Stray Dog Survey II: 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 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 at least one 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). 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 8:00am over the course of a few days, our Naturewatch Foundation representative, Natalie Sorokopud and a team of volunteers conducted a count of stray dogs in Kharkov, covering 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.

   \[
   \text{Total number of dogs counted} = \frac{256}{22} = 11.636363636363636 \approx 1024 \text{ stray dogs}
   \]

   The results of the survey reveal an estimation of 1024 stray dogs in Kharkov city.

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1 ICAM Coalition, Surveying stray dog populations: Guidelines on methodology
This is a 40% decrease of estimated numbers since the first count was conducted in April 2013.

Even taking a generous 20% margin of error into consideration, this is a very manageable number of just over 1228 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 estimated reduction of 685 dogs in five months can be attributed to an assortment of factors.

a) The Kharkov Municipal Animal Shelter remove stray dogs from the streets daily. These dogs are either rehomed or humanely euthanised. Up to 60 animals are rehomed at the Kharkov Municipal Animal Shelter every month.

b) There have been growing reports of stray dogs being poisoned, despite the fact this is illegal and extremely cruel. It is unknown who is committing these criminal offences.

c) The public awareness campaign to teach people about responsible pet ownership is beginning to work. Dog owners are keeping their pets under control, preventing them from roaming freely and breeding freely.

We were concerned that our previous count, conducted in April 2013, was lower than expected due to the following influencing factors:

a) The unusually cold weather, causing dogs to remain hidden for warmth.

b) The early time of day that we commenced the count each morning, which was at 6:30am. It was brought to our attention that many stray dogs can be seen on the streets from around 8am. These dogs are a mixture of owned stray dogs and homeless stray dogs in search of food from people on their way to work.

On that basis, in order to substantiate the figures, we decided to conduct this second count in a warmer month, starting at the later time of 8am every morning.

The fact that the estimated number of dogs has decreased, however, proves that neither of these external factors bare any influence over the number of stray dogs. If they had, the estimated number of dogs would have increased.

4. Recommendations
My recommendations remain the same as in my previous report:

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:
   a) Implement and enforce pet dog control orders and act upon complaints about owned dogs

b) Promote and educate responsible pet ownership
   i. Social advertising
   ii. Presentations at schools or holding talks for children in the shelter

   c) Develop the subsidised and free spay/neuter service for pet animals

   d) 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
In this section, graphs are used to illustrate the data collected during the count. There are also comparisons with the previous count conducted in April 2013.

   a. Male / Female / Puppies
The data reveals minimal change in the percentage of males and females, and a slight increase in the number of puppies. Months of warm weather is most probably the influencing factor for the increase of puppy sightings as their survival rate is higher.
b. Potentially owned dogs
Data reveals a slight decrease in sightings of potentially owned dogs. This is encouraging as, although too early in the programme to be confirmed, the decrease could be attributed to the growing public awareness campaigns about responsible pet ownership, both by local NGO’s and the Kharkov Municipal Animal Shelter. Naturewatch Foundation maintains its work with the Kharkov Municipal Animal Shelter to develop and expand its education programme, which we hope will continue to affect this downward trend. This will be ascertained in next year’s dog counts.

SEPTEMBER 2013
- Not owned: 23%
- Possibly owned: 77%

APRIL 2013
- Not owned: 25%
- Possibly owned: 75%

c. Health and condition
The health and condition of stray dogs has remained relatively constant since April 2013. The only obvious difference is the slight decrease in the number of overweight dogs. This is representative of dogs having less access to food; people could be choosing to not feed stray dogs or waste disposal services have improved.

SEPTEMBER 2013
- Healthy: 96%
- Lame: 6%
- Skin problems: 0%
- Overweight: 1%
- Obese: 14%
- Ideal: 84%

APRIL 2013
- Healthy: 93%
- Lame: 2%
- Skin problems: 2%
- Overweight: 0%
- Obese: 12%
- Ideal: 82%
d. Pregnant or lactating bitches
There is minimal change in the number of pregnant and lactating bitches, indicating stray dogs are continuing to breed at a constant pace.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SEPTEMBER 2013</th>
<th>APRIL 2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>96% Neither</td>
<td>96% Neither</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1% Pregnant</td>
<td>2% Pregnant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3% Lactating</td>
<td>2% Lactating</td>
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</tbody>
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6. Conclusion
By conducting this second count, Naturewatch Foundation has substantiated the data collected in the original dog count. In April, we were concerned that the number of stray dogs counted was lower than it should have been due to the unusually cold weather and our early starts. However, this second count has revealed that stray dogs in Kharkov roam the streets regardless of temperature and time of the day.

It is encouraging that the overall estimated number of stray dogs has decreased by 40% since April 2013.

Whilst the Kharkov Municipal Animal Shelter continues its programme to remove stray dogs from the streets, it is Naturewatch Foundation’s ambition to assist the Shelter to stop the flow of new dogs from becoming stray. Addressing the source of the stray dog problem is essential to any stray animal management programme, otherwise the programme will simply prove counter-productive and a waste of state funds.

As mentioned in Section 4 of this report, this can be achieved through subsidised spay/neuter clinics for pet animals and public awareness programmes to teach responsible pet ownership.

In order to change attitudes and raise public awareness about any topic on a large scale, professional public relations management must be sought. Whilst Naturewatch Foundation can assist with advert messages, a municipal budget should be allocated to cover the costs of a Kharkov-wide PR campaign to educate the public about responsible pet ownership.

Whilst the public continues to abandon unwanted pets or allow their dogs to roam and breed freely, Kharkov city will always have a stray dog population.

Educating the public about responsible pet ownership and offering subsidised spay/neuter clinics are fundamental to the city’s stray animal management programme.