every year.

Strict Liability on Owners: Ending the Culture of Carelessness: Owners currently face no repercussions when their cattle roam public areas, cause accidents, or destroy crops. A risky culture of impunity has resulted from this. The implementation of stringent liability legislation should result in swift fines, animal confiscation, or even the loss of dairy licenses for serial offenders whose cattle cause damage or annoyance. This kind of accountability guarantees that livestock are viewed as responsibilities rather than as expendable assets. It changes the perspective from one of neglect to one of care.

Statewide Cow Management Authority: Centralising Responsibility: NGOs, police, panchayats, and municipalities all have partial roles in the current dispersed cattle management system, which causes turmoil. With district-level offices, a State Cow Management Authority may centralise operations, provide consistent funding, keep an online cattle registry, and transparently supervise gaushalas. A single-point command system reduces waste, clarifies accountability, and ensures that reforms are applied consistently throughout Rajasthan.

Municipal Liability and Compensation Framework: Municipalities frequently neglect their responsibility to control cattle, and as a result, residents suffer from everyday annoyances, crop damage, and accidents. In addition to providing a compensation system for accident victims, the law must hold municipal corporations strictly liable for their failure to manage stray cattle. Municipal officials would be encouraged to take preventive measures, make

improvements to shelters, and start frequent stray cattle eradication drives if they knew that every fatality or crop loss may result in financial compensation claims.

Digital Cattle Tracking with RFID and GPS Technology: Where traditional methods fall short, technology must take over. Digital monitoring of cattle equipped with GPS trackers and RFID tags enables authorities to hunt down their owners and enforce accountability. In addition, AI-powered road safety systems may reduce accidents by warning vehicles when animals are lying ahead. Gujarati pilot programs have demonstrated the effectiveness of RFID in reducing livestock theft and abandonment. The monitoring and management of stray livestock would be completely transformed if this were implemented throughout Rajasthan.

Harnessing Community and Religious Participation: Although cows and Rajasthan have a very spiritual bond, the devotion frequently ends with ceremonies. The official livestock management structure of the state can incorporate religious trusts, temple committees, and nonprofit organisations that now operate gaushalas. These organisations can serve as grassroots partners in lodging, feeding, and caring for cattle if they are given the necessary funds, training, and oversight. This combination of administration and religion guarantees that cultural respect is translated into actual, quantifiable animal well-being. These reforms collectively establish a 360-degree framework: they transform cattle from “burdens” into “assets,” combine technology and tradition, impose accountability, and unite communities, municipalities, and individuals in a shared goal.

CONCLUSION

The incongruity of Rajasthan’s cow extremity lies in the stark discrepancy between reverence and reality. While cows are worshipped as Gau Mata, symbols of divinity, aliment, and artistic identity, their suffering on roadsides and in overcrowded harbours reflects a grave ethical, social, and legal failure. The extremity isn’t simply about slapdash cattle — it is about the gaps in enforcement, proprietor responsibility, and governance that have allowed this problem to spiral into a philanthropic, profitable, and public safety concern. The review of laws reveals that India, and Rajasthan in particular, isn't short of legal vittles for cow protection; rather, it's enforcement, collaboration, and invention that remain weak. Courts have stepped in with repeated directives, but judicial interventions alone can not substitute systemic governance. Relative models from countries like Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, and Uttar Pradesh demonstrate that humane,

economically integrated, and community-driven fabrics can transfigure bovine wealth from a liability into a sustainable opportunity.

For Rajasthan, the way forward must rest on three pillars: responsibility, invention, and participation. Possessors must be held rigorously liable for abandonment; technology similar to RFID and GPS can bring traceability and deterrence; and weal must be integrated with profitable models like biogas and organic toxin products. Contemporaneously, religious institutions, NGOs, and original communities must be woven into the operation system so that artistic respect translates into palpable well-being issues.

In substance, cow protection can not be confined to ritual symbolism or reactive drives. It requires a holistic governance approach that balances compassion with practicality, and reverence with responsibility. By bridging legal gaps, reforming enforcement, and creating sustainable weal systems, Rajasthan can set a public standard in turning its sacred bond with cows into a model of ultramodern, humane, and safe concurrence. This isn't only a beast weal imperative but also a moral and communal duty toward cows, toward citizens, and toward the values elevated in the Constitution itself.