

HOW TO SOLVE ROMANIA'S STREET DOG PROBLEM
- EFFECTIVELY, HUMANELY AND FOR EVER.

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1. Introduction.

Street dogs cause road accidents and nuisance, wake residents at night, disturb rubbish, frighten children and cause complaints to municipalities. The sight of hungry, sick dogs foraging desperately for food, or of their dead bodies squashed on Romania's roads, is distressing to visitors and residents alike and tarnishes Romania's image as an applicant to the European Union. Most of these miserable strays are potentially loyal, affectionate companions, pets and guard dogs. The problem is worse in Romania than in many other countries because of the policies of the previous communist regime and because many Romanians are animal lovers and deliberately feed street dogs. The proliferation of rubbish also supports the stray dog population.

FPCC's purpose is to persuade central government and local authorities to solve Romania's stray dog problem effectively, humanely and permanently.

"Each habitat has a specific carrying capacity for each species. This specific carrying capacity depends on the availability...of resources (shelter, food, water). The density of a population of higher vertebrates (including dogs) is almost always near the carrying capacity of the environment. Any reduction in population density through mortality is rapidly compensated by better reproduction and survival. In other words when dogs are removed, the survivors' life expectancy increases because they have better access to the resources, and there is less competition for resources". - World Health Organisation Guidelines for Dog Population Management, Geneva 1990, page 9.

2. Stray Dog Statistics

By "stray dog" we mean not only feral dogs, which stay at a safe distance from human beings, but free-roaming dogs or inadequately supervised dogs, which are occasionally or regularly fed by human beings, who may or may not consider themselves the dog's owner. **In other words all dogs except those few which are both fully dependent and always prevented from copulating.**

We have no accurate figures for the unsupervised dog population of Romania. However FPCC has in two and a half years from mid-2001 to end 2003 collected, neutered and vaccinated over 4500 dogs in and around Campina, an area with a human population of about 70,000. This suggests that the carrying capacity of Campina and suburbs is about 4000 dogs including owned but largely unsupervised dogs, a density of 1 dog per 17.5 people. This suggests that there are no more than 1.5 million unsupervised dogs in the whole of Romania. The density of dogs in Campina is higher than in many other towns because of dog dumping, so a figure of 1 unsupervised dog per 15 people is probably a more accurate overall estimate (this excludes puppies which die before breeding age).

This suggests that the carrying capacity of Bucharest is between 100,000 and 150,000 dogs. Stray or unsupervised dog

populations grow and decline in direct proportion to the human population. FPCC's sister organisation in Istanbul, SHKD, has witnessed this in the new suburbs springing up all around Turkey's commercial capital, one of the biggest and fastest growing cities in the world.

Numbers in urban areas of Romania are temporarily reduced by sporadic extermination campaigns such as those instigated by the mayor of Bucharest. When Pitesti city hall stopped killing dogs in April 2001 and brought its stray dogs to a former fox fur farm converted by Mrs Aurora Brizzi and Mrs Ute Langenkamp into an animal shelter, the dog population in the shelter quickly grew to a massive and barely manageable 3000 dogs by 2001. Pitesti has a population of about 200,000 people and there are still over 4000 dogs on the city streets, many of them now neutered and vaccinated by AULIM, Mrs Langenkamp's charity. In addition to the 3000 dogs in AULIMs shelter and the 4000 or so on the city streets, AULIM has rehomed thousands of dogs, mainly abroad, in the last 3 years. We estimate that the carrying capacity of Pitesti is between 6,000 and 12,000 dogs.

The stray dog population of every Romanian town and village depends solely on the carrying capacity of the area which in turn in a climate with plentiful water depends solely on the food (and in winter shelter) available. The food on which stray and unsupervised dogs survive consists of edible rubbish and handouts by animal lovers. The rubbish and handouts are in direct proportion to the human population. Stray dogs cannot survive independently of human beings.

Semi-stray or unsupervised dogs, those 'owned' by residents but always or sometimes allowed to stray at will, and therefore to breed, must also be taken into the equation (and of course be neutered and vaccinated). In Campina we estimate that 90% of the dogs with owners or feeders are allowed to wander and if not neutered, to breed.

Virtually every stray dog in Campina was known to us until we stopped our neutering campaign in February 2002 due to the intervention of dog catchers from the Bucov shelter near Ploiesti.

It is likely that the dog population is 55-60% male and only 40-45% female because of the human preference for males as guard dogs, because male dogs tend to be better foragers and because female dogs die younger due to repeated pregnancies.

3. Rabies

"Since dog elimination in general is very cost-intensive and lacks any positive impact on the occurrence of rabies it is not recommended." - Report of W.H.O. Consultation on Dog Ecology Studies related to Rabies Control, Geneva, 22-25 February 1988 (page 11).

Although FPCC has never had a single case of rabies since its inception in 2000 rabies is a danger because it is endemic in the wild mammal population, especially foxes. The threat of rabies is a persuasive reason for the Romanian Government and

the European Union to find the political will to get to grips with the stray dog problem once and for all, before Romania's borders with the EU disappear in 2007.

4. Solutions

There are only 3 ways to solve stray dog problems. (1) To kill or remove every single fertile bitch. (2) To remove the food source, i.e. somehow prevent animal lovers feeding unsupervised dogs and remove all rubbish from the streets so that the dogs starve to death. Or (3)

'Neuter and Return'.

"In the long term, control of reproduction is by far the most effective strategy of dog population management" - W.H.O., Geneva, Guidelines for Dog Population Management, page 72.

Extermination campaigns, for example the indiscriminate poisoning or shooting of dogs at night irrespective of whether they are neutered and vaccinated or indeed pets with owners, have never succeeded anywhere in the world.

'Neuter and Return', the policy advocated by the World Health Organisation and the World Society for the Protection of Animals, solves the problem permanently, although dogs have to be tolerated on the streets for 5-8 years for it to succeed. Providing it is implemented to the edge of the urban area it is however a permanent and humane solution which politicians can be proud of.

'Neuter and Return' must be implemented in conjunction with education campaigns to explain the importance of neutering, of vaccination and of preventing dogs from reproducing.

Romania needs to invest money and effort now to solve the problem for ever.

Stray dog populations anywhere depend solely on the amount of food available. Nature adjusts the population to the carrying capacity of the territory. If just one fertile female escapes being killed or captured she can breed up to 67,000 offspring in 6 years.* That is why killing dogs can never succeed unless every single female is exterminated.

If however the carrying capacity of an area is filled with sterile animals the population will gradually die out, providing no fertile dogs can infiltrate from surrounding areas and providing freshly abandoned dogs are collected by dog wardens, police and residents (as in developed countries).

* source: Doris Day Animal League, U.S.A.

5. Policies doomed to fail: Killing and Incarceration.

"Removal and killing of dogs should never be considered as the most effective way of dealing with a problem of surplus dogs in the community: it has no effect whatsoever on the root cause of the problem." - Guidelines for Dog Population Management, W.H.O. Geneva 1990 (page 74).

"In none of the study areas did the elimination of dogs by any method have any significant long term effect on dog population size." -Report of W.H.O. Consultation on Dog Ecology Studies related to Rabies Control, Geneva, 22-25 February 1988 (page 11).

(a) Killing.

This is usually done surreptitiously at night by municipal workers or by private contractors to municipalities who then return to collect dead bodies. No notice is given to local residents of poisoning so dog owners are unable to protect their pets from it. In Gorj province various mayors have resorted to asking hunters to shoot dogs and even to throwing them down wells to drown. Pitesti's municipal dog catchers have killed dogs in the woods with makeshift spears. This barbaric behaviour is of course illegal, but some mayors seem to have little respect for the law. The penalties for cruelty to animals are in any case derisory.

Officials and municipal vets are reluctant to admit knowing anything about these extermination campaigns. One municipal vet in Sadu (Gorj province) was however dismissed recently for carrying out a poisoning campaign. [The poisoning or extermination of dogs by any means other than humane euthanasia is now illegal in Romania].

In any case although poisoning reduces the stray dog population in the short term it can never be carried out intensively and persistently enough to eradicate stray dogs. That is why dogs are prospering in Romania as a species despite the wholesale slaughter carried out by local authorities for many years.

If killing worked the stray dog populations of Romania's towns would have been eliminated long ago.

If each fertile bitch has 8 live puppies twice a year 71% of all fertile females, most of which will have 'owners', must be killed twice a year before the dog population starts to diminish slowly. If as many as 76% of all fertile females could be caught and killed every 6 months the stray dog population in a town like Campina would be reduced from 4000 dogs to 2668 dogs after 7 years (again assuming each bitch has 8 live puppies twice a year).

This compares to a stray dog population of only 52 after 7 years if Neuter and Return is implemented.

Whereas 'neuter and return' can be carried out 24 hours per day every day of the week openly and with the cooperation of animal lovers and 'owners', catching and/or killing has to be carried out secretly and occasionally because of the likelihood of protests and disruption. If animal lovers and owners of semi-strays know dog catching or extermination squads are coming to their area they will do their best to protect the dogs they look after. In Campina Bucov's dog catchers have to be protected by Gendarmes because of opposition by residents and dog feeders.

'Catch and Kill' would have to be carried out persistently in every area of every municipality for six years once a week, without disruption from 'animal protectors', to kill 76% of the dogs every breeding season, and it would still take 7years of consistent killing to reduce the dog population to 67% of the carrying capacity !

DOG POPULATION REDUCTION IF 76% KILLED EVERY 6 MONTHS.

- assuming half of the killing is done before dogs give birth and half afterwards

assuming 12.5% of adult females dies naturally and 38% of balance is killed before giving birth in first 6 months, thereafter no natural deaths because almost all survivors will be young

* assuming 50% puppies die of illness before 38% of balance is killed

Date Killed	Total	Surviving Fertile Females # after 38% killed	Surv. Puppies* after 38% killed		Killed adults			
			Male	Female	Before breeding		After breeding	
					M	F	M	F
31.12.05	4000 (100% of carrying capacity)							
		1085	1345	1345	665	665	665	665
30.06.06	3530							
		1063	1318	1318	651	651	651	651
31.12.06	3462							
		1041	1290	1290	638	638	638	638
30.06.07	3387							
		1019	1264	1264	624	624	624	624
31.12.07	3318							
		998	1238	1238	612	612	612	612
30.06.08	3247							
		976	1210	1210	598	598	598	598
31.12.08	3178							
		956	1185	1185	586	586	586	586
30.06.09	3109							
		935	1159	1159	573	573	573	573
21.12.09	3042							
		915	1135	1135	561	561	561	561
30.06.10	2978							
		896	1111	1111	549	549	549	549
31.12.10	2916							
		877	1087	1087	538	538	538	538
30.06.11	2851							
		858	1063	1063	526	526	526	526
31.12.11	2788							
		838	1039	1039	514	514	514	514
30.06.12	2727							
		820	1017	1017	503	503	503	503
31.12.12	2668 (66.7% of carrying capacity)							

The problem for the exterminators is that the dogs can breed so fast - according to the Doris Day Animal League one female dog and her offspring can produce 67000 puppies in 6 years ! - that all they achieve is a temporary reduction in the dog

population. Every surviving bitch breeds. And no dogs are vaccinated against rabies. With 'neuter and return' most of the bitches wandering the streets don't breed.

As most Romanian fertile bitches have owners or feeders it is impossible to achieve a 76% extermination or removal rate.

(b) 'Catch and Incarcerate'

This summarises the policy adopted in February 2004 by the Municipality of Campina, who lost patience with FPCC because of the high number of dogs on Campina's streets and who could not understand that these neutered and vaccinated dogs must be left in place in order to prevent new fertile dogs infiltrating. Campina asked the shelter in Bucov, near Ploiesti, which is subsidised by Tierschutzverein Munich, to catch and remove the dogs FPCC had neutered and returned, although all these dogs had been adopted by residents according to the new Animal Protection Law. We believe the Bucov dog catchers removed about 300 dogs, three of which were inadvertently killed with tranquillising darts.

By removing and imprisoning animals in camps municipalities are simply creating empty feeding territories which nature will soon fill with new fertile dogs. So 'Catch and Incarcerate' makes the problem worse, not better (*see below*).

In Romania, due to poverty and the abundance of community dogs, there is little or no hope of rehoming these captured dogs. They must either be kept and fed until their deaths in the shelter, which is a pointless and very expensive exercise, or put to sleep according to the law. Due to lack of funds, or due to corruption if funds are available, the dogs in such shelters often starve to death.

Why does Catch and Incarcerate make the problem worse ?

Because nature ensures that every dog taken off the streets is replaced by a new dog. Puppies, or dogs dumped from Bucharest or other cities with extermination policies, which would have found so little food that they would have died of illness or starvation if territories were still occupied by their original owners, can now occupy those feeding territories, survive and breed. So unless every single female in a municipality and all areas within 7 km.* of that municipality is caught, which is highly unlikely, the stray dog problem will continue and the municipality will end up with thousands of dogs incarcerated at huge expense in its shelter plus the original number of dogs on the streets !

[* Studies by Help in Suffering in Jaipur India show that dogs will travel up to 7 km. in search of food.]

Pitesti and more recently Campina are proof of the futility of dog removal campaigns.

In the case of Campina the 300 neutered dogs removed by Bucov have now been replaced by 300 fertile dogs, dumped in Campina from Bucharest and surrounding villages, or which have infiltrated from outside the town. Although some of these

immigrants are dogs neutered by FPCC the dumped dogs are all fertile.

Bucov and the Town Hall are therefore undoing all the good work of FPCC over the last 3 years and are unwittingly ensuring that the stray dog problem in Campina will continue for decades to come. FPCC cannot afford to continue catching, neutering and returning Campina's street dogs, only for these dogs to be removed, put to sleep or starved to death by Bucov.

When Campina municipality realises that Bucov's dog catchers are achieving nothing, we hope we will be permitted to restart 'Neuter and Return' in Campina.

6. FPCC's work so far.

FPCC, which depends solely on donations from the public, and which is principally financed by its Founder and Chairman, Robert Smith, built an open plan shelter on land ceded by the Municipality near the Doftanei river on the edge of **Campina** in 2001. Dr Radu Milea carried out all operations and sterilisations during the first two years and subsequently trained our current veterinary team. Over 4500 stray, semi-stray and owned dogs were collected, neutered and vaccinated in Campina, Cornu and surrounding villages in the two and a half years up to February 2004. We made no charge for this service to owners or to the municipality (although we did charge the municipality when it was necessary to euthanise sick, injured or dangerous dogs and incinerate their bodies according to environmental regulations).

Over 100 Campina dogs have been happily rehomed in Holland by PAWS, who have also generously supported FPCC with materials and other donations.

In April 2003 FPCC's new shelter and neutering centre in **Oradea**, sponsored by Battersea Dogs Home, Dogs Trust and North Shore Animal League, began work, in a purpose built shelter on land leased by the Municipality. A local charity, the Arca lui Noe association, run by Mrs Gigi Bulz and her family, and supported by Narcis Fekete and his wife Diana, pioneered the cause of animal welfare in Oradea and did most of the groundwork for the project. The mayor, Mr Petre Filip, understood the logic and effectiveness of 'Neuter and Return' as opposed to previous policies of sporadic dog extermination, and enthusiastically supported this joint project.

From May 2003 to April 2005 our 'SOS Dogs Oradea' project has neutered and vaccinated 2250 dogs, without charge to the owners or municipality, and has rehomed over 500 of these dogs to families. Although most of the other dogs have been returned to their local communities, we still have over 100 friendly dogs waiting to be adopted and advertisements with their photos regularly appear in the local press.

We are very grateful to Battersea Dogs Home, Dogs Trust and North Shore for their support of this project and hope it will

become only one of many successful Neuter and Return projects financed by Western charities in Eastern Europe.

FPCC's third project is in **Mioveni**, a small town of 37000 people outside Pitesti, infamous for the extermination of dogs by the management of the Renault-Dacia factory two years ago. Carmen Arsene, the supervisor of AULIM's shelter in Smeura near Pitesti, asked us to help AULIM negotiate a Neuter and Return contract with the mayor of Pitesti and to carry out a similar Neuter and Return campaign in Mioveni. Contracts with both Pitesti and Mioveni were signed early in 2004 and both projects are underway. FPCC has bought land near Mioveni's municipal rubbish dump where a permanent neutering centre can be built if funding can be found. Up to April 2005 FPCC's temporary Mioveni clinic has neutered and vaccinated 1030 dogs in 12 months, over 500 of which have been rehomed.

In **Pitesti** since January 2003 AULIM has collected 4050 dogs incl. 1800 puppies. All of these have been neutered and many have been returned to their owners and/or territory and/or adopted, including 650 adults and 800 puppies rehomed abroad.

Because of the expense of maintaining shelters, and their 'magnetism' for dogs and puppies - i.e. people's and municipalities' tendency to dump dogs on shelters - the most cost-effective method of stray dog control is neutering by **Mobile Clinics**. FPCC bought its first mobile clinic in August 2004, generously sponsored by the Marchig Animal Welfare Trust. The generator was donated by Mrs Christa Becker of Aktionsgemeinschaft fuer Tiere Langenfeld/Monheim in Germany.

Vier Pfoten, an Austrian charity which has long been advocating 'Neuter and Return' in Romania and Bulgaria, pioneered the use of mobile clinics in Romania and conducted a joint neutering programme with us in **Negru Voda** in autumn 2003. Vier Pfoten's expert vet, Adriana, neutered 253 dogs in 10 days and trained our vets in her highly efficient surgical techniques.

FPCC's mobile clinic revisited Negru Voda in September 2004 and neutered, vaccinated and returned 93 more dogs (61 females and 32 males).

FPCC's mobile clinic then visited **Tirgu Carbunesti** in Gorj, where Mrs Carmena Serbaniou arranged the project in cooperation with the town's mayor, Mr Pasti. Previously the municipality had tried and failed to control the town's dog population with the usual futile, and now illegal, extermination methods. During the last two weeks of September we neutered and returned 212 dogs (148 females and 64 males). A local animal lover, Mrs Ficiu, is monitoring the dog population of Carbunesti and will deal with complaints about stray dogs. We returned to Carbunesti in March 2005 and neutered 125 more dogs.

Our mobile clinic has also visited **Magureni, Floresti, Campulung, Banesti and Ticleni** and will neuter in many other towns in the near future, after contracts have been signed with the municipality. It is important that municipalities make written commitments not to kill, mistreat or remove neutered

dogs so that mobile clinic campaigns are not sabotaged in the way FPCC's work in Campina has been [for sample contract please see annex].

7. School education project.

FPCC, with the help of Dogs Trust and Mr Ray Griffin, a British education expert, have developed a School Education Project, targeted at 10-13 year olds, which is carried out in as many schools as possible in towns where we work. The purpose of this education project is to motivate children to care about animal welfare, help us find fertile and sick dogs in their locality and to teach children to understand the importance of neutering, responsible dog ownership and rehoming. We hope to educate the adult population through their children and to educate the politicians via their parents. The education project is led by Antonia Craciun. In Oradea a similar project has been launched by Battersea Dogs Home and Dogs Trust, led by Mrs Paula Pop.

We are often asked why there are no stray dogs on the streets of London or Paris whereas there are so many on the streets of Bucharest and Ploiesti, despite these Romanian cities' catch and kill policies. The answer is not only economic development, it is the **education** of the British and French populations to care about animals and the promotion of neutering and responsible dog ownership. The problem in Romania is not the dogs; it is the people who allow their dogs to stray and breed and the politicians who lack the political will, the understanding and of course the funding to solve the problem.

A further factor is that in Romania very few people allow their pet dogs to live inside their house, as most families in Western Europe do. When a family bitch in W. Europe is on heat, it is kept inside the home, and when taken for its daily walk, is kept on a leash. In Romania most dogs are kept in yards or gardens, therefore most Romanian dogs are accessible for copulation.

In Western Europe most citizens who find a dog roaming free will collect the dog and if they cannot identify the owner from the disc on the dog's collar, will take the dog to their local shelter, animal warden or to the police. This is virtually unthinkable in Romania. The human population of Romania, as with most economically underdeveloped countries, must be educated to accept responsibility for stray dogs and for their environment in general.

Another misconception, usually by male dog owners, is that their dogs should be allowed to enjoy sex; dogs do not enjoy sex, indeed it is a quite painful and purely instinctive activity. It also spreads vaginal and genital tumours. Sex is not fun for dogs!

If every shop or restaurant owner, every factory boss, every petrol station attendant, every caretaker of apartment blocks, hospitals, schools etc. in Romania took their local stray

bitches to the vet and paid for them to be neutered that would solve the stray dog problem within 5 years. Animal welfare groups such as FPCC cannot improve the living standards of Romania but we can contribute to educating the next generation of Romanian dog keepers.

We would be delighted to hear from any schools interested in this Education Project.

8. FPCC's methods.

The best way of catching a dog remains the cheapest: gaining the dog's trust, befriending it and picking it up. Ideally community dogs should be cared for by a local animal lover, who may feed them, and should then be collected by this animal lover and handed over for neutering and vaccination, then returned to the supervision of this 'volunteer dog warden' after recuperation.

If it is not possible to catch a dog in this way, a catching cage or catching pole with plastic covered thick lanyards can be used.

Only as a last resort should a blowpipe or tranquillising gun be used because these are (a) expensive (b) an overdose can kill the dog, as illustrated by Bucov's dog catchers in Campina (c) the dog can run several hundred metres on an adrenalin surge before collapsing, so has to be chased on foot, and may run across a busy road or into woods and (d) in the case of a gun the loud bang will frighten every living creature within several hundred metres.

As dogs sense fear or hostility in human beings it is very difficult for municipal workers, who are not normally animal lovers, to catch dogs without resorting to inhumane and expensive methods. It is far easier and cheaper for animal lovers to catch dogs. Unfortunately most municipal catchers use inhumane and/or expensive methods to catch every single dog they take, in contravention of the new Dog Law No. 155.

Dogs returned by FPCC to their communities are fitted with a non-removable collar or earclip and an unique number is tattooed into one ear under anaesthetic. A record is kept of every dog, including the place and date of release.

9. Projections for 'Neuter and Release'.

NEUTER AND RELEASE PLAN FOR A TYPICAL MUNICIPALITY WITH 4000 STRAY DOGS (human population 60-80000).

Assumptions:

1. That the average life of a street dog which survives to breeding age is between 3.5 and 4 years.

2. That the male:female population at birth and the death rate are 50:50.
3. That a well trained vet team can neuter 9 females and 1 or 2 males per day.
4. That recuperation facilities are available for 50 dogs per clinic.
5. That all females have two litters per annum with 8 live births per litter.
6. That 50% of live puppies dies before they can breed.
7. That only the same number of surviving puppies will live until breeding age as older dogs which die during the same period for as long as the carrying capacity of the area is full; and that the others die of hunger, weakness etc.
8. That clinics practise early age neutering from age 3 months upwards if necessary on litters of surviving puppies, rather than releasing puppies un-neutered.
9. That the female dogs which die naturally (250 per half year for the first 5 years of the project) do not breed in the half year of their deaths, or if they do, that none of their puppies survives.
10. That each clinic employs two dog catching/release teams at night and one team during the day 6 days per week.
11. That dog owners who allow their dogs to stray, or who abandon them, will bring them to the clinic for free neutering and vaccination and will therefore not distort the diminishing reproduction rate, or alternatively, that all of such abandoned dogs can be picked up.
12. That priority is given to neutering females before males. The neutering of males has limited short term impact on the population.
13. That all surrounding municipalities follow the same policy to the edge of the conurbation.
14. That 60% of females are caught and neutered in the first 6 months. That 80% of the remaining fertile females are caught and neutered in the next 6 months. And that 90% of remaining fertile females are done in the third and subsequent 6 month periods.

Results:

- Within 4 years the stray dog population is less than half the present level.
- Within 5 years the stray dog population is reduced to 26% of present levels.
- Within 6 years the stray dog population is virtually eliminated.

If more females than 645 can be caught in the second 6 month period - for example 725 females (90% of the remaining fertile females incl. new puppies) - the process will be speeded up. If the average life span of the female street dogs is 2.5 to 3 years rather than the 3.5 to 4 years projected the stray dog population will almost die out within 4 years.

Life-span of street dogs:

This is in practice probably varies, for dogs which survive to breeding age, between 1 year and 8 years. Except for animals fed regularly nutritious food by humans, i.e. semi-stray dogs, it is very unlikely that a street dog will survive beyond 8 years, and relatively few will survive beyond 5 years in the severe winters of Romania.

SHKD's records over 6 years of neutering in Istanbul show that 49.5% of dogs caught were between 3 months and 1 year old. W.H.O. studies in Ecuador, Tunisia and Sri Lanka showed that the stray dog population was 28% under one year old, 17% 1-2 years, 14% 2-3 years, 11% 3-4 years, 8% 4-5 years, 7% 5-6 years and 15% above 6 years old. Life expectancy of free roaming dogs in Zimbabwe was estimated in 1987 at 4.6 years. These countries all have climates more conducive to the survival of street dogs than that of Romania.

The main source of healthy puppies on the streets is not feral dogs. Wild dogs, for example living on a rubbish dump, do not produce as many puppies well nourished enough to survive as dogs with owners do. Most new dogs on the streets are the offspring of dogs cared for by human beings - in other words Romanian street dog populations are the direct result of human ignorance and irresponsibility.

Dumped and Abandoned dogs:

Dog dumping by both animal lovers and perhaps municipalities is the greatest single threat to the success of a properly funded and managed Neuter and Return project.

During the last 3 years FPCC has found newly dumped dogs, usually from Bucharest or surrounding villages, on the streets of Campina virtually every week. This is partly the result of animal lovers bringing friendly community dogs to the 'safe haven' of Campina to escape Bucharest's dog exterminators and partly the result of dog owners dumping unwanted animals and puppies for convenience. Many of the foreign adult dogs which suddenly appear on Campina's streets are very friendly to humans, which means they are used to human contact and have been 'rescued' from the clutches of municipal dog catchers.

Oradea and Pitesti have also suffered from dog dumping in recent months. It is more likely that animal lovers will dump dogs in towns with humane dog control policies, as news of their shelters or clinics spreads. This unfortunately sabotages those humane projects.

As no town or village in Romania is an island and as there is no practical means to prevent the dumping of dogs, it is clear that Neuter and Return can only totally succeed in eliminating the street dog problem if it is adopted throughout Romania, which means its adoption and funding by central government and/or the EU.

Abandoned pets will continue to be a problem long after Neuter and Return has finished, as indeed they are in Western Europe. However former pets will be easy to catch as they are used to

and even seek human contact. People must be educated to collect them or report them to the Police or their local clinic and municipal dog wardens should bring them to the clinic. One hopes they can then be rehomed. Even bitches on heat when abandoned are likely to be caught by dog wardens or brought to clinics before giving birth.

Dog owners who can or no longer wish to keep their dog should be educated by publicity to bring their dog to their local clinic rather than to throw it out onto the streets.

9. "Complaint Fatigue" by municipalities.

Complaints from the public to municipalities are the main reason for mayors embarking on misguided dog removal and extermination campaigns. Even humane mayors who are animal lovers can only tolerate a certain level of complaints and have to think of their own political survival.

Our experience is that most complaints about 'dangerous dogs' are the result of disputes between neighbours, especially around blocks of flats, and of children baiting dogs, which then snarl or bite back. Dogs won't hang around an area unless food and shelter are available. At the mayor of Campina's request we investigated a complaint from a hotel owner who said his customers were being frightened away by a pack of vicious dogs. It turned out that his own hotel manager was (without his knowledge) feeding two harmless and friendly dogs.

It is however necessary to remove genuinely dangerous dogs, and as a last resort put them to sleep; some dogs may be friendly towards animal lovers but be a threat to people whose fear they sense. Cases must be individually investigated and dealt with, preferably by Animal Welfare Associations rather than by municipal workers. The problem of packs of dogs intimidating people can often be solved by removal of the pack leader or leaders.

11. The only practical answer.

The only solution is **private enterprise - public sector projects** financed and empowered by central or local Government but implemented by a committed non-profit private organisation or organisations **in every town and rural area of Romania.**

Public bodies are always too cumbersome, bureaucratic and conservative to succeed in implementing 'Neuter and Return'. Officials usually lack the motivation radically to change the status quo.

On the other hand private organisations like F.P.C.C., however efficiently run, lack the finance and the authority to implement 'Neuter and Return' except for a few pilot projects.

Such a project must be centrally financed either by the Government or by the EU. The recent Law no. 155, whilst well

intended, has no chance of solving Romania's stray dog problem because no municipality has the funding to carry out the law. There is no point in passing laws which noone can afford to implement ! Furthermore the law has unfortunately given municipalities like Campina the pretext to abandon Neuter and Return projects on the dubious grounds that the Law prohibits unsupervised dogs on the streets, though paragraph 17d of regulation no. 955 dated 15.6.04 goes some way to rectifying this error.

12. Dog Population Management Board.

An organisation must be established to run Romania's Dog Population Management Project effectively and dynamically as private businesses are run. A Chief Executive, experienced in managing public service companies or projects, should be appointed. There must be no question of corruption or political nepotism, so an apolitical or foreign CEO should be considered. He or she should be answerable directly to a Board consisting of a representative of the relevant Ministries, representatives of Animal Protection Organisations and of the sponsors. Commercial sponsors could also appoint a member of the board.

The financial records should be audited by a firm of internationally respected accountants who appoint a full time Chief Accountant to eliminate any danger of corruption or financial waste.

The Dog Population Management Board should ensure that funds are distributed to municipalities to set up mobile or fixed neutering clinics in association with local animal protection organisations and that these funds are not wasted inefficiently or corruptly.

Each municipality would have one or two neutering clinics supplying free of charge neutering and vaccination to all residents and stray dogs collected by residents. Each clinic must have recuperation facilities for 5 times the daily neutering capacity and quarantine facilities for 10 dogs. Incurable and dangerous dogs should be euthanased humanely as per Law No. 155.

A public liaison team should field calls and complaints from the public and publicise the project.

13. Local Neutering Clinics.

Every municipality, which does not already have a clinic, must be forced to make suitable land and/or a building available for a neutering clinic such as illustrated. Alternatively it could purchase a mobile clinic. The local municipality should provide water, electricity and if possible gas.

Each clinic would have a manager responsible for supervising personnel, record keeping and organising his dog catching/release teams. Each clinic would need 2 vans

(sponsored by advertisers) with 3 dog catching teams. At night 2 dog catching teams would operate. During the day one dog catching team would operate. The other van would be used for supplies. Dog catching teams would work outwards from their clinic until their whole catchment area has been covered up to the edge of the conurbation.

'Neuter and Return' must be carried out like a military campaign, street by street, house by house, factory by factory.

Having covered the main urban area, which will normally take 1 to 2 years, the dog catching and collection teams would concentrate on surrounding villages.

14. Publicising the Project and networks of local volunteers.

A budget should be allocated for advertising for local volunteers and to publicise the location of clinics. Neuter and Return should be advertised and explained to the public. A Public Relations Bureau could be engaged to handle this.

A network of volunteer dog wardens should be established in each clinic area. School children enthused by the Education Project might also help. Their job would be to locate, feed, befriend and catch street dogs, then to care for them after release, notifying their local clinic of illnesses, injuries or complaints. Dog wardens would help to recatch dogs for booster vaccinations. They could also guard catching cages to prevent theft.

Weak, small or handicapped dogs would be held in clinics or passed on to animal welfare associations pending adoption/rehoming or as a last resort euthanasia.

Local newspapers should be encouraged to help with adverts for rehoming dogs which cannot be returned to their community, for example grown puppies with no home territory, or small or weak dogs.

15. How long will it take and how much will the project cost?

If we take a putative town of 70000 inhabitants and 4000 free roaming dogs, with an existing clinic including holding and recuperation facilities, and assume that all vehicles, personnel and equipment are in place, it will theoretically take only one year to reduce the fertile female breeding population from 2000 to 161 dogs and after 3 years there will only be 5 fertile females left to breed.

This of course presupposes that owners who allow their fertile females to roam the streets cooperate and allow their bitches to be neutered (or keep them inside their homes when on heat) and that no new fertile females are dumped from outside the town.

There must be co-operation between municipal clinics so that spare capacity in one municipality is used for collecting and neutering dogs from neighbouring municipalities. Each province

should also have a number of mobile clinics, together with portable holding and recuperation facilities, so that personnel and equipment can be used efficiently.

There are plenty of European animal welfare associations who would provide training to vets and dog catching teams and other advice free of charge to the project.

One off capital expenditure			
Fixed clinic		Mobile clinic	
Clinic building	20.000	Mobile clinic	40.000
2 vans	32.000	1 van	16.000
50 recuperation cages	6.000	25 cages	3.000
6 catching cages	1.200	2 catching cages	400
Furniture	1.000	Recuperation tent 7x7m	1.250
6 catchpoles	700	3 catchpoles	350
Vet equipment	4.300	Equipment + generator	2.500
2 blowpipes	2.000	1 blowpipe	1.000
Gloves, clothing	800	Gloves, clothing	500
Other	1.000	Other	600
Total		Total	\$ 65.600
\$ 69.000			

Personnel required in each clinic (Year 1) Wage costs incl. tax and social charges			
Fixed clinic		Mobile clinic	
Manager	250		
Vet	300	Vet	300
4 drivers/helpers @ \$ 100 each	400	2 drivers/helpers @ \$ 100 each	200
3 catchers/carers @ \$ 120 each	360	3 catchers/carers @\$ 120 each	360
2 vet assistants @ \$ 150 each	300	2 vet assistants @ \$ 150 each	300
1 cleaner	90	Food tickets	360
1 night guard	100		
Food tickets	500		
Total per month	\$ 2.300	Total per month	\$ 1.520
Other monthly costs (Year 1)			
Fixed clinic		Mobile clinic	
Fuel for vans	200	Fuel	200
Cleaning materials	100	Cleaning materials	100
Medicine/vaccines	3.000	Medicine/vaccines	2.000
Dogfood	400	Dogfood	300
Phone incl mobiles	200	Mobile phones	200
Other incl repairs	100	Other	100
Total per month	\$ 4.000	Total per month	\$ 2.900
Year 1 Total monthly costs incl. Staff			
Fixed clinic	\$ 6.300	Mobile clinic	\$ 4.420

Year 2 Total monthly costs incl. Staff			
2 drivers and 2 dog catchers are sufficient; less fuel, dog food, medicine, vaccines			
Fixed clinic	\$ 5.000	Mobile clinic	\$ 4.420

Year 3 Total monthly costs incl. Staff			
1 driver, 1 dog catcher, 1 asst vet suffice less fuel, dog food, medicine etc.		2 catchers + 1 asst vet suffice less fuel, dog food, medicine etc.	
Fixed clinic	\$ 4.000	Mobile clinic	\$ 3.600

Annual Costs			
per fixed clinic		per mobile clinic	
Year 1			
Building + equipment	\$ 69.000	Clinic + equipment	\$ 65.600
Personnel + other	\$ 75.600	Personnel + other	\$ 53.040
TOTAL	\$ 144.600	TOTAL	\$ 118.640
Year 2			
Personnel + other	\$ 60.000	Personnel + other	\$ 53.040
Year 3			
Personnel + other	\$ 48.000	Personnel + other	\$ 43.200

TOTAL COST OVER 3 YEARS	
per fixed clinic	per mobile clinic
\$ 252.600	\$ 214.880

If we assume that there will be 300 such fixed clinics and 40 mobile clinics (one per province/ "judetul") in Romania to complete the project nationally **the total cost over 3 years of solving Romania's stray dog problem will be:**
approx. US Dollars 84.375.200,- ; excl. the costs of the Dog Population Management Board but less income from sponsorship and from sale of assets and less the millions of dollars spent every year on the futile killing of dogs.

This equates to about US \$1,17 or Lei 35.000,- per Romanian citizen per year.

'Neuter and Return' solves the stray dog problem for ever for an investment of no more than \$85 million over 3 years. The never-ending catching, incarceration and killing of dogs by municipalities at present costs much more than this over a ten or twenty year period and is totally ineffective.

16. Commercial Sponsorship.

A main sponsor should be sought to sponsor the whole project. This could be a bank, a pharmaceutical or consumer products company or one of the large holding companies with diverse interests. Their name would appear on all publicity, on the vehicles and on the clinics. Secondary sponsors such as dogfood manufacturers should also be sought.

If the clinic buildings and equipment and the vehicles were all sponsored this would save \$ 16.2 million.

Many companies would be interested in sponsoring a socially beneficial project with short term beneficial results for the human (and canine) population of Romania.

17. Future use of clinics/ dog control.

Once the number of stray dogs to be neutered diminishes (within 3 years) to about one per day, the local clinics should be converted into commercial veterinary clinics leased or rented out by the municipality. The clinics could be franchised to private vets on condition that all stray and owned dogs continue to be neutered and vaccinated free of charge or at cost price and that free quarantine facilities are available to the municipality.

A licensing system should be introduced whereby all un-neutered dogs be registered (possibly with microchips or discs) at their local clinic and the owner charged a licence fee starting at \$ 10 in the first year, gradually increasing to \$ 50 per dog in subsequent years. Neutered dogs would also be registered but free of charge. Unregistered and un-neutered dogs picked up or brought in would automatically be neutered before being returned to claimants.

Local clinics could also be used as bases for the enforcement of animal protection laws - bases for local 'R.S.P.C.A's'.

18. Licensing Dog Breeders.

These should be licensed (free of charge) by the local veterinary authorities, under supervision by local animal welfare associations, who would ensure that no bitch has more than two litters in her life-time, by having her neutered after her second litter, and who would remove the licence of any breeder mistreating or in-breeding animals.

19. Pitfalls.

Failure to provide finance when scheduled.
Corruption by employees/supervisors (especially in purchasing).
Misuse of vehicles. Diversion or theft of medicines/dogfood.
Obstruction by local officials/municipal vets.

Failure by municipalities to implement project despite availability of finance.
Obstruction by politia sanitara veterinara.
Dumping of dogs from recalcitrant municipalities on those implementing the project.
"Complaint Fatigue" by municipalities.

20. Lobbying

To lobby successfully for Neuter and Return throughout Romania it is necessary for animal welfare associations to work together and to eschew the disputes and jealousies which characterise animal welfare movements in most countries.

FPCC would be interested to hear from groups who would like to join an umbrella Animal Welfare Organisation for the whole of Romania.

To succeed it is necessary to work with politicians and officials who may feel alienated by (what they consider) fanaticism or silly sentimentality about animals.

21. Conclusion.

Both dog haters and dog lovers have the same aim: to make the streets of Romania like those of any British, French or German town, with no stray dogs.

The only question is: how can this common aim be achieved ?

- Killing does not work and is in any case barbaric and now illegal.
- Removal and incarceration, with or without euthanasia, is futile, never-ending and unaffordable.
- 'Neuter and Return' is the only practical and permanent solution, but it requires political will, short-term funding and efficient implementation.

This Report was written by Robert Smith and updated in April 2005.