

## UNION BUDGET 2026–27: WHAT IT MEANS FOR ANIMAL HUSBANDRY, FISHERIES, AND THE FUTURE OF VETERINARY SCIENCE

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### Abstract

The Union Budget 2026–27 marks a strategic shift in India's approach to animal husbandry and fisheries, positioning these sectors as core drivers of rural income, food security, and public health. This article examines key budgetary provisions, including capital subsidies for veterinary infrastructure, expanded vaccination and disease control programs, breed improvement with emphasis on indigenous genetic diversity, support for Livestock Farmer Producer Organizations (LFPOs), and strengthened fisheries investment. It highlights the integration of the One Health framework and the introduction of Bharat Vistar AI for region-specific advisories, signalling a move toward preventive, data-driven livestock management. Beyond financial allocations, the budget reflects structural reforms aimed at workforce expansion, collective farmer empowerment, export facilitation, and women's participation in fisheries. While implementation remains critical, the policy direction suggests a long-term commitment to sustainable livestock development and the evolving role of veterinary science in India's rural and economic landscape.

### Introduction

When our finance minister shrimati Nirmala Sitharaman presented this year's budget, I honestly wasn't expecting to care. Budgets are usually just long lists of numbers that mean very little until someone breaks them down three months later. But somewhere in the middle of the announcements, I actually listened carefully. Animal husbandry and fisheries weren't buried this time. They were front and centre, I mean, treated like they actually matter to the economy, which, for the record, they do. Nearly one in every six rupees earned on Indian farms comes from livestock and fisheries. I've spent time on farms, watched animals being tended to before sunrise, spoken with farmers who carry a specific kind of quiet anxiety that only comes when an animal is sick and help is an hour away. That statistic isn't abstract to me. It represents real families with real margins, and for them, progress doesn't begin with a press release. It begins when something actually reaches the ground. A capital subsidy plan tied to loans is aimed at pulling private investment into veterinary colleges, clinics, and diagnostic labs. If it works as intended, close to twenty thousand new animal care workers could enter the workforce. That sounds like a policy target until you consider what the current situation looks like: in many rural areas, one veterinarian covers multiple villages spread across distances that would surprise most

city dwellers. When livestock fall ill, the delay alone can turn something treatable into a total loss. More infrastructure means faster diagnosis, earlier treatment, fewer animals dying from conditions that were perfectly manageable and that directly protects income for families with very little margin for loss. The breed improvement programs are interesting too, though maybe not for the reasons they're usually discussed. Yes, higher milk yield matters. Yes, disease resistance is important. But what stood out to me was the emphasis on indigenous breeds — animals that carry generations of adaptation to local climates and conditions. Improving them scientifically while keeping that genetic diversity intact is the kind of long-term thinking that doesn't make headlines but quietly proves its value when weather patterns shift and you suddenly need animals that can handle what's coming.

One of the first things they teach you in vet school is that prevention is almost always cheaper and more effective than treatment. It's almost embarrassing how long it's taken for that logic to show up clearly in livestock policy. Expanded vaccination drives and structured disease control programs don't just protect the animals. They protect income. They stabilise food supply chains. A disease outbreak that spreads unchecked doesn't stay on one farm, it can

devastate a community in weeks. These aren't exciting interventions. They don't have ribbon-cutting moments. But their absence has historically cost rural India far more than their implementation ever would. Support for Livestock Farmer Producer Organizations (LFPOs) addresses something that better technology alone can't solve: the sheer structural disadvantage of operating alone. A small farmer negotiating individually has almost no leverage. Collectively, farmers can buy feed at lower costs, share veterinary services, and negotiate real prices for milk and meat instead of taking whatever they're offered. The proposed reduction in taxes on collectively purchased animal feed directly cuts daily expenses for households running on thin margins. Roughly 80 million people in India depend on livestock for their livelihoods. There's also the One Health angle here, which doesn't get nearly enough attention in general coverage. Animal health, human health, and environmental health aren't separate systems. Strengthening veterinary services reduces zoonotic disease risk, supports safer food production, and contributes to public health outcomes that eventually matter to everyone, not just farmers.

The fisheries sector gets ₹2,761.80 crore, the highest ever. More interesting than the number is the approach. Developing reservoirs and Amrit Sarovars for fish cultivation creates income alternatives in regions where rainfall has become genuinely unpredictable. That's not a small thing when climate variability is reshaping what farmers can rely on. Updated export norms simplify trade procedures for seafood, with tax relaxations on deep-sea catch and faster processing timelines that preserve freshness and improve market value. It's a quiet policy shift but a meaningful one for India's position in global seafood trade. The acknowledgement of women's roles in fisheries is long overdue. In coastal communities, women handle cleaning, drying, and trading often the most labour-intensive parts of the chain but from somewhere genuine.

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receive minimal formal recognition or support. Beginning to correct that imbalance matters beyond just fairness; it affects how effectively resources move through the sector. For anyone studying aquatic animal health or fisheries sciences, this is worth paying attention to. Quality assurance, biosecurity, traceability systems, international trade these are growing fields, and this budget is pointing in their direction.

## Bharat vistar AI

Bharat Vistar AI, integrated with AgriStack and ICAR's scientific databases, aims to deliver region-specific advisories in multiple Indian languages. The important word is 'region-specific' not a national template applied uniformly, but guidance based on local climate, local disease trends, local conditions. Early disease alerts help veterinarians shift from emergency response toward prevention. Precision livestock farming that is monitoring health parameters, feeding patterns, environmental conditions through digital tools, is moving from concept toward actual practice. For farmers, fewer losses. For vets, an additional layer of information rather than a replacement for being present. Aprons and stethoscope aren't going anywhere. They'll just come with data alongside them.

## Conclusion

One budget won't fix everything. Implementation at the village level is where these things actually succeed or fail, and that work is slower and harder and less visible than any announcement. But in my UG at BVSc & AH, what I see here is direction. Breed improvement, disease prevention, collective farmer support, fisheries expansion, technological integration, each of these, pursued consistently under a One Health framework, builds something that lasts. The work ahead is real. But the intent, this time, feels like it's coming.

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