Conflict to Co existence

A guide to Living with Animals in the City



Section 0

Preface

In every neighbourhood, humans are not alone. This booklet is for students who want to understand the animals they see every day and help make cities kinder for all living things.





About the author

I'm Rihaan, a 16-year-old student at Dhirubhai Ambani International School, Mumbai. I've been involved in animal welfare since 2018, feeding, rescuing, and fostering stray animals; I've adopted 5 cats! I volunteer with World For All (WFA) Animal Care and Adoptions, where I've helped organise events like the Adoptathon and set up a centre housing 45 dogs in Karjat.

Why I wrote this booklet

Living in a city like Mumbai, where stray animals are everywhere, I've often seen how easily fear and misunderstanding drive conflict between people and animals. In recent years, this issue has gained national attention. Court cases and public debates have highlighted the challenge of managing stray animals. Neither humans nor animals are actively seeking conflict. This booklet is an attempt to address that gap by helping build awareness, reduce fear, and make our cities safer and more compassionate for animals.

Section 1.1

Who shares our city?

In every neighbourhood, many animals live alongside us: navigating the same streets, the same heat, and the same monsoon rains.

Dogs & Cats	Birds	Livestock	Small Animals
Stray animals found in most neighbourhoods	Crows, pigeons, sparrows, mynahs, parrots & more	Common in older parts of the city	Squirrels, insects, lizards & more









> *These animals don't live in our city: we built our city in their home. Remembering this changes how we see them.*

Activity 1

Animals around you

Think back over the past week. List 3 animals you have seen, and reflect on each one.

Animal 1 Name & location	
What was it doing?	
Comfortable or struggling? Why?	
Animal 2 Name & location	
What was it doing?	
Comfortable or struggling? Why?	
Animal 3 Name & location	
What was it doing?	
Comfortable or struggling? Why?	

Section 1.2

Animals feel too

Animals experience a rich inner world. They have real emotions shaped by their experiences, just as we do.

Fear	Pain	Comfort	Attachment
When chased, cornered, or threatened suddenly	From injury or illness	When safe, fed and calm in a familiar place	To their young, territory, or a caring human

All mammals and birds share the brain structures responsible for basic emotions, just like humans! A dog's tail-wag and a cat's purr are all expressions of inner experience.

Activity 2

A day in my life

Write from the point of view of a street animal in your city. Think about a full day — finding food, dangers faced, how humans treated you, and what would make your life better. Aim for at least 150 words.

Choose your animal:	
Your essay (Minimum 150 words)	

Section 1.3 Identifying what animals need

Cities are designed for humans. Animals often struggle to meet even their most basic needs. Here is what they require, and simple ways you can help.

Food	Water	Shelter	Safety
• Plain rice, roti, or animal feed	• Use a clean, stable bowl	• Animals rest under cars & trees	• Never chase, hit, or scare animals
• Avoid spicy or oily food	• Place in a shaded quiet spot	• Do not disturb resting animals	• Keep a calm, gentle distance
• Feed at fixed times daily	• Refill every single day	• Shade is vital in summer	• Speak softly near animals







Activity 3

What does this animal need?

Think of an animal you have seen that appeared to be struggling. Describe the situation and work through the questions below.

Describe the animal & situation	
What is the animal lacking?	

Why can it not solve this alone?	
What could a human do to help?	

Activity 4

What will you do this week?

Small, consistent actions matter. Tick off what you commit to doing this week:

- □ Leave out a bowl of clean water for a street animal
- □ Replace or refill the water bowl every single day
- □ Observe a street animal calmly for a few minutes without disturbing it
- □ Tell a friend or family member one fact about animal needs
- □ Photograph your action and share it with your teacher or Rihaan
- □ My own commitment: _____

Section 2.1 Why animals bite

You've probably been afraid of an animal before. Often, this is because you're afraid it will bite you. Most conflict between humans and animals happens because of fear and misunderstanding, not aggression. Understanding why animals react the way they do helps us stay safe and act with empathy.

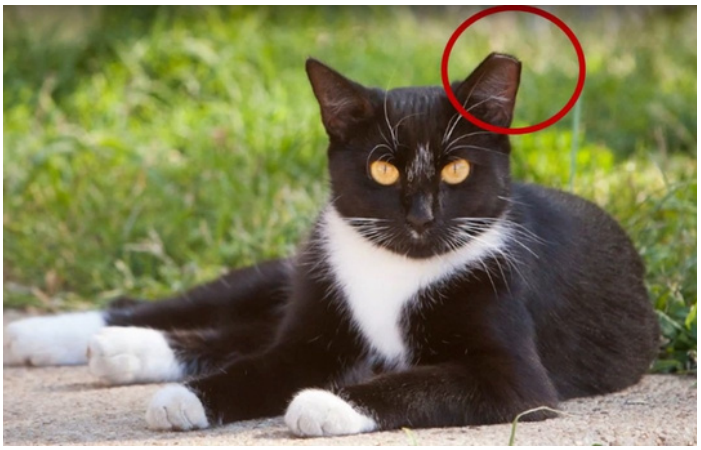
Fear	Pain	Protecting young	Past trauma
Approached suddenly, chased, or cornered	Injured or sick animals react defensively	Parent animals are highly protective	Animals previously harmed may fear all humans

Section 2.2 Safe behaviours around animals

How we approach and behave around animals makes all the difference. Most bites are completely preventable.

✓ Do	✕ Don't
• Stay calm • Keep your distance • Move slowly • Observe quietly	• Run or shout • Throw objects • Touch suddenly • Tease or chase

> *A clipped ear generally indicates that a dog or cat has been vaccinated and is safe.*

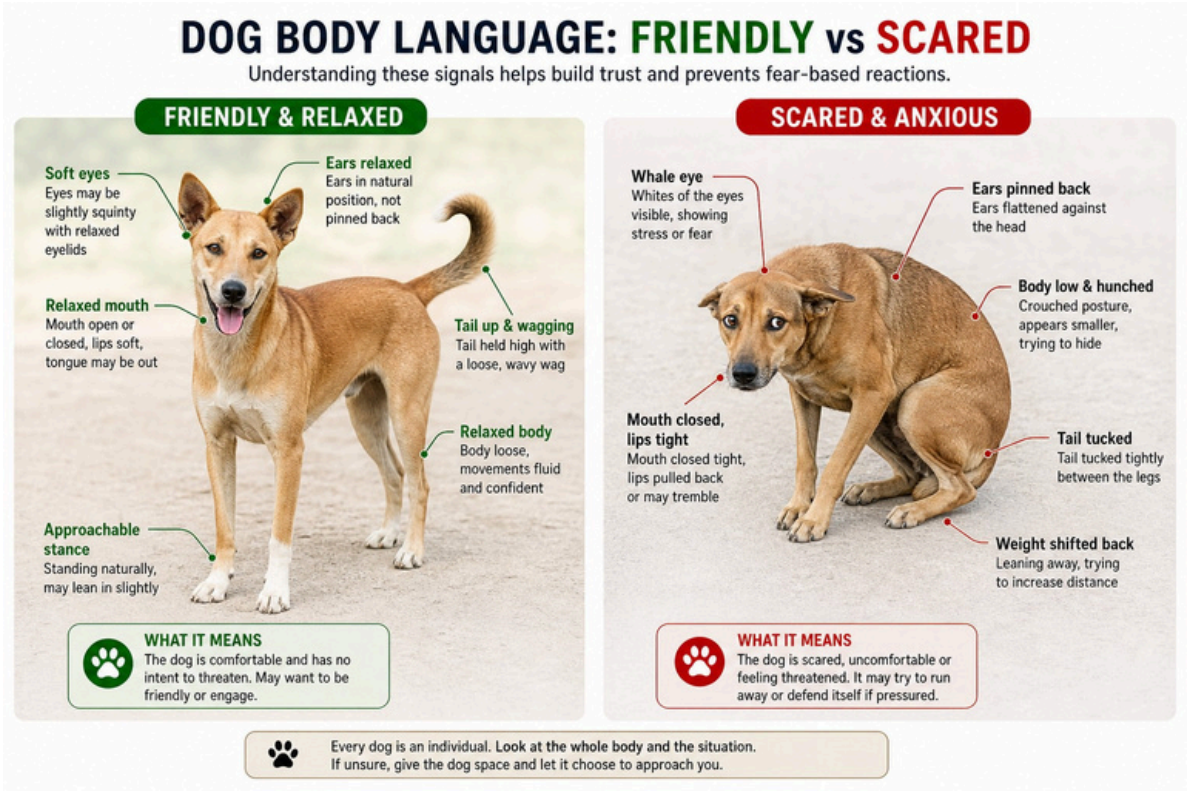


Section 2.3 Reading animal body language

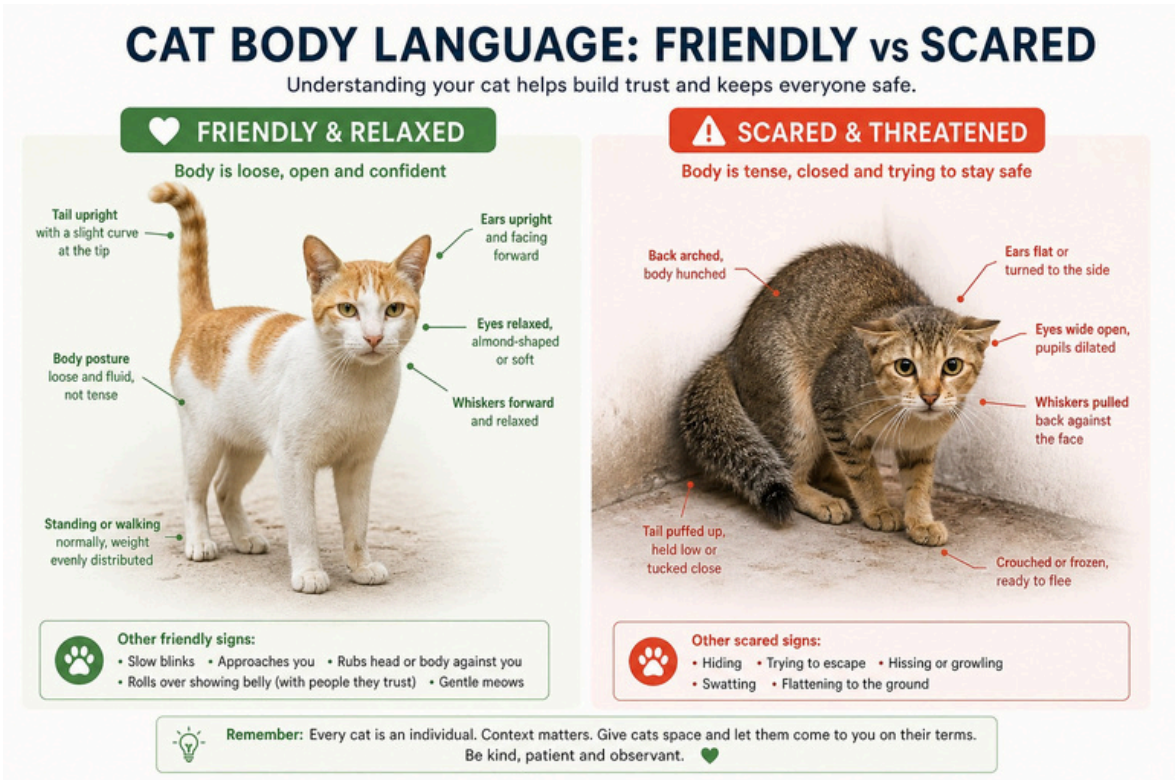
Since animals cannot speak, they communicate through body language. Learning to read these signals helps you know when an animal is safe to be near, and when to give them space.

Dog — Calm	Dog — Afraid	Cat — Calm	Cat — Afraid
• Tail relaxed or gently wagging • Ears neutral • Body relaxed	• Growling or barking • Showing teeth • Tail stiff or tucked • Ears pulled back	• Sitting or approaching slowly • Tail relaxed • Ears forward	• Hissing • Arched back • Runs away • Ears flat

Dog Body Language



Cat body language

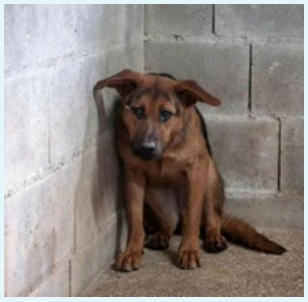
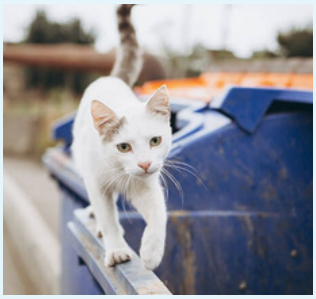


A calm animal is not necessarily friendly. Always move slowly and give animals the choice to approach you, never force contact.

Activity 5

Identify the emotion

Look at each image below. Decide whether the animal is calm or afraid, and explain the clues that helped you decide.

			
This animal is: □ Calm □ Afraid **How can you tell?**	**This animal is:** □ Calm □ Afraid **How can you tell?**	**This animal is:** □ Calm □ Afraid **How can you tell?**	**This animal is:** □ Calm □ Afraid **How can you tell?**

Section 2.4

What to do if you are bitten

1. Inform an adult immediately
2. Wash the wound thoroughly with soap and water, then disinfect
3. Apply gentle pressure with a clean cloth to stop bleeding
4. ALWAYS seek medical help. A doctor may recommend vaccines.

Section 2.5 What to do if you see an injured animal

1. Stay calm: do not make loud noises or sudden movements near the animal
2. Observe from a distance: check where it is injured, if it is bleeding, and if it can move
3. Do NOT touch the animal: injured animals may bite even if they know you
4. Call for help: dial the animal ambulance (1962) or contact a local NGO
5. Stay nearby to guide rescuers to the exact location

Activity 6

Emergency contact card

Fill in your local contacts below so you are prepared if you ever encounter an injured animal.

Emergency contacts	
Animal ambulance	**1962**
Local NGO	
Parent / teacher	

Section 3.1 What is human-animal conflict?

Human-animal conflict refers to situations when humans and animals interact in ways that cause harm, fear, or disturbance. It is almost always the result of misunderstanding, pressure on space, or disrupted routines.

> *Examples include dogs biting humans out of fear, and humans harming animals out of frustration.*

Section 3.2 Causes of human-animal conflict

Conflict rarely has a single cause. Understanding the root causes helps us find solutions that actually work.

Urbanisation	Irregular feeding	Poor waste management	Lack of population control
Buildings replace habitats. Animals lose space and enter human areas.	If feeding stops suddenly, animals become stressed and may act aggressively.	Open garbage becomes a food source, drawing animals into human spaces.	India has 60 million+ street dogs. Without sterilisation, numbers rise.

Activity 7 · Case study **Residential area, Mumbai**

In a housing society, residents reported increased barking and chasing incidents by stray dogs near a school. Residents demanded that all stray dogs be removed. However, it was found that the society had recently restricted the work of animal feeders, citing safety concerns.

1. What is the root cause of the problem?

2. Who are all the stakeholders? (Be creative — animals can be stakeholders too!)

3. What are possible solutions?

Section 3.3 Wildlife

Near forests and national parks, animals lose habitat to urban expansion. They enter human areas looking for food or following old movement routes, creating unpredictable and dangerous situations.

Activity 8· Case study **Sanjay Gandhi National Park, Mumbai**

Leopards have been entering Mumbai at night. There has been increased construction and urban expansion near the park. These leopards are attracted by local stray dogs that congregate near piles of garbage. Authorities have encouraged residents to remain indoors if a leopard is spotted, but people continue to attempt to trap them.



1. What is the root cause of the problem?

2. Who are all the stakeholders? (Think beyond just humans!)

3. What are possible solutions?

Section 4.1

Solutions to human-animal conflict

Solutions to conflict exist at every level — from individual daily choices to national policy. The most effective change happens when all three work together.

Individual	Community	Policy
What YOU do • Stay calm around animals • Give animals space, don't chase • Leave out water for them	*What people do together* • Feed animals at fixed times • Keep surroundings clean • Work with local NGOs	*Government & organisations* • Waste management systems • Sterilisation & vaccination • Animal shelters & rescue





Section 4.2 Laws protecting animals in India

India has a strong legal framework for animal protection. Knowing these laws empowers you to report violations and hold authorities accountable.

Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1960	Animal Birth Control Rules 2001	Wildlife Protection Act 1972
• It is illegal to harm animals • Covers all domestic and stray animals • Violations can lead to prosecution	• Stray dogs cannot be killed • Must be sterilised and vaccinated • Governs humane population control	• Wild animals are fully protected • Illegal to harm or capture them • Covers leopards, birds, and more

Activity 9

Debate: Do Indian laws do enough?

Research points for and against the statement below, then hold a debate with your class or a partner.

> *"Do current Indian laws do enough to protect animals and ensure safe coexistence with humans?"*

✓ Laws DO enough	✕ Laws DON'T do enough

Section 4.3 Your individual role in policy

You do not need to wait until you are an adult to make a difference. There are real actions available to you right now.

- □ Report cruelty to local authorities or an NGO
- □ Inform adults when you see an animal in danger
- □ Spread awareness among friends and family
- □ Write to local authorities to suggest changes

Activity 10

Letter to your municipal authority

Write a practice letter to your local municipal authority. Describe an animal-related problem in your neighbourhood, suggest one solution, and explain why it matters. You do not have to send it, but you are welcome to!

To: _____

Date: _____

Dear _____,

Yours sincerely, _____

Section 5

Final projects

These two projects bring together everything you have learned. Take your time, be creative, and think about what kind of city you want to live in.

Activity 11

Design a city

You are a citydesigner. Redraw your neighbourhood so that humans and animals can live together peacefully.
Some ideas:

- Waterpoints
- Safefeeding zones
- Shadeoranimal shelters
- Signsforthe safe movement of animals on roads
- Goodwaste management
- Medicalcare (animal hospitals, vets, ambulances)
- Parks

Activity 12

Real-world action log

Leave out food or water for a street animal every day for one week. Record your action each day below. Take photos and share them with your teacher or with Rihaan.

Day	Time	What I did	Who helped?
Day1			
Day2			
Day3			
Day4			
Day5			
Day6			
Day7			

Afterword

Thank you for working through this booklet! Every action, however small, contributes to a city that is kinder and safer for all living things. Please share your work, your questions, and your ideas.

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- □ Share pictures of your activities
- □ Ask questions about anything in this booklet
- □ Suggest ideas for future editions



“The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated.”

— Mahatma Gandhi