

NH-11014/279/2025-HA(CN.262254)
Government of India
Ministry of Road Transport & Highways
(Highway Administration Cell)
Transport Bhawan, 1, Parliament Street, New Delhi - 110001

Dated : 15.09.2026

1. The Chief Secretaries of all the State Governments/ UTs
2. The Principal Secretaries/ Secretaries of all States/ UTs Public Works Department dealing with National Highways, other centrally sponsored schemes.
3. All Engineers-in-Chief and Chief Engineers of Public Works Department of States/ UTs dealing with National Highways, other centrally sponsored schemes.
4. The Director General (Border Roads), Seema Sadak Bhawan, Ring Road, New Delhi
5. The Chairman, National Highways Authority of India, G-5 & 6, Sector-10, Dwarka, New Delhi-110 075.
6. The Managing Director, NHIDCL.
7. All Regional Officers of the Ministry/NHAI and EDs of NHIDCL
8. The Principal Secretaries/ Secretaries of Animal Husbandry Department of all States/ UTs.

Subject: - Standard Operating Procedure (SoP) for Safe Removal of Stray Cattle and Other Animals from National Highways/Expressways.

Sir,

In exercise of the powers conferred under Rule 3 of the Highway Administration Rules, 2019 issued under the provisions of the Control of National Highways (Land and Traffic) Act, 2002, and in compliance with the directions of the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India in *Suo Motu Writ Petition (Civil) No. 5 of 2025 ("City Hounded by Strays, Kids Pay Price")*, the Competent Authority has approved the attached Standard Operating Procedure (SoP) for Safe Removal of Stray Cattle and Other Animals from National Highways/Expressways. All concerned stakeholders are directed to follow the attached SoP for implementation of the provisions of the Control of National Highways (Land and Traffic) Act, 2002, read with Section 37(1) and 37(2) thereof.

2. This circular is being issued in continuation to the Standard Operating Procedure (SoP) for Identification, Reporting, Removal of Unauthorized Occupations and Regulation of Traffic on National Highways issued vide Circular No. NH-11014/171/2025-HA dated 07.08.2025, and shall be read in conjunction therewith.

Encl: Standard Operating Procedure (SoP).

(Ganesh B. Shelar)
Executive Engineer (NFSG)

Copy to:

- i. NIC - for uploading on Ministry's website under "What's New" and under Compendium.

Copy for kind information to:

- i. Sr. PPS to Secretary (RT&H)
- ii. Sr. PPS to DG (RD) & SS
- iii. Sr. PPS to AS (H&LA)
- iv. Secretary, Animal Welfare Board of India

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE FOR SAFE REMOVAL OF STRAY CATTLE AND OTHER ANIMALS FROM NATIONAL HIGHWAYS/EXPRESSWAYS

1. Background

Control of National Highways (Land and Traffic) Act, 2002, Section 37(1) and 37(2) along with Rule 3(1)a of Highway Administration Rules, 2004 mandates Central Government to lay down policies/implementation framework for the removal of animals. The recurring presence of stray cattle and other animals on National Highway (NH) carriageways poses a serious and continuing threat to road safety. Taking cognizance of this issue, the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India in *Suo Motu Writ Petition (Civil) No. 5 of 2025* ("City Hounded by Strays, Kids Pay Price") has directed NHAI to devise a structured mechanism for the safe removal and coordination of stray animals on NHs/Expressways. Accordingly, this SOP is intended to establish a coordinated mechanism with the competent State & Local Authorities for the prevention of stray-animal incursions, their safe removal from NHs/Expressways, and their lawful handover to the competent State/Local Authorities, without altering the statutory allocation of responsibilities.

The management of stray/abandoned animals falls within List II (State List) of the Seventh Schedule (Entries 15 & 16 – prevention of cruelty to animals; pounds and cattle trespass), making it constitutionally a state subject. National Highways and Expressways are, however, vested in and managed by the Central Government/NHAI under the Control of National Highways (Land and Traffic) Act, 2002. This SOP bridges that constitutional divide by delineating a clear, non-overlapping division of responsibilities between NH agencies and State/Local Authorities.

2. Objective

To establish a structured mechanism with clearly assigned institutional responsibility for:

- i. **National Highway Agencies (Road Wing/PWD/NHAI/NHIDCL):** Removal of stray cattle and other animals from NHs, and their transportation to a Shelter/Pound or Gaushala, designated by the State Government for the purpose as applicable.
- ii. **State/District/Local Administration:** Identification, establishment and maintenance of Shelter/Pound.

3. Legal and Constitutional Framework

This SOP operates within, and does not override, the following legal framework:

3.1 Highway Administration Rules, 2004

Rule 3(1)(a) mandates the Central Government to lay down policies and implementation frameworks for Highway Administration. This SOP gives effect to Sections 37(1) and 37(2) of the Control of National Highways (Land and Traffic) Act, 2002.

3.2 The Cattle-Trespass Act, 1871

The Act, and the applicable State amendments/rules, as in force in the respective State/UT, shall govern the establishment and functioning of pounds and the custody and release of impounded cattle.

Sections 4 & 5 vest the identification, establishment and control of pounds in the District Magistrate, and empower the State Government to appoint pound-keepers. Section 31 further empowers State Governments to transfer these functions to any local authority. Section 27 prescribes penalties on pound-keepers, with appeals vested in District officials.

3.3 Constitutional Position

Entries 15 & 16 of List II of the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution place prevention of cruelty to animals, pounds and cattle trespass within the State's legislative and administrative domain. Sheltering, feeding, veterinary care, sterilisation and long-term rehabilitation of stray animals shall remain the responsibility of the competent State/Local Authorities, in accordance with applicable law.

The Standard Operating Procedure issued by the Animal Welfare Board of India on 27.11.2025, pursuant to the directions of the Hon'ble Supreme Court, provides for identification of existing shelters and suitable locations for establishment of new shelters by the jurisdictional Municipal/District Authorities.

4. Definitions

7. **"National Highway Agencies"** means the agencies to whom National Highways are entrusted, as applicable, and responsible for the development, operation, maintenance and management of National Highways and Expressways entrusted to them under law.
8. **"Local Authority"** means the competent authority designated by the State Government/UT Administration, including the District Magistrate/Collector, Animal Husbandry Department, Municipal/Panchayati Raj bodies, or any other authority authorised under applicable law.
9. **" Shelter/Pound"** means a shelter, cattle pound or other authorised facility identified by the State Government/ UT Administration or the District Magistrate or the local authority for receiving and maintaining animals removed from NHs/Expressways.

5. Institutional Roles and Responsibilities

5.1 *National Highway Agencies – Nodal Agency for Removal and Transit*

- i. Identify location on NHs/Expressways where stray cattle/animals frequented and mark such location on the PM Gati Shakti platform.
- ii. Arrange transport of animals to the Shelter/Pound through the competent State/local authority with transportation cost to be borne by the NH agencies.

5.2 *State/District/Local Administration – Nodal Agency for Custody and Rehabilitation*

- i. Identify, establish and maintain shelters/cattle pounds, in accordance with applicable law and the requirements of the competent authorities.
- ii. Arrange transportation mechanism for carrying the stray cattle/ animals and notify the price for such transportation to be paid by NH agencies and receive animals at the cattle pounds.
- iii. Maintain cattle-pound records and initiate owner-tracing and action for recovery of applicable fees, fines and penalties under the relevant cattle-trespass legislation.
- iv. Designate a State-level nodal officer and district-level nodal officers, and share contact details with National Highway Agencies.
- v. Provide a list of designated agencies engaged in the removal, handling and transportation of stray animals, which shall be competent, trained and compliant with the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960 and the Rules made thereunder.

6. Surveillance, Hotspot Mapping and Collection Points by NH agencies

- i. **Surveillance:** Round-the-clock surveillance shall be ensured through Route Patrol Vehicles (RPVs) in designated stretches, and through the Advanced Traffic Management System (ATMS), wherever available. All RPVs shall be equipped with safety equipment (traffic cones, reflective jackets, chevrons, signboards, blinkers) and dashboard cameras.
- ii. **Reporting:** On detecting stray animals, RPV/ATMS teams shall immediately inform the designated nodal officer with exact location (GPS coordinates, latitude/longitude, and chainage). Road users shall be encouraged to report stray-animal incidents through helpline 1033, or Rajmarg Yatra App wherever available, and through other designated reporting channels notified by the concerned Highway Agency.
- iii. **Hotspot Mapping/Review:** Field offices shall maintain a stretch-wise log of all stray-animal incidents (location, time, animal type). Hotspot stretches shall be mapped, preferably through a GIS-based system, reviewed at least once every six months, and updated based on incident data. Targeted interventions – CCTV cameras, barriers, lighting, signage – shall be planned for identified hotspots.
- iv. **Coordination with Local Authorities:** ROs/PDs/PWDs shall coordinate with State/UT governments to sensitise local police stations, municipal authorities and Panchayati Raj institutions, in conformity with direction in para. 10C of the Hon'ble Supreme Court order dated 07-11-2025 and applicable state/govt agencies SOP. The Highway Agency shall arrange for an immediate response to reported stray-animal incidents.
- v. **Cattle pounds:** The State/District/Local Administration shall, as far as practicable, identify shelters/pounds at an indicative density of one per 100 km of NH, subject to local requirements, availability and the directions of the competent authority and density of one per 50km in identified vulnerable location frequented by the stray cattle/animals. The list of shelter/cattle pounds provided by Local Authorities with GPS coordinates and nodal officer contacts shall be maintained and displayed at field offices.
- vi. **Payment structure:** Payment for the removal and transportation of stray cattle/animals from NHs/Expressways to shelters/pounds shall be borne by the concerned Highway Agency and may be structured on a per-animal basis, linked to the number of animals safely removed and handed over.

7. Transportation Protocol

National Highway Agencies shall arrange for the safe removal and transportation of stray cattle/animals from NHs/Expressways to shelters/pounds through designated State/Local Authorities or authorised agencies, using vehicles compliant with applicable animal-transport requirements.

8. Preventive and Long-Term Measures

- i. Cattle-proof chain link fencing along identified vulnerable/hotspot stretches.
- ii. Appropriate warning signage and other traffic-calming/speed-management measures may be provided at identified hotspots to alert drivers subject to applicable road-safety standards and site conditions.
- iii. Prominent display of helpline number 1033 and Rajmarg Yatra App at regular intervals along the highway.
- iv. Community awareness programmes, in coordination with Local Authorities and livestock owners, shall be undertaken to discourage the abandonment of unproductive cattle near NHs/Expressways and to promote responsible livestock management.

9. Reporting, Monitoring and Coordination

- i. Monthly coordination meetings between NH Agencies and the concerned District Officer(s), under the District Highway Safety Task Force constituted pursuant to the directions of the Hon'ble Supreme Court in Suo Motu Writ Petition (Civil) No. 5 of 2025, shall review performance, resolve operational issues and update hotspot data.
- ii. **State-level nodal authority:** States/UTs are requested to designate a State/UT-level nodal authority to consolidate district-wise data and serve as the principal point of contact with NHAI/MoRTH for policy-level coordination.
- iii. **Central MIS/Dashboard:** National Highway Agencies shall consolidate stretch-wise and State/UT-wise data into a central MIS/dashboard for periodic review and compliance reporting to the Hon'ble Supreme Court, as required.
- iv. This SOP shall be reviewed periodically, preferably annually, or earlier if required in light of operational experience, court directions or changes in applicable law.
