Stray Dog Survey I: Kharkov
Official count of stray dogs

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1. Background
   a. Definition of “Stray dog”
   For the purpose of this document and any future documentation and presentations from Naturewatch Foundation, the definition of a “stray dog” is any dog that is free to roam outside of private property. This includes owned and un-owned dogs, community dogs and feral dogs.

   b. Naturewatch Foundation
   Naturewatch Foundation is a British animal welfare charity that prides itself on an extensive knowledge of humane and sustainable stray animal population management. Naturewatch Foundation’s unbiased and realistic approach to the problem takes into account the fine balance between protecting both citizens and animals, with a dedicated team of experts boasting a mix of backgrounds, from animal welfare to UK municipal dog control. Naturewatch Foundation makes decisions based on facts only, and therefore insists on official counts before recommending stray animal management programmes.

   Naturewatch Foundation supports both national governments, municipalities and NGO’s in order to guide them to work together with the shared goal to humanely manage stray dog populations. This involves not only dealing with the stray dogs themselves, but also addressing the source of the problem, legislation and public education. We do not believe in doing the work for city municipalities, we provide training and support to enable them to address the stray dog situation in its entirety themselves.

   Every year, Naturewatch Foundation will carry out a count of the stray dogs in order to ascertain whether the intervention is working. This will enable Naturewatch Foundation and Kharkov Municipality to monitor the intervention and amend it where necessary in order to secure its success.

2. Results and methodology
The count was conducted using an internationally recognised method, which was developed by the World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA) and is endorsed by the International Companion Animal Management Coalition (ICAM Coalition)\(^1\).

A map of Kharkov city was divided into 88 sectors. Individual sectors were distinguished by assigning one of four colours to each, ensuring that no two sectors of the same colour were next to each other. One colour was then chosen for the count. This methodology ensures the sample sectors chosen for the count are randomly selected with equal probability, which results in an unbiased estimation.

From 6:30am over the course of a few days, Naturewatch Foundation conducted a count of stray dogs in Kharkov, covering almost a quarter of the city.

The estimated number of dogs was then calculated by dividing the total number of dogs counted by the sampling fraction, extrapolating the counted figure to the whole of the city.

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\frac{\text{Total number of dogs counted}}{\text{Number of sample sectors / Total number of sectors}} = \frac{388}{20 / 88} = \frac{388}{0.227} = 1709 \text{ stray dogs}
\]

\(^1\) ICAM Coalition, Surveying stray dog populations: Guidelines on methodology
The results of the survey reveal an estimation of only 1709 stray dogs in Kharkov. Even taking a generous 20% margin of error into consideration, this is a very manageable number of just over 2000 stray dogs.

The margin of error is factored in due to external forces that can influence the number of stray dogs counted. Naturally, we aim to minimise these influences, and it was for this reason we chose not to disclose dates and times of the count prior to our visit. The two main external influences that can affect the count are weather conditions and the behaviour of people.

Detailed results of the count are in Chapter 5.

3. Analysis of results
The low number of stray dogs that this survey has revealed contradicts the high number of complaints that the Kharkov Municipal Animal Shelter receive. This needs to be investigated in order to ascertain the best form of intervention to reduce the stray dog population. Two explanations are to be considered:

Explanation one:
A majority of the complaints received by the shelter refer to owned dogs that roam freely in public places, and given we conducted the count in the mornings and partly over a weekend, perhaps these owned dogs hadn’t yet left the property as owners aren’t yet up. There is a high chance these owned dogs were still within their boundaries waiting for owners to give them breakfast, enjoying the warmth of their kennels, or waiting for owners to open boundary doors to let them out.

The reason the count is conducted so early in the morning is because this is when un-owned stray dogs are at their most active. We therefore may have missed a proportion of the owned stray dog population that citizen’s phone up to complain about.

Explanation two:
The weather was colder than expected and some stray dogs were hidden, keeping warm. One such location is the network of underground piping across the city. The only way to substantiate this is to conduct the same count in summer.

4. Recommendations
The recommendations stated below would apply even if the survey had revealed a stray dog population of up to 3000.

As the stray dog population reduces, there will be less un-owned stray dogs for the catchers to capture and given the low number of dogs counted earlier this month, this situation is drawing closer quicker than anticipated.

Maintain the same funding to the Kharkov Municipal Animal Shelter, and as the number of stray dogs reduces, gradually lessen the percentage used for catching dogs and use it instead to:
1. Implement and enforce pet dog control orders and act upon complaints about owned dogs
2. Promote and educate responsible pet ownership
   a. Social advertising
   b. Presentations at schools or holding talks for children in the shelter
3. Develop the subsidised and free spay/neuter service for pet animals
4. Promote the rehoming of animals through the shelter
Gradually reduce the target number of dogs to be caught every month as this will be impossible for the dog catchers to achieve as stray dog numbers reduce.

5. Breakdown of stray dog count
   a. Male / Female / Puppies
   Of the dogs that could be sexed, 41% were female and 59% were male, showing there is a marginally higher population of male dogs roaming the streets. The graph below also includes the percentage of dogs that were unable to be sexed.

   Of the 388 dogs counted, 4% were puppies up to the age of 6 months, for which gender was not registered.

   ![Graph showing male, female, and unknown sex percentages]

   ![Graph showing adults and puppies percentages]

   b. Possibly owned dogs
   Many dogs that were counted displayed behaviour that indicated they were possibly owned.

   These indicators include:
   - Ducking under garden fences/gates as we approached using a well-worn route
   - Walking inside a property when someone opened the property door
   - People putting a dog outside of the property and closing the door behind it
   - Dogs wandering freely in and around open gateways to industrial businesses

   A quarter of the dogs counted fell under the ‘possibly owned’ category.

   ![Graph showing owned and possibly owned percentages]
c. **Weight conditions**
A majority of the dogs counted were of an ideal weight and appeared healthy.

![Weight conditions chart]

d. **Pregnant or lactating bitches**
Out of the dogs counted, nine were lactating and nine were believed to be pregnant.

![Pregnant or lactating bitches chart]

6. **Conclusion**
Kharkov’s stray animal management programme is both humane and sustainable. For that reason, the stray dog problem will not be solved overnight. Any sustainable stray animal management programme is multifaceted, addressing all factors that contribute to the stray dog problem.

Educating the public about responsible pet ownership is fundamental to the programme, as irresponsible dog owners are the main contributing factor to the stray dog problem.

We will conduct a second count in September and further counts will take place over the course of the next few years, which will help to ascertain whether our intervention is having a positive effect on the population.