STRAY DOG & FERAL CAT POPULATIONS IN EUROPE: FROM CULLING TO CARE

Animal Welfare and Castration Center in Odessa, Ukraine

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Original situation in Odessa

- Approximately 70,000 – 80,000 stray dogs and several thousand feral cats used to live in the year 2000 in the streets of Odessa without any care.
- Furthermore, the unneutered pets from private households were roaming the streets, contributing to the overpopulation.
Dealing with stray dogs - *Budka*

• Catching of around 200 stray dogs weekly by the municipal dog catchers

• Stay in *Budka*
  - Lack of food, water and care in general
  - Lack in space and freedom of movement
  - Horrendous hygienic conditions

• Culling after **five** days in *Budka*
Budka

- As well catching of free roaming dogs
  - Private owners had to buy back their animals within five days
  - Or they were gassed in containers
- Not hermetically sealed containers
  - Slow and painful death
  - Afterwards, some were buried alive (just unconscious)
Approaches to manage stray animal populations (1)

Catching & Culling

• Neither an animal welfare friendly nor an effective solution to the problem, because
  ➢ Every habitat provides resources (food, water, shelter etc.) for a specific quantity of animals of the same species (“carrying capacity”)
  ➢ Vacant gaps are refilled by:
    – Migration of other animals from surrounding areas
    – Increased breeding success (increased birth rate, decreased death rate)
Approaches to manage stray animal populations (2)

Trap Neuter Release

- Animal welfare friendly and effective solution
  - Catching animals as gently as possible
  - Vaccination – Neutering – Marking
  - Clinical recovery
  - Return animals to original territory

Ear tag
Comparison of the influence of different control measures on population development

- No management
- Catching & Culling
- Trap – Neuter – Release (TNR)
Beginnings of the castration project in Odessa (1)

Main goals
• Animal welfare friendly, effective reduction of the number of stray dogs by TNR
• Veterinary hospital for medical treatment
• Animal shelter (adoption)

Mandatory requirement
• Contract signing between town committee and the German Animal Welfare Federation
• Acceptance of the concept „catch, neuter, release“ (by competent authorities and citizens)
• Providing a location free of charge by the city
• City bears a part of the running costs
Beginnings of the castration project in Odessa (2)

• **2000**: German Animal Welfare Federation starts its work
  - Negotiations with the head of the Budka, the city authorities (deputy major offered to provide a free of charge location), members of the local animal welfare organizations, the German Ambassador (contact to major), meetings with veterinarians

• **2001**: killing of dogs in *Budka* stopped
  - Budka → animal shelter

• **2004**: signing the lease agreement for the Animal Welfare and Castration Center
Animal Welfare and Castration Center Odessa

- Opening in 2005
  - 90 kennels (3-4 dogs per kennel), fenced running areas
  - two cat houses
  - Quarantine area
  - Clinic with examination, surgery and recovery rooms

- Center is managed by locals
- Operations are carried out by professionals and according to the latest scientific knowledge
Animal Welfare and Castration Center Odessa

- Municipal dog catchers or private persons bring dogs to the Center
  - The dog catchers have been trained to use animal friendly capture methods, one district after another
- In the Center:
  - Medical treatment (e.g. wound management)
  - Castration (also from private dogs)
  - Antiparasitics, rabies vaccination, marking (tattoo and ear tag) and registration
  - Release after recovery time
Castration Center –
Preconditions for success

- Acceptance among the population (campaigning, open days etc.)
  - Taking animals to the center
  - Feeding of stray dogs and feral cats
  - Rehoming/adoption
Current situation

• Reduction of stray dog population from around 70,000 to 3,000 - 4,000
  ➢ Project expansion to surrounding areas
• Less complaints about stray dogs (high acceptance and big support)
Current and future plans

  - Population of several ten thousand animals (mostly hidden)
  - Free vouchers for 32 collaborating veterinary clinics
  - Neutering of more than 5,000 cats → prevention of estimated 77,000 births
Thank you for your attention!