

EVIDENCE BASED INSIGHTS

# WHY KILLING DOGS DOESN'T WORK



Compassion. Evidence. Change  
The Stray Dog Solidarity Alliance



# SNAPSHOT OF CONTENTS

**4**

**Our Mission**

**10**

**What Works  
Against Rabies**

**07**

**The Vacuum Effect**

**12**

**A Safer, Kinder  
Community**

**08**

**Case Insight: India**

**16**

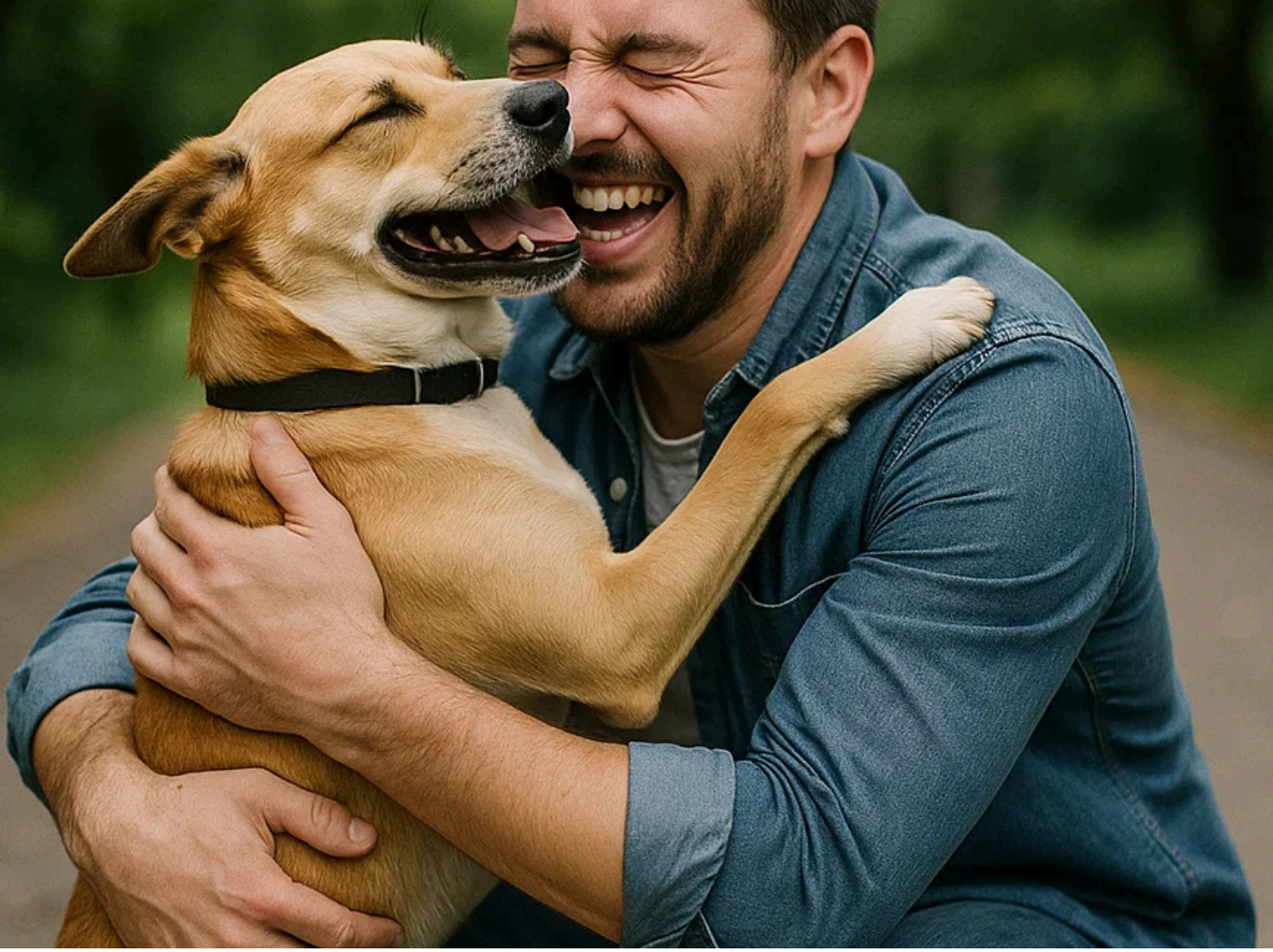
**Putting Evidence  
Into Action**



A Stray Dog Solidarity Alliance Publication

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# OUR MISSION

The Stray Dog Solidarity Alliance is dedicated to creating a world where people and dogs live together in safety, respect, and compassion. We believe that every community can thrive when humane, effective solutions are used to manage dog populations, solutions grounded in science and empathy, not cruelty.

For too long, mass culling has been treated as a quick answer to the challenges posed by free-roaming dogs. But decades of evidence prove this approach does not work. Culling is not only inhumane, it is ineffective, costly, and damaging to the social fabric of communities.

This publication has been created to explain, clearly and with reliable evidence, why killing dogs fails and to showcase the strategies that truly deliver results. From large-scale vaccination campaigns to sterilisation programs, from community education to compassionate care, the evidence is overwhelming: humane approaches protect both people and dogs.

The Stray Dog Solidarity Alliance works to replace cruelty with compassion. Together, we can build safer, healthier environments for dogs and for the people who share their streets.

# The Problem with Culling

Culling is often used as a quick fix by authorities who want to be seen as taking action against large street dog populations. The logic appears simple: remove the dogs, and the problem disappears. But in reality, the opposite happens.

Scientific studies and field experience from around the world demonstrate that culling is not just cruel, but also ineffective and counterproductive. When dogs are removed from an area, the resources they once relied upon, food, water, and shelter remain in place. This creates an ecological gap, known as the vacuum effect. Very quickly, new dogs migrate into the space, while surviving dogs reproduce at a faster rate because there is less competition.

Instead of reducing the population, culling triggers a cycle of instability:

- Dogs are killed → vacant space and food sources remain.
- New dogs move in → often unvaccinated, unsterilised, and unfamiliar with the community.
- Survivors breed faster → producing larger litters, with higher survival rates.
- The population rebounds → sometimes even higher than before.

This revolving door of killing and replenishment wastes precious resources, spreads fear within communities, and ultimately fails to solve the issue. Humane alternatives—vaccination, sterilisation, and education—are not only kinder but are proven to work where culling never has.



## CULLING CREATES A CYCLE OF REMOVAL AND RAPID RETURN—SOLVING NOTHING.

Despite being implemented in many countries for decades, repeated culling has never delivered sustained reductions in dog populations. At best, there may be a temporary decrease in numbers, but within months the population rebounds due to the vacuum effect. This cycle locks communities into endless, costly rounds of killing, with no long-term impact.

Culling also diverts scarce funds and resources away from proven, science-based strategies such as vaccination, sterilisation, and public education. Every dollar spent on killing could instead fund vaccinations that protect people and dogs from rabies, or sterilisation surgeries that prevent future litters. By choosing culling, authorities sacrifice long-term stability for short-term appearances.

Perhaps most damaging, the normalisation of cruelty erodes public trust and safety. When governments endorse violence against animals, it sends a dangerous message that cruelty is acceptable. Communities become desensitised, and cycles of violence can spill over into human relationships. Instead of fostering cooperation, culling breeds fear, mistrust, and resentment.

In contrast, humane programmes build community pride and confidence. When people see their leaders choosing compassion and evidence-based approaches, they are more likely to engage, volunteer, and support sustainable solutions.



# THE VACUUM EFFECT



*The vacuum effect is one of the most important reasons why culling never works. Street dogs exist in a community because resources are available: food scraps, water sources, and places to rest or shelter. When dogs are killed, those resources don't disappear—they remain, waiting to be used.*

- 1. Remove dogs → resources remain.*
- 2. Authorities may clear an area of its dogs, but the environment still offers the same food, water, and shelter. The ecological niche remains open.*
- 3. New dogs migrate in; survivors breed faster.*
- 4. Stray dogs from neighbouring areas quickly move into the vacant territory. At the same time, surviving dogs reproduce at a faster rate because there is less competition for resources. Litters become larger, and more puppies survive.*
- 5. The population rebounds—often higher than before.*
- 6. Within months, the number of dogs climbs back to previous levels, or even exceeds them. Communities are left in the same position as before—only with the added trauma and cost of repeated killing campaigns.*



# CASE INSIGHT: INDIA

Across many Indian cities, mass culling campaigns were repeatedly carried out in an attempt to control street dog populations. Dogs were poisoned, beaten, or rounded up and killed—yet time and again, the populations bounced back. Communities found themselves trapped in a cycle of cruelty, fear, and wasted resources, with no meaningful reduction in dog numbers or improvement in public safety.

By contrast, cities that invested in CNVR (Catch–Neuter–Vaccinate–Return) programs saw very different results. Sterilised and vaccinated dogs were returned to their territories, where they no longer reproduced and where they acted as a buffer against unvaccinated newcomers. Over time, these stable dog populations became healthier, less aggressive, and better integrated into the communities around them.

Conflicts decreased, rabies cases fell, and residents reported greater trust in humane programs than in violent culling campaigns. Instead of pouring resources into endless killing, communities began to see lasting improvements through compassion and science.

The lesson from India is clear: stability, not slaughter, leads to safety.

# Culling Does Not Stop Disease

One of the most common justifications for culling is the belief that it will reduce the spread of rabies and other diseases. At first glance, the logic may appear simple: fewer dogs, less disease. But the evidence shows this is a dangerous misconception.

Killing unvaccinated dogs does not eliminate rabies. As soon as dogs are removed from an area, others move in to take advantage of the available food and shelter. These new arrivals are often unvaccinated and may carry rabies or other infections, immediately restoring the risk that culling was supposed to remove. The cycle begins again, with no long-term protection for the community.

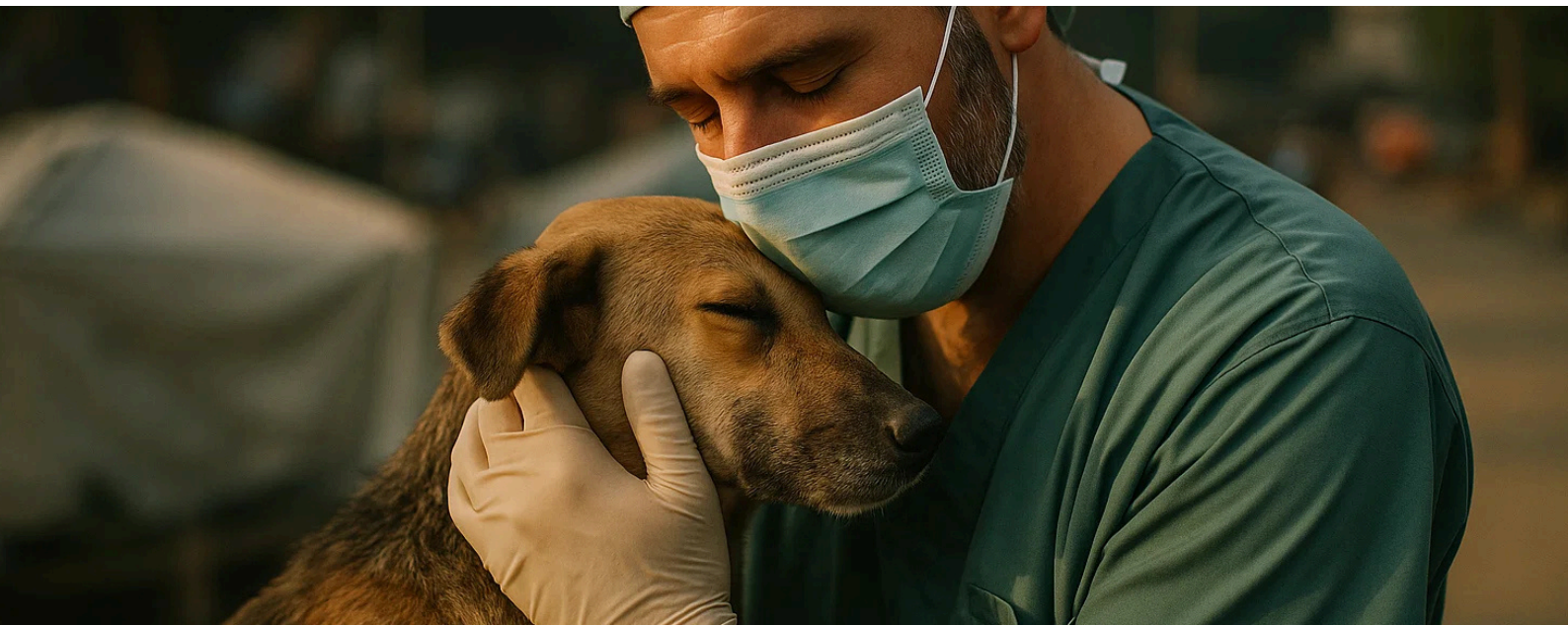
By contrast, stable, vaccinated dog populations are the community's best defence. Vaccinated dogs act as a protective barrier, preventing the rabies virus from circulating. Research shows that vaccinating at least 70% of the dog population in an area is enough to break the cycle of transmission, protecting both people and animals.

This is why international health authorities—from the World Health Organization (WHO) to the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) all insist that mass vaccination, not culling, is the only way to achieve rabies elimination. Stability saves lives; violence does not.



“You cannot kill your way out of rabies. Only vaccination creates lasting protection for both people and dogs.”

# WHAT WORKS AGAINST RABIES



The evidence is clear: mass dog vaccination is the single most effective way to stop rabies transmission. When at least 70% of dogs in a community are vaccinated, the virus cannot circulate. This level of coverage creates what scientists call herd immunity, protecting not just the dogs but also the people who live alongside them.

Rabies is a human health crisis as well as an animal welfare issue. By focusing on vaccination, communities protect children, families, and entire neighbourhoods from one of the world's deadliest—but entirely preventable—diseases. Unlike culling, which creates instability, vaccination builds a shield of safety.

For the greatest impact, vaccination should be paired with:

- Sterilisation programs that gradually reduce dog populations over time, preventing new generations of unvaccinated puppies.
- Community education campaigns that dispel myths, encourage cooperation, and promote responsible dog care.
- Local engagement that empowers people to help, from reporting unvaccinated dogs to volunteering during campaigns.

Together, these strategies create stable, healthy, and protected dog populations. Instead of the endless cycle of killing and repopulation, communities achieve lasting safety, compassion, and trust.

# Ethical & Social Costs



Culling is not only ineffective, it is deeply inhumane. The methods most often used, such as poisoning, shooting, or beating, inflict terrible suffering on dogs. Many die slowly and in agony, often in full view of other animals and people. These brutal practices leave lasting scars, not just on the dogs but also on the communities that witness them.

For children especially, watching animals suffer and die violently can be deeply traumatic. Instead of learning compassion, they are exposed to cruelty and desensitised to suffering. This damages the values of empathy and respect that are the foundation of safe, healthy societies.

Culling also fosters fear and mistrust. When local authorities adopt violent measures, communities lose confidence in them. People who care for or feed stray dogs feel attacked, while others grow fearful of both the dogs and the authorities. Far from building unity and safety, culling creates division and resentment.

Most dangerously, violence against animals can spill over into violence against people. Studies show strong links between cruelty to animals and human-directed aggression. Normalising animal abuse sends a message that violence is acceptable, eroding the moral fabric of society.

In contrast, humane approaches—vaccination, sterilisation, and education—build compassion and trust. They show children that kindness works, strengthen community cooperation, and create lasting solutions. Choosing humanity protects both dogs and people.

# A SAFER, KINDER COMMUNITY

Where culling divides and traumatises, humane approaches bring communities together. Vaccination, sterilisation, and feeding programs are not just effective, they are also inclusive. They invite people to participate in solutions that improve life for both humans and dogs, creating a sense of pride and shared responsibility.

Public trust grows when authorities choose compassion over cruelty. Instead of fearing violence, communities see transparency, care, and results they can believe in. Humane programs open the door to volunteer engagement, with local residents, students, and animal advocates stepping forward to help catch, vaccinate, feed, or educate.

Children are especially impacted. When they watch kindness in action, veterinarians treating dogs, volunteers caring for puppies, teachers explaining coexistence, they learn empathy, responsibility, and respect for life. These lessons ripple outward, shaping more peaceful societies.

At the same time, communities themselves become safer. Vaccinated and sterilised dogs are healthier, calmer, and less likely to fight or spread disease. By stabilising dog populations, humane programs reduce conflict and build resilience, ensuring that people and dogs can live side by side without fear.

The message is simple: when communities protect dogs with compassion, they also protect themselves.



# WHAT WORKS INSTEAD

Around the world, the most successful street dog programs are those that focus on humane, evidence-based solutions. These approaches not only protect animal welfare but also safeguard public health and build stronger, kinder communities.

## **Mass Sterilisation (Spay/Neuter)**

By preventing unwanted litters, sterilisation steadily reduces population growth over time. Unlike culling, which creates instability, sterilisation stabilises dog communities, lowers aggression linked to mating behaviour, and improves overall health. Communities that invest in sterilisation see fewer roaming dogs and less conflict on the streets.

## **Mass Vaccination**

Vaccination is the cornerstone of rabies elimination. When at least 70% of dogs in a community are vaccinated, the virus can no longer spread. This protects not only dogs but also the people who live among them. Vaccinated dog populations act as a shield, keeping families, especially children, safe from one of the deadliest diseases known to humanity.

## **Community Education**

Lasting change is only possible when communities understand the issues and feel empowered to act. Education campaigns teach people how to live safely and compassionately with dogs, how to respond to bites, and why sterilisation and vaccination matter. Schools play a crucial role, instilling compassion and responsibility in the next generation.

## **Feeding & Care Programs**

Providing safe feeding points, access to clean water, and basic veterinary care stabilises dog populations and reduces competition for resources. Well-cared-for dogs are less likely to roam, fight, or become aggressive. Feeding programs also encourage positive relationships between dogs and the people who share their streets, building trust and cooperation.

Together, these four strategies create the only sustainable pathway forward: healthier dogs, safer people, and communities built on compassion rather than cruelty.

# Case Study: Jaipur

One of the most powerful examples of success comes from Jaipur, India. For many years, the city struggled with rising dog populations and human rabies deaths. Mass culling campaigns were carried out, yet the problems persisted, dogs continued to reappear, and people remained at risk.

Everything changed when Jaipur launched a Catch–Neuter–Vaccinate–Return (CNVR) program. Instead of killing dogs, they were humanely caught, sterilised to prevent breeding, vaccinated against rabies, and then returned to their own territories. These returned dogs acted as guardians of their neighbourhoods: they could not reproduce, and they blocked unvaccinated outsiders from moving in.

The results were dramatic. Over time, dog population growth slowed, stability increased, and most importantly, human rabies deaths in the program areas fell to zero. This was not a temporary fix but a permanent shift, built on science and compassion.

The Jaipur experience also showed that sustained coverage and monitoring are essential. It was not enough to run a single campaign, ongoing sterilisation, vaccination, and record-keeping ensured the program's success. With consistent commitment, Jaipur became a model for cities around the world, proving that CNVR is not just humane, but also highly effective.

The lesson is clear: when communities choose CNVR, they choose safety, stability, and humanity.



# GLOBAL CONSENSUS

The call to end dog culling is not just an opinion held by animal welfare groups, it is the global consensus of the world's leading health and veterinary authorities.

- **World Health Organization (WHO)**

- WHO has long confirmed that mass dog vaccination is the only effective way to eliminate rabies. Their guidance is clear: vaccinating at least 70% of dogs in a population is enough to stop the spread of the virus. Killing dogs, by contrast, has no impact on rabies transmission and wastes resources that could save lives.

- **World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH, formerly OIE)**

- WOAH provides international standards for animal health and welfare. Their guidelines explicitly reject culling as a method of dog population control, urging countries instead to adopt Catch–Neuter–Vaccinate–Return (CNVR) programs combined with education and community engagement.

- **World Small Animal Veterinary Association (WSAVA)**

- Representing veterinary professionals worldwide, WSAVA also endorses vaccination-centred approaches. They stress that controlling rabies in dogs through vaccination is the single most effective way to protect human health and achieve the goal of Zero by 2030—a world free from human deaths caused by dog-mediated rabies.

Together, these authorities send a powerful, unified message: culling is not a solution. Humane, science-based strategies—vaccination, sterilisation, education, and care are the only path to safer, healthier communities.

This global consensus reinforces what communities already know through experience: when compassion and evidence guide policy, everyone benefits.

# PUTTING EVIDENCE INTO ACTION

The research, the case studies, and the experience from communities around the world all point to the same conclusion: lasting change is possible when we choose humane, evidence-based solutions. But success requires more than isolated campaigns, it depends on building long-term commitment and community trust.

Build a stable, vaccinated community dog population.

Healthy, vaccinated dogs are the cornerstone of rabies elimination and population control. By ensuring that at least 70% of dogs are vaccinated, communities create a protective barrier that safeguards both dogs and people. A stable dog population also means fewer conflicts, calmer behaviour, and less roaming.

Commit to CNVR with community participation and transparent reporting.

Catch–Neuter–Vaccinate–Return (CNVR) is not just a technical solution—it is a community project. Lasting success comes when local people are invited to participate, whether by volunteering, spreading awareness, or helping to monitor dog populations. Transparency in reporting numbers—dogs sterilised, vaccinated, and returned—builds public trust and demonstrates accountability.

Replace culling with compassion and science.

Cruelty has no place in modern, humane societies. Replacing culling with CNVR and education shifts the focus from fear and violence to compassion and safety. When communities embrace science and kindness, they break the cycle of suffering and build a future where both people and dogs thrive together.

The path forward is clear. Choose stability. Choose compassion. Choose solutions that work.

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