

Analysing Cow Protection Laws In Delhi

I. INTRODUCTION

Few matters cause as much emotional discussion or active debate throughout Delhi's busy metropolitan environment than the issue of protecting cows. Within Hindu beliefs the sacred cow stands as the most respected animal in India's religious framework as well as legal system. As India's capital city Delhi represents this developing situation by merging religious beliefs with economic considerations and urban development demands in its mutating cow protection rules. The protection of cows in Delhi exists as a narrative which incorporates sacred religious events together with political disputes and societal advancements starting from early scriptures to present-day laws. The Delhi Agricultural Cattle Preservation Act, 1994, bans the slaughter of all agricultural cattle, with violations punishable by up to five years in prison and fines up to ₹10,000¹. The city displays a mix of religious practice and legal enforcement because the Delhi-National Capital Region has approximately 200 active cow preservation groups combined with evidenced ongoing illegal slaughterhouse operations.

II. HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF COW PROTECTION MOVEMENTS

Mass cow protection movements gained rapid momentum during the 1870s in the Punjab along with North-West provinces, Awadh as well as Rohilkhand. The Arya Samaj transformed this feeling into a national movement with their exceptional leadership abilities. Vijaypal Baghel works to protect the cow while directing north Indian popular movements since the 1870s. The establishment of the Gaurakshini sabha which protected cows took place first in Punjab province during 1882. The movement spread rapidly all over North India and to Bengal, Bombay, Madras and other central provinces. Through its organization the group located loose cows before collecting them to care for them within establishments named gaushalas (cow refuges). Private charitable networks spread across North India dedicated themselves to obtaining rice donations from the public before combining these contributions to resell them for operating the gaushalas.

Arya Samaj and its leader Dayananda Saraswati declared their support for the early protection of cows along with its organization. In 1881 Dayananda Saraswati became the author of the book Gokarunanidhi (Ocean of mercy to the cow). During Dayananda's time the cow protection movement started as a non-Muslim targeted effort but it slowly turned into a focal point for religious tension between communities.

After gaining independence through 1947 India included cow protection as a constitutional requirement. In a rejection of a full ban on cow slaughter the Constituent Assembly accepted economic cases presented by B.R. Ambedkar and other leaders demonstrated the value of cattle and preservation of only prohibited cow and calf killing through the Directive Principles of State Policy (Article 48). Since state authorities now retained authority to decide about cow protection laws the situation led to varying rules among different regions.

Delhi Agricultural Cattle Preservation Act of 1994 marked the definitive change by the Congress government in power. A ban under the 1994 Delhi Agricultural Cattle Preservation Act prohibited any activities regarding all "agricultural cattle" including cows, bulls, bullocks and calves in the region. The Act served to protect cattle

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<https://web.archive.org/web/20131029185034/http://www.dahd.nic.in/dahd/reports/report-of-the-national-commission-on-cattle/chapter-ii-executive-summary/annex-ii-8.aspx>

based on their market value together with cultural traditions as the census revealed Delhi reached over 9 million residents.

III. CATTLE PROTECTION IN DELHI

1. Delhi Agricultural Cattle Preservation Act Of 1994

The cow protection laws of Delhi are primarily controlled by the Delhi Agricultural Cattle Preservation Act, 1994. The law specifically outlaws all slaughter procedures for agricultural cattle of any age along with calves and bulls and bullocks. Under the Delhi Agricultural Cattle Preservation Act, 1994 transportation of these animals from Delhi to any other area remains prohibited to eliminate their slaughter. A permit with an obligation against animal slaughter becomes necessary for persons who need to export cattle. This Act punishes violating rules by treating offenders with criminal jurisdiction and making offenses neither bailable nor non-bailable and implements sentences from six months up to five years coupled with ₹1,000 to ₹10,000 fines².

2. Delhi Budget of 2025

On 26 March, 2025 Delhi Finance Minister Rekha Gupta introduced a ₹ 1 lakh crore Budget for 2025-26 fiscal. The budget focuses on ten primary areas consisting of electricity alongside roads and water and connectivity needs. The budget allocation of ₹40 crore aims to construct contemporary shelters at Ghumanhera that will improve sheltering and protection for stray and relinquished cattle³. The animal shelters will obtain advanced amenities such as veterinary care and proper feeding systems as well as broad housing areas to provide safe living accommodations for animals. This project works to protect cattle by improving their welfare standards while also decreasing the number of stray cows that roam city street areas while helping people maintain proper animal healthcare practices.

IV. CHALLENGES TO COW PROTECTION IN DELHI

1. Stray Cattle and Urbanization

Public streets in Delhi face major difficulty due to stray cattle that occupy roads and flyovers and open spaces in the city. Urban development advances at a rapid tempo yet it eliminates pastures while abolishing the rural way of living that required cattle ranching. Cows become abandoned by farmers and dairy operators since it costs too much to maintain them while farm euthanasia laws prevent them from being killed and hence these cows become wild creatures. Public security and urban well-being decline because stray cattle lead to traffic collisions and make urban conditions chaotic.

The public safety and civic wellbeing suffer because stray cattle cause road accidents and create disruptive conditions in urban areas. The problem reached its severe stage when Delhi Chief Minister

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<https://web.archive.org/web/20131029185034/http://www.dahd.nic.in/dahd/reports/report-of-the-national-commission-on-cattle/chapter-ii-executive-summary/annex-ii-8.aspx>

³ <https://insightfulpeek.com/delhi-budget-2025-key-highlights-covered-sectors-and-focus-areas-for-1-lakh-crore-budget/>

Rekha Gupta's convoy found itself blocked by stray cattle on the Haiderpur Flyover on March 26, 2025⁴.

2. Overcrowded Gaushalas (Cow Shelters)

The existing gaushalas in Delhi suffer from both excessive overcrowding and insufficient budget that limits their capacity to accommodate an increasing number of abandoned or stray cattle. Such a limiting framework makes it impossible for local authorities to both protect and provide proper handling for these animals. The insufficient capacity of gaushalas prevents the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) from executing its initiatives to move stray cattle from city streets. Lack of proper funding together with insufficient healthcare and water resources creates unhygienic living spaces in shelters for cows.

A 2018 report from ANI showed 36 cows perished in a two-day period within the Delhi Chhawla area gaushala because the water motor failed and veterinary support was missing thus proving protracted care shortages⁵.

3. Illegal Dairies and Cattle Trade

Illegal dairy operations within Delhi significantly cause the problem of stray cattle in the city. Profitability ends for dairy operations forcing them to let their cows free on streets instead of caring for them anymore. The combination of unauthorized cattle trade along with smuggling operations generates increased challenges in the situation. Following milk collection unlawful dairies situated in Keshav Puram let their cows free into public roads thus causing numerous highway collisions. The MCD faces difficulties in closing down these facilities because operators cut seals followed by illicit business operations.

Activities related to cattle transportation to neighboring regions use dangerous drugs to calm animals which hinders safeguarding procedures. Police officers from Delhi engaged three people in 2023 for their roles in these activities⁶.

4. Legal and Policy Gaps

The Delhi Agricultural Cattle Preservation Act from 1994 prohibits cow slaughter yet law enforcement remains unreliable and there exists no official policy that protects both abandoned cows and controls dairy operations. Unproductive cows become abandoned because the 1994 Act prevents cow slaughter while providing no resolution. Insufficient legal regulations for both stray cattle management and illegal dairy operator enforcement establish a space where protection is weak.

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<https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/delhi/govt-planning-to-bring-foolproof-law-for-protection-of-stray-cows-says-delhi-minister-9912320/#:~:text=Keshavpuram%20Zone%20Chairman%20Yogesh%20Verma,them%2C%20leading%20to%20frequent%20accidents.&text=The%20Delhi%20government%20is%20planning,Minister%20Ashish%20Sood%20announced%20Friday>.

⁵ <https://x.com/ANI/status/1022835691095576576>

⁶ <https://x.com/DelhiPolice/status/1740701041908457870>

5. Economic Pressures and Farmer Behavior

The financial stress on farmers forces them to perform cow abandonment which disrupts the efforts to provide protection. Dairy farmers suffer increased expenses to maintain and feed their cows because milk profits and non-productive cow values fall short of the rising fodder costs within metropolises lacking proper agricultural networks. Rising fodder prices joined with banned domestic cow sales force farmers to release their old cows onto streets since there is no alternative to handle the expense. The decrease in cattle trading has become worse due to both increased vigilante intimidation and strengthened regulatory measures. The religious respect toward cows conflicts with economic benefits because their worth drops after milk production thus creating a twisted situation.

6. Vigilantism and Social Tensions

The protective strategies for defending cattle turn into violent incidents that violate local trade regulations while simultaneously increasing stray animal populations and disrupting animal welfare operations. Mothers associated with radical Hindu extremist groups carry out road patrols to drive out traders who transport cattle creating obstruction to lawful cow transport. The diminished trader interest in useless cows stems from watchdog groups emptying the cattle herds by leaving them behind. Social tensions increase and public attention shifts away from protective measures towards law enforcement due to such actions.

V. GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES: FUNDING AND POLICY MOVES IN 2025

In March 2025 the Delhi government unveiled a new “foolproof” legislation to boost protection and conservation of cows for the state. The emergence of such critical legislation occurred after the March 26th, 2025 incident during which Chief Minister Rekha Gupta's convoy experienced slowdown due to stray cattle on the Haiderpur Flyover.

*“We will bring a law for cow conservation and protection after due deliberations, ensuring there is no confusion between different departments. Relevant sections of the Bharatiya Nyay Sanhita (BNS) will also be studied for incorporation into the law,”*⁷ Urban Development Minister Ashish Sood said.

Components of the Proposed bill:

- a) The legislation seeks to stop cows from wandering freely through roads due to their impact on traffic and safety hazards. Between January 1 and February 19, 2025, Official data presented by BJP MLA Ashok Goel in the Assembly indicated 25,393 complaints related to stray cattle⁸.
- b) The government plans to build new shelters (gaushalas) as well as enhance the existing facilities for providing shelter to stray and abandoned cows in the area.

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<https://www.dailypioneer.com/2025/state-editions/new-law-on-anvil-to-manage-gaushalas--curb-stray-cattle-in-national-capital.html>

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<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/india/delhi-govt-to-enact-law-for-cow-conservation-and-protection/articleshow/119653553.cms>

- c) The Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) plans to shut down unlicensed dairies while destroying their unlawful built structures while also charging owners who let their milked cows roam free.
- d) Stringent enforcement systems for the proposed legislation will fight cow mafia exploitation through the implementation of BNS clauses together with guidance from MCD and PWD.

*"This will not be just another law. It will be a strong and well-enforced legislation that addresses all aspects of cow protection, from shelter to legal enforcement,"*⁹ Urban Development Minister Ashish Sood said.

VI. KEY DIFFERENCES: DELHI CATTLE PROTECTION ACT OF 1994 AND PROPOSED LEGISLATION

The 1994 Act part of Delhi Legislative Assembly stands as the primary legislation for cow safeguarding in Delhi before the new bill becomes law. The legislation seeks to ban all types of slaughter and deliver oversight to cattle activities. Urban Development Minister Ashish Sood describes the new bill as a comprehensive “foolproof” framework for cattle protection in Delhi.

1. Expanded Scope

The 1994 Act prohibited slaughter and related activities but ignored issues regarding welfare and post-slaughter abandonment.

The new Bill extends its goal for cow conservation and protection by regulating stray cattle operations and shelter management and inspecting illegal dairy operations while prohibiting slaughter activities. Minister Sood promoted an all-encompassing strategy for civic and cultural issues.

2. Regulation of Illegal Dairies

The 1994 legislation failed to address dairies as well as the responsibility of owners who stop caring for milked cows after abandonment becomes a key source of stray animals.

With the new Bill the government established provisions for illegal dairy enforcement through sealing unauthorized operations while discontinuing their utility service connections. The Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) has received enforcement responsibilities under the 2025 bill despite lacking these functions in 1994.

3. Shelter Infrastructure and Funding

Under the 1994 Act there are no provisions regarding gaushalas or cattle welfare funding making shelters dependent on occasional help from the government and NGOs. The new Bill establishes shelter development within legislative boundaries through budgetary funding that starts at ₹40 crore during 2025-26. The proposed amendment specifically fixes failings from the Chhawla gaushala tragedy which resulted in the death of 36 cows through neglect during 2018.

4. Stray Cattle Management

The 1994 Act failed to address stray cattle which resulted in more than 25,000 complaints in 2025 according to the statements of BJP MLA Ashok Goel.

⁹ <https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/delhi/govt-to-introduce-law-for-protection-of-stray-cows-sood/>

The proposed Bill clearly addresses the stray cattle problem through an organized relocation process to design shelters with additional plans for road prevention solutions.

VII. CONCLUSION

Authorization laws regarding cows in Delhi unite several elements including historical respect for sacred animals with official legal changes and current structured requirements. Through the Delhi Agricultural Cattle Preservation Act of 1994 Indian laws against killing cows reached their formal expression after roots developed from traditional cultural practices that honored cows as sacred life-giving symbols of sustenance. The new bill that does not exist yet for 2025 combines enhanced protective measures with improved enforcement systems and anti-trafficking efforts as well as urban growth adjustments to safeguard Delhi's cattle population. The 1994 law created essential groundwork but the 2025 proposal demonstrates ongoing adaptation to modern demands which includes both tradition conservation and city expansion needs together with financial sustainability of cattle farming and discussion about enforcement methods. Effective progress hinges on robust enforcement, public education, and sustainable solutions for dairy farmers and traders. Delhi currently faces this pivotal juncture where protecting cows continues the ongoing pursuit to connect with history through practical municipal policies.

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