

Guidance on addressing human-dog conflict stemming from undesired street dog behaviour



Human-street dog conflict can be of different types and manifests at different scales.

Type 1: Conflict between people about street dogs (e.g., conflicts over feeding); Scales: neighbourhoods; media; litigation and policy

Type 2: Human aggression towards dogs (e.g., relocation, poisoning, intentional harm); Scale: neighbourhoods/local

Type 3: Dog behaviours that are perceived as aggressive (e.g., chasing, mobbing, jumping, grabbing); Scale: neighbourhoods/local

Type 4: Dog aggression towards humans and owned dogs (e.g., bites, aggressive chasing); Scale: neighbourhoods/local

Type 5: Deaths or serious injuries due to mauling

These different types of conflict need different responses. **In all cases, prevention is the best approach.**

Preventing conflict at the neighbourhood level

Conflict prevention strategies at the local scale fall under two categories and are best carried out when there is ***no ongoing conflict***:

- a) Smart caregiving designed to prevent or reduce conflict (especially Types 1, 2 and 3)
- b) Community awareness about safety around street dogs (especially Types 3 and 4)
- c) Up to date vaccination against rabies with careful maintenance of vaccination records (for reference in the case of bites)

For more information on smart caregiving and community safety awareness, see:

<https://rohindies.org/resources/#safety>

<https://rohindies.org/resources/#smart-caregiving>

Conflict mitigation at the neighbourhood level

Conflict mitigation strategies are required in ***situations of ongoing conflict***. This guidance focuses on conflict mitigation at the local or neighbourhood level for conflict Types 3 and 4.

1. **Take the complainant seriously:** Ensure that the complainant(s) feels heard and understood. Reassure them that the necessary action will be taken. In the case of bites, provide information on the vaccination status of the concerned dog. Provide appropriate guidance on post-bite treatment by referring them to the [WHO decision tree for post-exposure prophylaxis](#). This is key to understanding the concerns of the complainant and preventing retaliatory action against the dog in question or all dogs in the area.

2. Understand the nature of the conflict and its drivers: The main drivers of Type 3 and Type 4 conflict are:

- Attachment to specific caregivers and locations, resulting in territorial or protective pet-like behaviours towards people including aggressive barking or chasing and biting.
- Boredom, playfulness, or curiosity resulting in pet-like behaviours such as non-aggressive chasing, mobbing, jumping, and grabbing of clothes or packages.
- Anxiety or fear, commonly seen in dogs that have been relocated.
- Infrequently, rabies or aggressive personalities.

3. Address the drivers of conflict:

3a. Conflict stemming from pet-like behaviours and/or aggressive personalities can be addressed by creating the conditions for the re-development of normal street dog skills and behaviours, including foraging for food and being cautious around people. This involves:

- Reducing attachment to specific people and/or locations
- Reducing dependency on regular feeding (except for sick, injured, emaciated, old, orphaned, lactating, distressed dogs, or dogs in closed areas with no food sources)
- Re-schooling for normal street dog behaviours and skills. This includes appropriate use of non-violent and harmless aversive actions (e.g., withholding affection, ignoring them, walking away from them, saying 'no' in a firm voice etc.). The aim is to prevent the dog that is displaying the undesired behaviour from approaching people, including caregivers, too closely.
- Encouraging the dog to interact safely with other people. Engage with some of the people the dog displays undesired behaviours towards (e.g., sanitation workers, other residents of the neighbourhood). If they are willing, provide them with treats that they can offer to the concerned dog, initially at a distance, and progressing towards closer contact. They can also be encouraged to talk to the dog in a reassuring tone when there is barking or other undesired behaviours.
- Socialising the dog with local owned dogs. Request owners to establish first familiarity between themselves and the concerned dog without the owned dogs around. This can be done with treats and regular contact. Once a good relationship has been formed between the owner and the concerned street dog, gradual familiarisation with the owned dogs can be undertaken.

For more detail see: <https://rohindies.org/resources/#smart-caregiving>

3b. Conflict stemming from anxiety or fear requires close work with the concerned dog to help him/her stabilise. This typically involves, for a temporary period:

- a) Consistent contact with the dog to reassure them
- b) Regular feeding to build trust and allow them to adapt to the local environment

- c) Encouraging them to move away from locations where they are not welcome (e.g., inside buildings) by setting up makeshift bedding and a water bowl, and feeding them at an appropriate location that can act as a safe space till they have stabilised.
- d) At the right time, getting them neutered and vaccinated.

Note: once the dog has stabilised, wean them off regular feeding and excessive contact with caregivers to prevent pet-like behaviours.

4. **Implement environmental modifications and community safety education:** In some circumstances, environmental modifications and/or safety guidance for residents, employees, and passersby might be required. This can include:
 - The construction of well-marked speed breakers at close intervals to prevent speeding (and thereby prevent chasing)
 - Clearing any excessive availability of food (both intentional feeding and waste, especially at roadside eateries and meat stalls) and other resources that attract dogs and may provoke conflict between street dogs or between street dogs and people
 - Installing gates at the bottom of stairs or other exit/entry points to prevent dogs from entering buildings
 - Putting up signage on how to avoid being chased (e.g., slow down; stop if chased)
 - Sharing targeted guidance on chasing and bite prevention with local people, preferably through one-on-one conversations to provide resource materials; see <https://rohindies.org/resources/#safety>
 - Recommending, and where required, providing resources for the close supervision of children, especially during playtime, in areas with street dogs
5. In cases where rabies is suspected, confine the dog and either observe for 10 days (only if it is possible to maintain high-welfare conditions) or euthanise.
6. In cases of personality driven aggression that does not respond to other interventions, there might be a case for the targeted removal of the concerned dog (e.g., adoption by an experienced caregiver).