

Causes of stray animals and consequences

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More Humanity towards Animals



Presentation outline

- Stray animals: who are they?
- Stray animals in Eastern/Southern Europe and Western Europe
- Reasons for pet abandonment
- Street animal (over)population and consequences
- Role of the EU
- What is FP doing



Stray animals are not only on the street

Stray animals **ARE**:

- Street animals: Born and reproduce on the street, and have never been owned
- Lost animals: Owned free-roaming animals that could not find their way home
- Abandoned animals: Owned animals who are no longer wanted and left on the street to fend for themselves or taken to a shelter by their owner

Stray animals **ARE NOT**:

- Wild animals: Stray animals, wherever they live, remain domestic animals



Visible strays vs Invisible strays

It is wrong to think that stray animals are only found in Eastern/Southern European countries. They are also in Western European countries!

Where are they?

In Eastern/Southern Europe, stray animals are **VISIBLE** because they are mostly living on the street. They are sometimes picked up and brought to shelters and/or killed.

In Western Europe, stray animals (abandoned animals) are **INVISIBLE** because almost always they are immediately picked up from the street and put in public shelters/pounds

If stray animals were not immediately collected and put in shelters, we would also have an issue with increasing stray animal population in Western Europe. For example in the UK there were over 47,000 abandoned dogs in 2015*

→ **The main cause of stray animals is abandonment. And after that, if dogs/cats are left on the street it is breeding.**

* Stray Dog Survey 2015 – Dogs Trust

Reasons for pet abandonment

Why do people abandon their pets?

- Time constraint: People underestimating the time needed to take good care of pets
- Behavioural problem: Such as aggression. Often due to lack of socialisation and training
- Medical problem: Pets becoming sick, for example due to poor breeding or having age related illnesses such as dementia
- Cost of pet ownership: Owner not able to pay for food, vet care, and other bills
- Lifestyle changes: Owners losing their job, getting divorced, having a baby, encountering health difficulties, etc.
- Housing problem: Owners moving into rented accommodation that does not allow pets, owners moving to smaller place, moving abroad, home foreclosure

Facilitated by: either no legislation or enforcement regarding abandonment and Identification & Registration

→ **At the source of these reasons lies another problem..**

People 'consume' pets

From buying to abandoning, today people tend to 'consume' pets just like they consume goods

Impulse consumption behaviour

1. Buying pets: The Internet allows easy, quick and cheap purchase of animals (vs breeder visit in the past)
2. Using pets: People project themselves through their pets (status/fashion pets, celebrity culture)

Result:

Abandonment: Owners get rid of their pets as quickly and easily as they throw away goods when no longer wanted/popular/novel

Street dog population: Reasons

Reason: Abandonment (for the reasons stated)

Facilitated by:

- Lack of legislation or enforcement regarding abandonment of pets
- No effective mechanisms in place to collect abandoned animals and rehome them (Western Europe v's Eastern Europe countries)

Which leads to:

- Animals on the street and uncontrolled breeding amongst street animals resulting in the second, third generation, etc. of street animals

Perpetuated by:

- Uncontrolled breeding of free roaming pet animals with street animals: because owners either do not have the funds or inclination to neuter their pets

Which leads to:

- Large and growing stray dog populations and human/animal conflict issues

Stray animal overpopulation: Consequences

- **Human/Stray animal conflict:** Road accidents/dog bites/spread of diseases/dog fouling
- **Overcrowded shelters:** Across Europe, animals are being kept in overcrowded shelters sometimes in inhumane and unhealthy living conditions
- **Culling:** Eastern European countries (for example Romania) are carrying out mass killing of stray animals. Not only inhumane but also ineffective solution: short-term, does not reduce the number of animals in an area in a permanent way; deals with the symptoms without addressing the underlying causes of the problem
- **Creation of a stray dog business:** People making money out of stray dogs i.e. Bid rigging: Municipalities hire private companies to run CNR campaigns. These companies have no real experience in running such campaigns. They just get guaranteed profit from the public funds and answer for nothing other than numbers on a paper, with often no proof of these numbers
- **High cost of dealing with situation:** Often funded by the tax payer and NGO's through public funding



What is required at EU level to help address the situation

Very often, we hear that the welfare of dogs and cats, including strays, is not governed by EU rules and that the matter remains within the sole competence of the Member States.

Nevertheless, over the past few years the EU has taken a number of steps to help address the issue:

2010

- EU Council Conclusions on the welfare of dogs and cats (pets and strays)
- Partner of the CAROdog platform

2011

- EP Written Declaration 26 on Dog Population Management, followed by...

2012

- Resolution on the establishment of an EU legal framework for the protection of pets and stray animals (4 July 2012)

What is required at EU level to help address the situation

2013

- Partner of the CAROcat platform
- EU letter to Romanian Government “*Whilst respecting the Romanian Parliament's decision and acknowledging that this issue falls outside the scope of EU legislation, I would like to recall Romania's international obligations as a member of the OIE*”
- 1st EU Conference on the Welfare of Dogs and Cats: Building a Europe that cares for companion animals, followed by a Workshop under the Lithuanian Presidency

2015

- 2nd EU Conference on dog and cat welfare. Presentation of the results of the EU study on the welfare of dogs and cats involved in commercial practices

2016

- Stray dogs included in the Animal Health Law

→ Through these actions, the EU has proven that it can help to address the issue and have an impact on the welfare of dogs and cats, including strays

What is required **now** at EU level to help address the situation

Animal Health Law (AHL)

- Breeding: Control breeding by ensuring that the obligation of registration of all establishments of breeders and sellers is effective before 2021 (first step transparency)
- Traceability: Improve traceability by extending mandatory I&R to companion animals (via delegated act)

Public Education

- Promote public education on responsible pet ownership



What is FOUR PAWS doing

International Stray Animal Care

Catch-Neuter-Release (CNR) – Only effective and sustainable method (WHO)

Objective: To reduce the stray animal population

Combined with...

Community outreach – Events (adults/children) where we teach responsible pet ownership to local communities

Objective: To reduce dogs/cats being abandoned in the future

Programme: FP's International SAC programme, working with National and Local authorities, Vet Agencies and local vets, NGOs and local communities

Changing negative human behaviour towards stray animals

Objective: To help improve the way in which street animals are treated in society

Programme: Animal Assisted Therapy with stray dogs

Thank you

Questions?

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