

# Zero Strays

## Humane Street Animal Management By the Numbers

by Gina Goldini

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Introduction .....	4
Chapter 1: Understanding the Stray Phenomenon .....	6
Chapter 2: The Consequences of Inaction.....	12
Chapter 3: Legal and Policy Frameworks Around the World .....	15
Chapter 4: Humane Strategies for Achieving Zero Strays .....	17
Chapter 5: Building Responsible Communities .....	20
Chapter 6: The Role of Stakeholders.....	23
Chapter 7: Data, Monitoring, and Measuring Success .....	27
Chapter 8: Overcoming Obstacles.....	35
Chapter 9: A Call to Action .....	39
Chapter 10: A Future Without Strays .....	42
Resources: Animal Welfare Organizations in Case Studies .....	43
References.....	45
Appendix 1: Sample Policies for Humane Stray Animal Management.....	49
Appendix 2: Template for a Memorandum of Understanding.....	54
Appendix 3: Animal Welfare Acts.....	56
Appendix 4: Animal Sentience Laws.....	59

# Introduction

Dogs and cats have been humanity's loyal companions for thousands of years, offering friendship, service, protection, and joy. Yet, in many parts of the world, millions of companion animals live on the streets, facing hunger, disease, abuse, and premature death. The presence of strays is not merely an animal welfare concern: it intersects with public health, community safety, and even local economies.

## **What does it mean to achieve “Zero Strays”?**

“Zero Strays” refers to a situation in which every dog and cat has a responsible owner or caretaker, and no companion animal is forced to live as a stray, unwanted, unprotected, and at risk. This vision has been realized in a handful of countries and cities, and is the aspiration of many more. But what does it actually take to reach this goal? Which approaches work, which fall short, and why?

## **The Global Picture: Facts and Figures**

According to the World Health Organization, there are an estimated 900 million dogs and 600 million cats worldwide, with 75% of them classified as “free-roaming” or stray. In some countries, strays account for up to 80% of reported rabies cases, and bites from strays are a leading cause of injury, especially among children. The economic impact is significant: for example, India, which has approximately 35 million dogs, spends over \$25 million annually on post-exposure prophylaxis for dog bites, and the World Bank estimates that dog-mediated rabies costs the global economy \$8.6 billion a year (Smith et al., 2019; Kumar et al., 2018).

## **Why Stray Animal Management Is Important**

The consequences of unmanaged stray populations are far-reaching, and their numbers are increasing. In addition to the suffering of the animals themselves, the risks to public health (rabies and other zoonotic diseases), community well-being (dog bites, traffic accidents), and municipal budgets (animal control, healthcare costs) are well documented. On the other hand, effective, humane management improves animal welfare, community harmony, and even tourism and investment.

## **A Shift Towards Evidence-Based Solutions**

In my previous book, *Loving Dogs*, I explored the stories of countries and communities striving for Zero Strays. While these narratives inspired hope and compassion, readers wanted more: hard data, research findings, and a critical analysis of what works and what doesn't. This book is my answer to that call. Here, you will find not only stories, but also the

facts and figures that underpin success, and sometimes failure, in dog population management.

**Throughout this book, we will examine:**

- The root causes of stray animal populations, supported by demographic and epidemiological studies
- The comparative effectiveness of policies such as sterilization campaigns, registration laws, and public education, with reference to peer-reviewed research and government data
- The costs and benefits of different approaches, quantified wherever possible
- Case studies of cities and countries that have achieved, or are striving for, Zero Strays—this time, with a critical eye on statistics, survey results, and independent evaluations

**Our Aim**

The goal is not simply to inspire, but to inform and empower policymakers, advocates, and concerned citizens with the tools they need to make real, measurable progress. By grounding our understanding in solid evidence, we can move beyond wishful thinking and toward practical, effective, and humane solutions.

**A Note on Data and Transparency**

Wherever possible, this book references the most up-to-date and reliable statistics available, drawing from sources such as the World Health Organization, World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH/OIE), peer-reviewed journals, government reports, and NGO studies. All data sources are cited, and readers are encouraged to consult the references for further information.

With evidence at our fingertips, let us embark on a journey to discover what truly works in the quest for Zero Strays, and how every community can be part of the solution.

# Chapter 1: Understanding the Stray Phenomenon

## **Stray animal Phenomenon**

The phrase “stray animal” may seem straightforward, but its meaning changes from place to place. In some countries, a stray animal is one without a home or owner, left to fend for itself on the streets. In others, the term includes dogs and cats that belong to a community as a whole, cared for by several people, but not officially claimed. There are also free-roaming owned dogs: those that have a family but are allowed to wander. And then, there are truly feral animals, born and living their entire lives with little to no human contact. These distinctions matter because they affect how we count, care for, and create policies for these animals.

Hundreds of millions of strays living on the edges of human society, often struggling to survive. Free-roaming dog and cat populations are more prevalent in countries with lower human development indices (Villa et al., 2010).

For example, India is home to over 35 million strays, while Romania has grappled with populations nearing a million in its cities and towns. In wealthier nations, most strays are quickly taken in by shelters, but in many developing countries, they remain a visible part of daily life.

Densities and ratios vary greatly between urban and rural areas, even within the same country (Jackman & Rowan, 2007; Smith et al., 2019). However, stray populations are difficult to accurately measure: Most countries lack systematic, up-to-date national surveys; available data are often from localized studies or estimates (Smith et al., 2019; Smith et al., 2022).

## **Why Stray Animal Populations Increase**

The reasons stray animal populations grow are as varied as the animals themselves. Uncontrolled breeding is a major factor. A single pair of dogs can produce hundreds of puppies in just a few years if left unchecked. Abandonment is another serious issue. When people face economic hardship or unexpected changes, pets can be left behind. During Greece’s financial crisis, for example, the number of strays climbed as more families released pets they could no longer care for. Death of the owner is another issue, when no relative wants to take the animal in.

Weak laws or poor enforcement around pet ownership and abandonment only make matters worse. In some regions, there are few penalties for dumping a dog or letting pets breed freely. Cultural attitudes also play a role; in some societies, community animals are accepted and even fed, while in others, roaming dogs and cats are seen as nuisances or threats. Finally, a lack of public awareness around responsible pet ownership, spaying and neutering, and adoption allows the cycle to continue.

### **Impact of Strays**

The impacts of stray animal populations are felt on many levels. For the dogs, life on the streets is hard. They face hunger, disease, injuries, and abuse. Most street animals live only a few years, compared to a decade or more for pets in loving homes. Communities face their own challenges: strays can be carriers of diseases like rabies, which kills nearly 59,000 people worldwide each year, almost always transmitted by dog bites. In Thailand, for instance, there were over 400,000 reported dog bite cases in a single year. Stray dogs can also cause traffic accidents, frighten residents, and create noise and sanitation problems. Cities and towns spend millions on animal control, healthcare, and sometimes controversial population control measures.

### **Keeping Track**

Counting strays is far from easy. They move around, hide, and sometimes blend in with owned pets. Traditional methods, like sending teams to count dogs in neighborhoods, or tracking how many are taken in by shelters, often miss large numbers. Newer approaches, such as using drones or smartphone apps, are helping researchers get better numbers, but it's still a challenge. Having accurate data is essential: without it, it's hard to know what solutions are working or where help is needed most. Reliable information and clear definitions give us the tools to help both strays and the communities they live in.

## **Stray Cat Phenomenon**

While strays often take center stage in public discourse and animal welfare campaigns, stray cats are an equally significant, though sometimes less visible, component of urban and rural animal populations worldwide. Understanding the unique dynamics of stray cat populations is crucial for anyone seeking to create humane, sustainable solutions to the challenges faced by both animals and communities (HSUS, 2022).

## **The Nature of Feline Independence**

Unlike dogs, domestic cats have retained much of their wild ancestry. They are highly adaptable, solitary by nature, and capable of surviving, sometimes even thriving, without direct human support (Bradshaw, 2016). This independence helps explain why cat colonies can develop unnoticed in city parks, alleys, abandoned buildings, and even rural farms. Cats are territorial, often forming loose colonies around food sources such as garbage bins, restaurants, or sympathetic caretakers (ASPCA, 2021).

## **Sources of Stray Cats**

Stray cats typically fall into two categories:

- **Lost or Abandoned Pets:** Cats that once lived in homes but were lost or deliberately abandoned (HSUS, 2022).
- **Feral Cats:** The offspring of strays or other feral cats, these animals are usually unsocialized to humans and may never have lived indoors (Alley Cat Allies, 2023).

Both groups contribute to the population, though feral cats present particular challenges for socialization and adoption (ASPCA, 2021).

## **Population Dynamics and Reproductive Potential**

One female cat can have multiple litters per year, and kittens can begin reproducing as young as five months old (Levy et al., 2003). A single pair of unsterilized cats and their offspring can theoretically produce thousands of kittens in just a few years (HSUS, 2022). This exponential growth makes traditional methods of culling or sporadic removal ineffective for long-term population control (Levy et al., 2003; Alley Cat Allies, 2023).

## **Public Health and Environmental Impact**

Stray and feral cats can impact human communities and local ecosystems in several ways:

- **Public Health:** While cats rarely pose the same direct bite risk as dogs, they can carry diseases such as toxoplasmosis, ringworm, and, in rare cases, rabies. Fleas and parasites are also common (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2019).
- **Wildlife Predation:** Outdoor cats are skilled hunters and can have significant impacts on local bird, reptile, and small mammal populations, especially in sensitive environments (Loss et al., 2013).

- Nuisance Complaints: Noise from mating or fighting, foul odors, and property damage can lead to friction between cat colonies and human neighbors (HSUS, 2022).

### **Why Stray Cat Management Is Different**

Efforts to control stray cat populations confront unique challenges:

- Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR): The most widely recommended humane approach involves trapping cats, sterilizing and vaccinating them, and returning them to their territory. TNR stabilizes and gradually reduces colony size while minimizing nuisance behaviors (Levy et al., 2003; Alley Cat Allies, 2023).
- Low Adoption Rates: Feral cats are often unsuitable for adoption. Socialization programs for young kittens can help, but adult ferals are best managed in place (ASPCA, 2021).
- Caretaker Networks: Many stray cat colonies rely on volunteer feeders or caretakers, whose cooperation is essential for successful TNR and health monitoring (Alley Cat Allies, 2023).
- Public Perception: Myths and misinformation about cats, their value, and their behavior often complicate efforts to build support for humane management (HSUS, 2022).

### **Successful Models and Global Innovations**

Cities worldwide have pioneered strategies for managing stray cats:

- Istanbul, Turkey is famous for its “community cats,” with residents and businesses feeding and caring for neighborhood felines. The city supports TNR and provides public feeding stations (Kedistan, 2020).
- Rome, Italy has long recognized cat colonies as part of its cultural heritage, with formalized caretaker programs and legal protection for established colonies (Natoli et al., 2006).
- United States & UK: Many cities have embraced TNR, supported by local animal welfare charities, with measurable stabilization and reduction of outdoor cat populations over time (Levy et al., 2003; HSUS, 2022).

## **The Role of Data and Community Engagement**

Accurate data is essential for effective cat management. Surveys, citizen science apps, and partnerships with veterinary clinics can help map colony locations, monitor health, and measure progress (Levy et al., 2003). Community education (Including dispelling myths, promoting spay/neuter, and encouraging responsible pet ownership), is equally vital (ASPCA, 2021).

## **Ethical Considerations**

Stray cat management raises ethical questions:

- **Culling vs. TNR:** Research shows culling is often ineffective and unpopular, while TNR offers a humane alternative (Levy et al., 2003; Alley Cat Allies, 2023).
- **Wildlife Impact:** Balancing the needs of cats with those of native wildlife requires careful planning, especially in sensitive habitats (Loss et al., 2013).
- **Caretaker Rights:** Recognizing and supporting the role of caretakers can improve both animal welfare and community relations (Natoli et al., 2006).

The stray cat phenomenon is a complex, multifaceted issue requiring specialized approaches distinct from those used for dogs. As such, this book focuses mainly on efforts to manage street dog populations.

By understanding both feline and canine behavior, reproductive biology, and the dynamics of urban ecosystems, communities can design effective, compassionate programs that protect animal welfare, public health, and biodiversity. Collaboration among animal welfare organizations, local governments, caretakers, and the public is the key to progress toward a world where dogs, cats and people coexist in harmony (HSUS, 2022; Alley Cat Allies, 2023).

**Table 1: Stray Populations**

Statistic	Figure	Source
Pets becoming strays	7.6 million annually	Abdulkarim et al, 2021
Europe	100m dogs & cats (30%)	Four Paws, 2024
Germany	1.7k dogs / 2m cats (7%)	Mars Petcare, 2021
India	52.5m dogs / 8m cats (69 %)	Mars Petcare, 2021
China	26.3m dogs /105.3m cats (52%)	Mars Petcare, 2021
Japan	24.9k dogs / 218m cats (12%)	Mars Petcare, 2021
Brazil	20m dogs / 10m cats (25%)	Mars Petcare, 2021
Mexico	18.8 m dogs / 9.1 m cats (32 %)	Mars Petcare, 2021
Indonesia	4.36m dogs / 11.52m cats (76%)	Mars Petcare, 2021
Thailand	1.6 m dogs /752.8k cats (17%)	Mars Petcare, 2021
Turkey	1.66m dogs /4.38m cats (48%)	Mars Petcare, 2021
Greece	693K dogs / 2m cats (69%)	Mars Petcare, 2021
Australia	38.2k dogs / 110.7k cats (3%)	Mars Petcare, 2021
Canada	1.12m dogs / 2.91m cats (21%)	Mars Petcare, 2021
United States	5.9m dogs / 35m cats (20%)	Mars Petcare, 2021
United Kingdom	49.3K dogs /970k cats (5%)	Mars Petcare, 2021
Average street animal lifespan	4 years	WHO, 2023
Average pet lifespan	10–13 years	ASPCA, 2022

## Chapter 2: The Consequences of Inaction

When stray populations are left unmanaged, the effects ripple out far beyond the animals themselves. Ignoring the problem doesn't make it go away; it only allows it to grow, creating challenges for public health, safety, and the well-being of entire communities.

One of the most serious consequences is the spread of disease, particularly rabies. The World Health Organization estimates that more than 59,000 people die from rabies around the globe each year, and nearly every case is linked to a bite from an infected dog. Children are especially at risk; in some countries, most rabies victims are under the age of fifteen. In places where strays are common and vaccination rates are low, the threat of rabies hangs over every community, forcing governments to spend millions on emergency treatments and prevention campaigns.

Dog bites are another widespread problem. In Thailand, over 400,000 cases of dog bites were reported in just one year. These bites can cause serious injuries, emotional trauma, and, in rare cases, death. Hospitals and clinics must treat bite wounds, and sometimes people need costly and painful post-exposure shots to protect against rabies.

The economic impact of stray populations is significant. Governments and local authorities spend large sums on animal control services, shelter operations, vaccination drives, and street cleaning. In India, for example, more than \$25 million is spent each year on treatments for dog bites and rabies exposure. This is money that could otherwise support schools, hospitals, or infrastructure.

Communities also face daily disruptions. Packs of strays can frighten residents, especially children and the elderly, and sometimes cause traffic accidents by running into roads. Noise from barking, fights, and the presence of sick or injured animals can make neighborhoods feel unsafe.

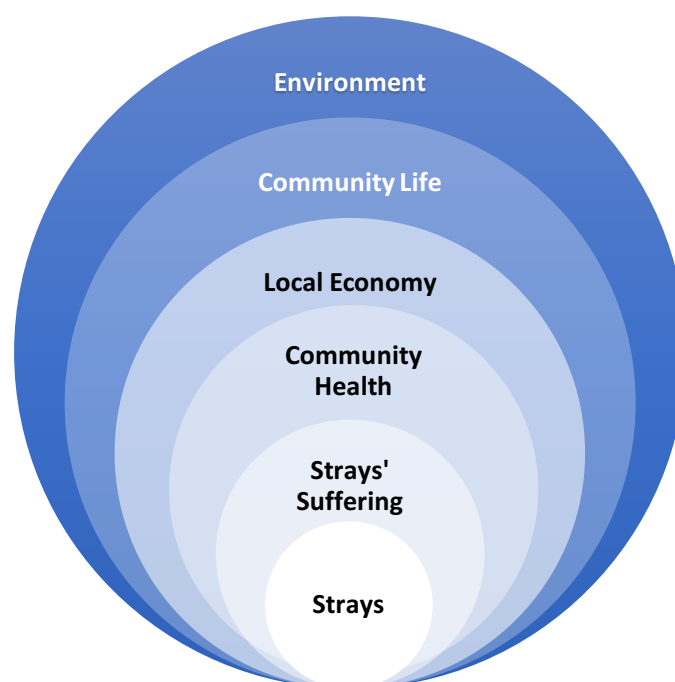
Most of all, the animals themselves endure great suffering. Life on the street is harsh: food is scarce, diseases spread easily, and injuries are common. Many street animals never know a gentle touch, a steady meal, or a warm bed. Puppies and kittens born on the streets have little chance of survival, and adult strays usually live only a few years, far less than their cared-for counterparts.

Perhaps the saddest consequence is that unmanaged stray populations often lead to desperate and inhumane responses, such as mass culling or poisoning campaigns. These

measures do not solve the root problem, but they cause immense pain and distress to animals and communities alike.

Inaction, then, is not a neutral choice: It has real, lasting costs for everyone. Without intervention, stray animal populations grow, suffering increases, and the risks to people and animals multiply. Addressing the issue with compassion and effective policies is not just the kind thing to do. It's the smart thing to do for building healthier, safer communities.

### **The Ripple Effect of Strays**



- Strays experience suffering: hunger, disease, injury, abuse
- They affect Community Health: rabies & injury from animal bites, animal waste
- The Local Economy is affected: healthcare, animal control & sanitation costs
- Community Life is impacted: noise, fear, accidents
- The Environment is affected: wildlife impact, waste
- The farther the ripples go, the wider the impact, showing that even if someone doesn't interact directly with strays, they are still affected by the consequences.

**Table 2: The Impact of Rabies**

<b>Statistic</b>	<b>Figure</b>	<b>Source</b>
Annual global rabies deaths	70,000	CDC, 2025
Percentage of rabies cases from dog bites	99%	WHO, 2025
Percentage of global rabies deaths in Africa & Asia	95%	WHO, 2025
Annual rabies deaths in Asia	31,000 (20,000 of those in India)	CDC, 2025
Annual rabies deaths in Africa	21,000	WHO, 2025
of countries where rabies is endemic	9: Bangladesh, Bhutan, DPRK, India, Indonesia, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka & Thailand	WHO, 2025
Cost of rabies prevention/ treatment	\$25 million annually	WHO, 2018
Global impact of dog-caused rabies	\$8.6 billion	World Bank, 2015

## Chapter 3: Legal and Policy Frameworks Around the World

Solving the problem of strays isn't just about compassion or community action; it also depends on the rules and policies set by governments. From national laws to city ordinances, what governments choose to do (or not do) shapes the fate of millions of strays and directly affects public health and safety.

### **How Different Countries Approach the Issue**

Around the world, countries take very different approaches to managing stray animals. Some, like the Netherlands, have virtually eliminated stray animals through a combination of strict laws, widespread sterilization, and a culture of responsible pet ownership. In the Netherlands, all pets must be registered, microchipped, and spayed or neutered unless their owners are licensed breeders. Abandoning a pet is a criminal offense, and there is a strong system of shelters and support for both animals and people.

In contrast, countries like India and Turkey face much bigger challenges due to their large, free-roaming dog populations. India's approach is based on the Animal Birth Control (ABC) program, which focuses on sterilizing and vaccinating strays instead of culling them (a method now required by law in many cities). Turkey protects street dogs by law, requiring municipalities to provide food, water, shelters, and neutering programs, with culling strictly banned.

Some countries, however, still rely on less humane methods like large-scale culling or poisoning to control stray populations. These approaches may provide a quick drop in numbers, but studies have shown they don't work in the long run. Animals quickly repopulate areas through breeding or migration from surrounding regions. In fact, the stray rebound rate is 100% within 2 years after culling if there is no sterilization program in place (WHO, 2023). Moreover, the suffering caused by culling or poisoning can spark public outrage and damage a country's reputation.

### **International Guidelines**

Organizations like the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) provide guidance and standards to help countries manage stray populations responsibly. They recommend focusing on sterilization, vaccination, and public education instead of culling. According to these organizations, the most successful programs are those that combine laws, enforcement, and community involvement.

## Who Is Responsible?

A key question in any country is: who is responsible for strays? In some places, it's the government. In others, it's left to local municipalities, animal welfare groups, or even individuals. The most successful countries have clear laws that spell out responsibilities: who must register pets, who pays for sterilization, and who enforces penalties for abandonment or mistreatment.

## Enforcement: The Missing Link

Having a law on the books doesn't guarantee it will be enforced. Many countries have animal welfare laws, but without proper funding or public support, these laws are ignored. Enforcement also works best when paired with education and support for pet owners, such as low-cost spay/neuter clinics or free microchipping days.

## Why Policy is Important

The right mix of laws, enforcement, and community support can make a dramatic difference. Countries that have invested in humane, evidence-based programs have seen stray numbers drop, rabies cases decline, and public attitudes shift in favor of responsible pet care. Where laws are weak or ignored, the cycle of suffering and risk continues.

**Table 3: Examples of Effective Dog Management & Disease Control**

Statistic	Figure	Source
Netherlands (by registration & sterilization)	Reached virtually Zero Strays in 2016 (>95%)	Dutch Ministry of Agriculture, 2018
India enacted Animal Birth Control Law	2001 (Law prohibits killing strays)	Indian Govt. Gazette, 2001
Bhutan's sterilization & vaccination program	In 2 years, achieved 100% of dog sterilization in 2023	WOAH, 2023
United Kingdom	89% of dogs microchipped	UK DEFRA, 2022
United States	80% of owned dogs sterilized	ASPCA, 2021
Countries still using culling as main dog population control	30%	WOAH, 2019
Dog rebound rate after culling with no sterilization program	100% after 1-2 years	WHO, 2023

## Chapter 4: Humane Strategies for Achieving Zero Strays

If cities and countries want to solve the problem of strays for good, the answer isn't more suffering; it's more compassion, science, and community action. Over the last few decades, a growing number of places have discovered that humane solutions not only work better, but also create safer, happier neighborhoods for people and animals alike.

### **From Shelters to the Streets: Different Approaches**

There are two main ways to manage stray populations: shelter-based and community-based. Many people think that building bigger shelters or kennels is the answer. While shelters play a vital role in rescuing and rehoming animals, relying only on shelters quickly becomes overwhelming. When stray populations are high, shelters fill up faster than animals can be adopted. This can lead to overcrowding, stress for the animals, and, in some cases, euthanasia for healthy dogs when space runs out.

That's why more and more cities are turning to community-based solutions. These focus on controlling the stray population directly where the strays live: out on the streets or in the neighborhoods where people already know them.

### **The Power of Spay and Neuter**

The most effective humane strategy is large-scale spay and neuter programs. Spaying (for females) and neutering (for males) prevent animals from having unwanted litters, which is the root cause of the stray problem. This approach is called "catch-neuter-release" (CNR) or "catch-neuter-vaccinate-release" (CNVR) when vaccination is included.

For example, in Jaipur, India, a decade-long CNVR program led to a dramatic drop in the number of strays and almost eliminated human rabies cases. In Istanbul, Turkey, sterilization and vaccination have become the law, and local authorities provide food and care stations for street dogs.

### **Vaccination: Protecting People and Dogs**

Vaccinating strays against diseases like rabies is crucial. Even if the animals are not adopted or removed from the streets, making sure they are healthy protects the whole community. In Bali, widespread vaccination campaigns in stray and community dog populations reduced rabies cases in both animals and humans.

## **Registration, Microchipping, and Licensing**

Keeping track of animals is another important tool. Registration and microchipping help reunite lost pets with their owners and prevent abandonment. Some countries, like the Netherlands, require every pet to be microchipped and registered. Licensing also helps fund animal welfare services and encourages responsible pet ownership.

## **Laws Against Abandonment**

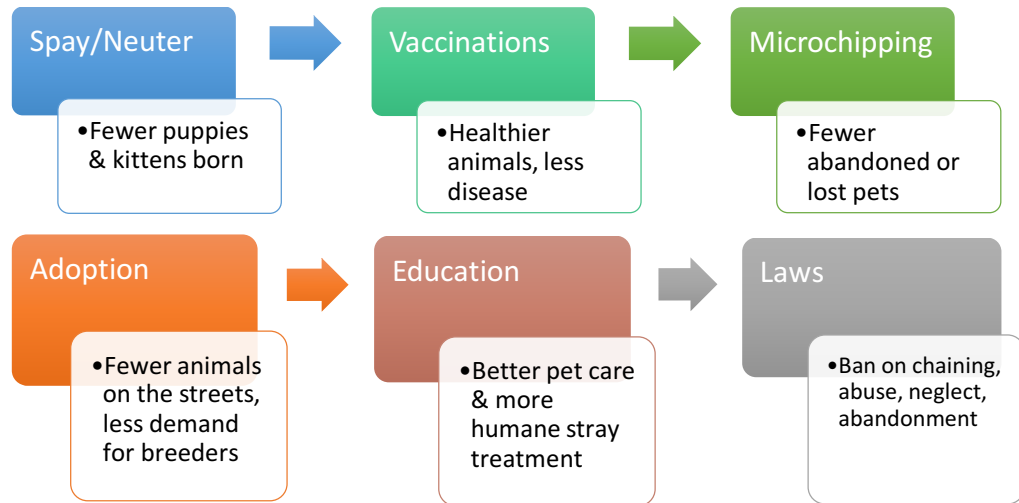
Strong laws that make it illegal to abandon a pet, and real consequences for breaking them, help change public behavior. When people know they can't simply "dump" a pet without consequences, they are more likely to seek help or find new homes for their pets.

## **Adoption, Education, and Community Support**

Promoting adoption over buying dogs from breeders or pet shops is key to reducing stray populations. Public education campaigns teach people about responsible pet ownership, the importance of sterilization, and the joys of adopting a rescue animal. Community involvement can include feeding programs, local volunteers, and school projects that help care for or monitor street animals.

Humane solutions are not only kinder, but they are also more effective in the long run. Studies show that culling or removing dogs simply creates a temporary drop in numbers, other animals move in, or the remaining dogs and cats breed faster. By focusing on sterilization, vaccination, and responsible ownership, communities can break the cycle of suffering and create lasting change.

## How Humane Strategies Work Together



## Chapter 5: Building Responsible Communities

Solving the issue of strays isn't just about laws and veterinary care; it's about people. The most successful efforts to achieve Zero Strays happen when entire communities get involved, working together to make sure every dog has a place and a purpose. Responsible communities are the backbone of any long-term solution.

### **The Power of Responsible Pet Ownership**

At the heart of the stray animal problem is how people treat their pets. Responsible pet ownership means more than just loving your animal: it means taking care of all their needs, keeping them safe, and making sure they don't contribute to the next generation of strays. This includes providing proper food and shelter, regular veterinary care, keeping dogs on a leash or within a secure yard, and, importantly, having them spayed or neutered.

In places where pet owners are educated about and supported in these responsibilities, stray populations drop dramatically. For example, in the Netherlands, responsible pet ownership is the norm. Dogs are rarely abandoned, almost all are microchipped and registered, and the country has achieved a remarkable Zero Strays status.

### **Education and Raising Awareness**

One of the most effective tools for change is education. When people understand why sterilization is important, how to prevent accidental litters, and what happens to abandoned animals, they're more likely to make choices that help both pets and their communities. Schools can play a big role by teaching children about empathy, animal welfare, and responsible pet care from a young age.

Public awareness campaigns, such as posters, community meetings, social media, radio public service announcements, and even television programs, can help spread these messages to every corner of society. In India, for example, animal welfare organizations regularly run street plays, workshops, and "Adopt, Don't Shop" campaigns to encourage better treatment of pets and promote adoption from shelters.

## **Community Involvement and Volunteers**

Communities don't need to wait for government action to make a difference. In many places, local volunteers look after street animals, making sure they have food, water, and medical care. These "community caretakers" can also help monitor stray animal populations, report new litters, and assist with trapping and transporting the animals for sterilization and vaccination.

Neighborhood groups can organize adoption events, fundraising for spay/neuter clinics, or educational outreach. The more people get involved, the more likely it is that humane solutions will take root and last.

## **Partnering with Local Leaders and Institutions**

Local leaders, such as religious figures, teachers, or respected elders, can be powerful allies in changing public attitudes. When community leaders speak out in favor of responsible pet care, or even set an example by adopting a stray animal, others are more likely to follow.

Partnerships with schools, businesses, and veterinary clinics can help provide resources, spread information, and make services like vaccination and sterilization more accessible and affordable.

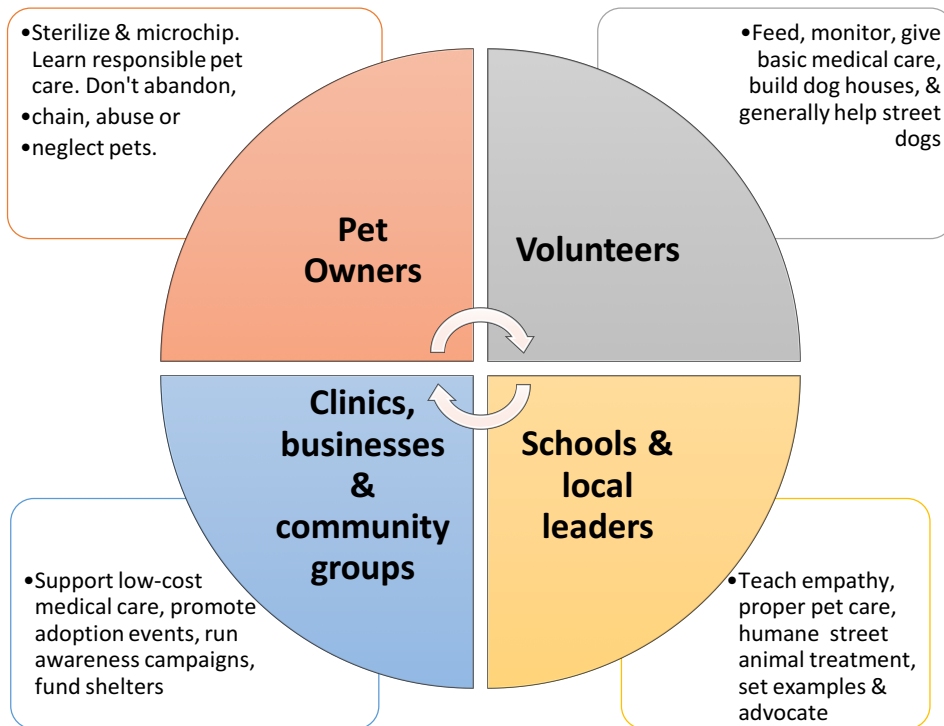
## **Celebrating Success and Building Pride**

Communities that work together to reduce the number of strays often find new pride in their neighborhoods. Cleaner streets, healthier animals, and fewer bite incidents create a sense of accomplishment. Publicly celebrating milestones, like a successful adoption day or the opening of a new clinic, helps keep momentum going and encourages others to join the cause.

## **The Ripple Effect**

When communities come together for strays, the benefits spread far and wide. People feel safer, there's less suffering, and new friendships and connections are made. Responsible communities don't just help street animals; they help each other, too.

## How Communities Can Make a Difference



## Chapter 6: The Role of Stakeholders

Solving the stray animal problem is too big for any one person or organization alone. It takes a whole network of people, each with their own skills, resources, and responsibilities, working together toward a common goal. These people and groups are known as stakeholders. When their efforts are coordinated, the journey to Zero Strays becomes not just possible, but sustainable.

### **Government Agencies**

Government bodies, such as city councils, health departments, and national ministries—are vital for providing leadership, funding, and legal frameworks. They create and enforce laws about dog ownership, sterilization, and animal cruelty. Governments also support public health by organizing vaccination drives, funding animal shelters, and partnering with animal welfare groups. In successful programs, governments don't just make the rules; they invest in solutions and monitor progress.

### **NGOs and Animal Welfare Organizations**

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and animal welfare groups are often the driving force behind humane dog population management. These organizations run spay/neuter and vaccination clinics, rescue and rehome strays, educate the public, and advocate for better laws. For instance, groups like Humane Society International, Four Paws, and local charities have helped cities around the world launch successful sterilization campaigns and adoption programs.

### **Veterinarians**

Veterinarians are the hands-on heroes in the fight for Zero Strays. They perform spay/neuter surgeries, vaccinate dogs and cats, treat illnesses and injuries, and provide expert advice to both pet owners and policymakers. In some countries, mobile vet teams travel to remote or underserved areas, making sure no dog or cat is left behind. Vets also play a key role in educating communities about responsible pet care and disease prevention.

## **Community Volunteers and Caretakers**

Ordinary people like neighbors, students, and retirees, often make an extraordinary difference. Community volunteers may feed street animals, help with trapping for sterilization, foster puppies until they're adopted, or organize local awareness events. In some places, "community dog caretakers" are recognized and supported by local authorities for their work in monitoring and caring for street animals. Their compassion and commitment are essential, especially in areas where resources are limited.

## **The Role of the Private Sector**

Businesses, especially veterinary clinics and pet-related companies, can support Zero Strays by sponsoring low-cost spay/neuter days, donating food or supplies, or helping promote adoption events. Sometimes, local businesses even serve as hubs for community education or fundraising.

## **Working Together: The Importance of Partnerships**

No single stakeholder has all the answers or resources. The most successful communities are those where governments, NGOs, veterinarians, volunteers, and businesses work hand-in-hand. In Istanbul, for example, the city government partners with animal welfare groups and local citizens to care for, sterilize, and feed street animals. In the Netherlands, strict laws are supported by a network of shelters, veterinarians, and volunteer organizations.

When these different groups communicate openly, share data, and coordinate their efforts, progress accelerates. Partnerships mean more strays are reached, more people are educated, and solutions are more lasting.

## **Why Stakeholder Involvement Matters**

When everyone has a role and feels responsible, the burden doesn't fall on just one group. This shared commitment ensures that humane, effective stray population management continues year after year, regardless of changes in leadership or funding.

## Case Study: Jaipur, India - A Model of Collaboration

Jaipur, a bustling city in Rajasthan, India, once faced a severe stray animal crisis. In the early 1990s, rabies was a constant threat, and complaints about street dogs were common. The city's initial response was culling, which failed to solve the problem and drew criticism from both locals and international observers.

Change began when a group of concerned citizens and local animal welfare organizations joined forces with the Jaipur Municipal Corporation. They decided to try a new, more humane approach: The Animal Birth Control (ABC) program. Here's how the stakeholders came together:

1. **Government:** The municipal government provided funding, policy support, and access to public spaces for clinics and outreach.
2. **NGOs:** Organizations like Help in Suffering ran spay/neuter and vaccination clinics, managed dog-catching teams, and trained local staff.
3. **Veterinarians:** Both local and visiting vets performed thousands of surgeries and vaccinations, training others along the way.
4. **Community Volunteers:** Residents helped identify unsterilized dogs, fostered puppies, and spread awareness about the program's goals and benefits.
5. **International Partners:** Animal welfare groups such as Humane Society International provided technical expertise and sometimes funding or equipment.

**Table 4. Efficacy of Jaipur's Animal Birth Control (ABC) Program**

Statistic	Figure	Source
of dogs sterilized during ABC program	60,000+	Help in Suffering, 2018
Drop in rabies deaths after ABC program	From 20 + annually down to 0 deaths	Reece & Chawla, 2006
of Indian cities to adopt ABC program	70+	Indian Ministry of Animal Husbandry

Over time, the ABC program sterilized and vaccinated tens of thousands of street dogs. As a result, the stray animal population stabilized, and human rabies deaths dropped to nearly zero. The project became a model for other Indian cities and even influenced national policy.

The key to Jaipur's success was that no single group acted alone. Government leadership, NGO dedication, veterinary skills, and community participation all worked together toward a shared goal. Today, Jaipur's approach is studied and celebrated worldwide as proof that collaboration can transform the lives of both people and dogs.

## Chapter 7: Data, Monitoring, and Measuring Success

You can't solve a problem or prove you've solved it, if you don't know how big it is or whether it's getting better. That's why collecting data and tracking progress is so important on the road to Zero Strays. Good information helps communities set goals, make smart decisions, and celebrate real achievements.

### The Importance of Data

Imagine trying to reduce the number of strays in your city, but you don't know how many there are to begin with. Or you launch a spay/neuter campaign but have no way to tell if it's working. Without data, efforts are like trying to navigate a maze blindfolded. Reliable numbers show where help is needed most and reveal if programs are making a difference.

### How Do We Count Strays?

Counting strays isn't always easy. Street animals, especially cats, move around, hide, or blend in with pets. However, some common methods for counting dogs include:

- **Street Surveys:** Teams walk or drive along set routes, counting visible dogs. This gives a "snapshot" but can miss shy or hidden animals.
- **Capture-Recapture:** Dogs are marked (with collars or paint) and then counted again later; the number of marked vs. unmarked dogs helps estimate the total population.
- **Shelter Intake Data:** Tracking how many dogs enter and leave shelters provides clues about local populations.
- **Technology Tools:** Some cities use drones, GPS, camera traps, or even smartphone apps to help count the dogs.

## **What Do We Track?**

Numbers alone aren't enough. To measure progress, communities and organizations often track:

1. Number of dogs sterilized and vaccinated
2. Dog bite and rabies cases
3. Adoption rates from shelters
4. Reports of abandoned or roaming dogs
5. Public attitudes and awareness (through surveys)

For example, after Jaipur, India, launched its Animal Birth Control program, officials tracked both the number of surgeries performed and the decline in human rabies cases, which fell to nearly zero.

## **Success Stories: What Does Progress Look Like?**

Success doesn't always mean zero strays overnight. It's about steady improvement: fewer stray puppies and kittens on the street, fewer bite incidents, more adoptions, and healthier animals. In Istanbul, the city monitors sterilization and vaccination rates and regularly surveys neighborhoods. In the Netherlands, dog and cat registration and microchipping rates are over 95%, and stray sightings have become almost unheard of.

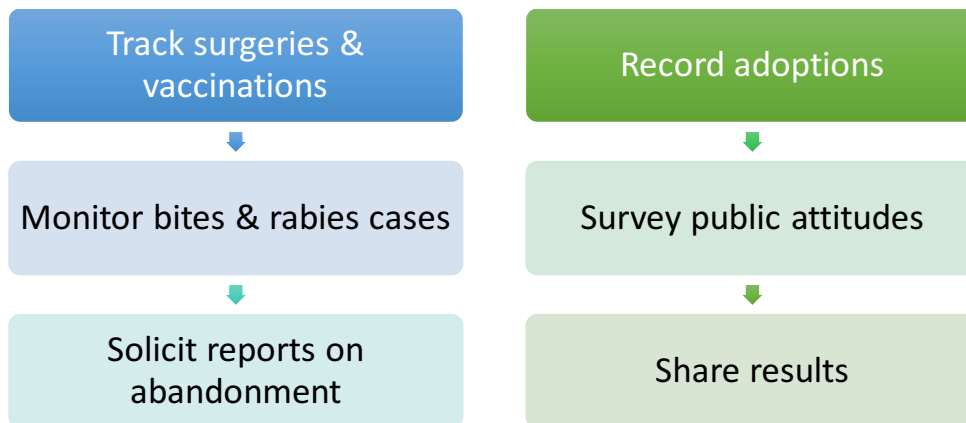
## **Challenges in Data Collection**

Not every community has the resources for high-tech solutions. Sometimes, local volunteers or animal welfare groups keep simple records with pen and paper. The most important thing is consistency: track the same things, the same way, over time.

## **Transparency and Sharing Results**

Sharing results builds trust. When communities see real numbers and honest updates, they are more likely to support ongoing programs. Publicizing successes (and learning from setbacks) helps keep the momentum going and inspires others to join in.

## Ways to Measure Street Dog Populations



### Case Study 1: High-Tech Dog Counting in Bali

Bali, Indonesia, has long struggled with a large population of free-roaming dogs and recurring outbreaks of rabies. Traditional counting methods, like sending teams into neighborhoods to tally dogs by hand, often missed animals hiding in alleys or moving between areas. In 2021, animal welfare organizations and researchers teamed up with local authorities to try something new: using drones and artificial intelligence (AI) to get a better count.

The team flew drones over selected neighborhoods and rural areas, capturing high-resolution images from above. These images were then analyzed with AI software trained to recognize and count dogs, even when they were lying under trees or near buildings. This approach allowed for a much more accurate estimate of the dog population, identifying patterns of movement and hotspots where interventions were needed most.

The data from the drone surveys helped local authorities plan targeted vaccination and spay/neuter campaigns, focusing their efforts where the need was greatest. The project also attracted international attention, showing that even in areas with limited resources, technology and innovation can make a big difference in animal welfare work.

This high-tech approach is now being adapted by other regions facing similar challenges, proving that creative solutions can help communities track their progress toward Zero Strays more effectively than ever before.

## **Case Study 2: Community Science in Cluj-Napoca, Romania**

Cluj-Napoca, a major city in Romania, faced a persistent problem with stray and free-roaming dogs. With limited budgets and a sprawling urban area, local authorities and NGOs needed a way to get accurate, up-to-date information on dog numbers and locations. Instead of expensive technology, they turned to the community itself.

In 2019, the city launched a “citizen science” dog mapping project. Residents were encouraged to report sightings of strays through a simple smartphone app and a dedicated website. People could upload photos, mark locations on a map, and add notes about the dogs’ health, behavior, or whether they were friendly or aggressive.

Over several months, hundreds of citizens in Cluj-Napoca contributed thousands of reports. The data gave animal control officers and NGOs a detailed, real-time map of stray animal “hotspots.” This allowed the city to:

- Prioritize areas for spay/neuter and vaccination campaigns
- Identify neighborhoods where more public education was needed
- Track the results of their efforts, seeing stray numbers decrease in areas that had received attention

This approach did more than just collect data; it also built a sense of shared responsibility. Citizens felt empowered to help, and the project improved trust and cooperation between the public, animal welfare groups, and the local government.

Cluj-Napoca’s experience shows that you don’t need drones or expensive equipment to monitor progress: with a little creativity and a lot of community spirit, any city can gather the information needed to measure success and keep moving toward Zero Strays.

## **Case Study 3: Community Dog Census in Colombo, Sri Lanka**

Colombo’s municipal council, in partnership with the Blue Paw Trust, conducted a citywide street dog census in 2012. Over several weeks, teams of trained volunteers and veterinary staff systematically covered every block, recording each stray animal they saw, along with details such as age, sex, and visible health status.

The census provided a baseline population figure and mapped out “dog density” in different districts. This enabled the city to launch targeted spay/neuter and rabies vaccination drives, focusing resources where they were needed most. Follow-up censuses every two years allowed the council to measure their impact and adjust strategies as needed.

#### **Case Study 4: Photographic Mark-Recapture in Cape Town, South Africa**

Cape Town, South Africa, is home to a large population of street dogs, especially in lower-income townships. In 2017, local animal welfare organizations, including the Mdzananda Animal Clinic, used a method called photographic mark-recapture to estimate the dog population.

Volunteers and staff took digital photos of dogs during community walks. Each dog's unique markings, scars, or fur patterns acted as a "natural tag." The team returned a few days later and photographed dogs again. By comparing the number of "recaptured" dogs (already photographed) to new ones, they estimated the total population statistically.

This low-tech but effective approach allowed for ongoing monitoring without collars, dyes, or stress to the dogs. By repeating this process regularly, the clinic could track whether sterilization campaigns were reducing dog numbers and spot any sudden changes in population, such as after a disease outbreak or migration from nearby areas.

#### **Case Study 5: Shelter Intake Data in Los Angeles, USA**

In Los Angeles, California, animal shelters keep detailed records of every dog they take in, including where the animal was found, its condition, and whether it was reclaimed, adopted, or euthanized. The city's Department of Animal Services uses this shelter intake data to monitor trends over time.

For example, after introducing free spay/neuter programs in high-risk neighborhoods, shelter intakes for stray and unwanted dogs dropped by over 30% in five years (2010–2015). These data also helped identify specific neighborhoods where dogs were being abandoned most frequently, guiding targeted outreach and education campaigns.

The shelter system's detailed record-keeping makes it possible to measure not only the number of strays but also improvements in adoption rates and reductions in euthanasia: important indicators of humane progress.

### **Case Study 6: Digital Mapping and GPS Collars in São Paulo, Brazil**

São Paulo, one of the largest cities in South America, experimented with using GPS collars on a sample of street dogs to study their movement patterns and territory sizes. Animal control officers and researchers fitted strays with lightweight collars that recorded location data for several weeks.

By analyzing the movement data, they learned that some dogs covered surprisingly large areas, while others stayed within just a few city blocks. This information changed the city's approach, showing that culling in one neighborhood could simply result in dogs moving in from another, and reinforcing the need for citywide, rather than piecemeal, sterilization and vaccination campaigns.

### **Case Study 7: Annual Dog Population Surveys in Istanbul, Turkey**

Istanbul's metropolitan municipality conducts annual surveys to monitor the city's free-roaming and community dog populations. City workers, often in collaboration with local animal welfare organizations, use a combination of direct street counts, citizen reports, and shelter intake records.

These surveys are published online, making the data transparent and accessible to the public. The results help the city's ongoing catch-neuter-vaccinate-release (CNVR) program and allow for rapid response if there's a sudden rise in stray numbers or disease cases.

### **Case Study 8: Tag, Track, and Release in Tbilisi, Georgia**

There is no nationwide data or systematic population survey for strays across all of Georgia, but it is estimated to be around 150,000. There are about 40,000 in Tbilisi, Georgia's capital, which offers a clear example of city-level data-driven stray animal management. Since 2015, the city's Animal Monitoring Agency has tracked every stray animal brought to its centers for sterilization and rabies vaccination. Each treated dog is photographed, ear-tagged, and logged in a public database, allowing citizens to view treatment history and report concerns online.

This transparency helps reduce community fears, monitors the impact of the CNVR program, and builds trust between the public and animal welfare authorities. While funding and resources remain a challenge, Tbilisi's approach is widely seen as a humane model for the region.

However, strays are still a visible and persistent issue throughout Georgia, especially in the three main cities: Tbilisi, Batumi (a resort town on the Black Sea) and Kutaisi. There have been concerns about public health (rabies, dog bites), animal welfare, and tourism image, but that is changing: Tbilisi has a website (<https://animal.tbilisi.gov.ge/>) that allows citizens and concerned tourists to report injured or aggressive dogs, and the other cities will make their own websites soon. International groups like Four Paws, Mayhew, and the World Animal Protection have provided technical support, and veterinary training for humane dog management in Tbilisi, and plan to help in other regions.

There are also plans for government- sponsored dog census and animal welfare programs in other regions. In the meantime, local organizations like Dog Organization Georgia in Tbilisi and Republic of Georgia Dog Refuge in Batumi are relying on donations to operate, conducting their own monitoring, vaccination, sterilization, and adoption campaigns.

While there are still reports of illegal poisoning or culling in some regions, there is a growing culture of animal welfare awareness in Georgia, especially among the younger generation and urban residents. Public education campaigns and volunteer involvement (feeding, medical care, fostering, and reporting) are increasing, shifting the mindset towards citizen responsibility.

### **Why These Approaches Are Important**

These global examples show that there is no one-size-fits-all solution to counting and monitoring strays. Whether it's high-tech drones, community-powered apps, old-fashioned censuses, or creative use of cameras and GPS, the key is consistency, transparency, and using the information to guide humane, effective action.

**Table 5. Free-Roaming Dog Tracking Methods**

Location	Tracking Method	Description / Tools	Impact / Use
Bali, Indonesia	Drones & AI Image Analysis	Drones take aerial images, AI software counts dogs in various environments.	Accurate counts, hotspot identification, targeted campaigns
Cluj-Napoca, Romania	Community (Citizen) Science	Residents report stray sightings via app/website, upload photos, mark locations, & add notes	Real-time dog mapping, prioritization, public engagement
Colombo, Sri Lanka	Volunteer Field Census	Teams walk every block, recording dogs' age, sex, health.	Baseline data, targeted interventions, follow-up measurement
Cape Town, South Africa	Photographic Mark-Recapture	Volunteers photograph unique markings, repeat surveys estimate population statistics.	Ongoing monitoring, non-invasive, tracks changes over time
Los Angeles, USA	Shelter Intake Data	Shelters log details on each dog (location, condition, outcome).	Tracks trends, informs outreach, measures adoption/euthanasia
São Paulo, Brazil	GPS Collars & Digital Mapping campaigns, prevents migration issues	Strays fitted with GPS collars; movement & territory analyzed digitally.	Informs citywide campaigns, prevents migration issues
Istanbul, Turkey	Annual Mixed-Method Surveys	Combines street counts, citizen reports, & shelter data; surveys published online.	Transparent, guides CNVR programs, rapid response possible
Tbilisi, Georgia	Tag, Track, and Release (Database)	Strays sterilized/vaccinated, photographed, ear-tagged, logged in public database; citizen reporting online	Transparency, trust-building, monitors CNVR, encourages reports

## Chapter 8: Overcoming Obstacles

The journey to Zero Strays is rarely straightforward. Every community faces obstacles, some expected, others surprising, on the road to humane stray animal management. Understanding these challenges, and learning how others have overcome them, is vital for building lasting solutions.

One of the most persistent barriers is limited funding and resources. Many cities, especially in low- and middle-income countries, struggle to afford large-scale spay/neuter and vaccination programs, let alone shelters or comprehensive public education campaigns. Essential resources like medicines, trained staff, and safe facilities all require money. Communities that make progress often start by prioritizing high-impact actions such as Catch-Neuter-Vaccinate-Release (CNVR) over more expensive and less effective approaches. They seek partnerships with NGOs, international organizations, and local businesses, and mobilize volunteers to help with community outreach and animal care. Creative fundraising, like adoption events or social media campaigns, can also make a difference.

Another major challenge is public attitudes and misinformation. In some places, strays are seen mainly as a nuisance or threat. Myths about sterilization, rabies, or dog behavior can fuel fear and resistance to humane solutions. Sometimes, there's also mistrust of local authorities or NGOs. Successful communities address this by investing in ongoing public education, using clear and locally meaningful messages. Respected leaders, teachers, and even religious figures can become advocates, helping spread accurate information and dispel myths. Sharing visible improvements, like a decrease in bite incidents or seeing healthier street animals, also helps to win public support.

Even when good laws exist, enforcement can be a struggle. Weak enforcement often stems from lack of training, low priority, or even corruption. In some regions, animal welfare laws are simply outdated or missing. Progress comes when people advocate for modern, evidence-based animal laws that require humane methods and responsible pet ownership. Building trust and relationships with law enforcement and local officials can support fair enforcement, while media attention and community pressure can keep animal welfare on the agenda.

High reproduction and migration rates are another serious hurdle. If sterilization campaigns only reach part of a city or if new dogs move in from neighboring areas, stray populations can quickly rebound. That's why effective programs coordinate efforts on a citywide or even regional scale, track dog movements and population changes, and maintain ongoing campaigns instead of one-off interventions.

Cultural and religious beliefs can also shape attitudes toward dogs and interventions like sterilization. In some communities, these beliefs may make people hesitant to support certain solutions. The key is to engage local leaders early, seek their guidance, and tailor messages to respect local traditions and values while explaining the benefits of humane approaches.

Political instability, conflict, or natural disasters pose additional risks. During crises, resources may be overwhelmed, dogs can be abandoned, and existing programs disrupted. Communities that build strong volunteer networks and prepare emergency response plans, including animal welfare, are better able to weather such storms.

Finally, a lack of reliable data can make it nearly impossible to track progress or fine-tune solutions. Many regions lack the tools, training, or consistency for solid monitoring. Even simple, low-cost methods like volunteer counts, shelter data, or community reporting can be a starting point. Sharing data transparently helps build trust and attract support, and partnerships with universities, NGOs, or technology groups can lead to innovative solutions for tracking and measuring success.

While each of these barriers can seem daunting, communities around the world have shown that they can be overcome with creativity, collaboration, and persistence. Every challenge presents an opportunity for new ideas, stronger partnerships, and greater compassion.

**Table 6. Obstacles and Solutions to Zero Strays**

Barrier	Description	Solution
Funding Shortages	Limited resources for rescue, care, and outreach	Partnerships & Grants
Public Attitudes	Low awareness or negative views of strays	Public Education & Community Engagement
Weak Laws	Ineffective or unenforced animal protection laws	Advocacy & Policy Reform
Dog Migration	Movement of strays between areas	Cross-Community Coordination
Cultural Beliefs	Traditions or myths that affect stray management	Cultural Respect & Dialogue
Emergencies	Disasters disrupt rescue & care operations	Emergency & Disaster Planning
Data Gaps	Lack of info populations/trends	Data Sharing & Technology

## **Case Studies**

### **Overcoming Limited Funding: Colombo, Sri Lanka**

Colombo faced a huge stray animal population but had little money for a large-scale program. The city partnered with local NGOs, international groups like the World Animal Protection, and thousands of volunteers. NGOs provided veterinary expertise and funding for initial mass sterilization, while volunteers helped with dog catching, outreach, and caring for animals during recovery. The city prioritized CNVR over building expensive new shelters. By pooling resources and focusing on the most cost-effective approach, Colombo managed to sterilize and vaccinate over 70% of its strays within a few years, with a dramatic reduction in street dog numbers and rabies cases.

### **Changing Public Attitudes: Istanbul, Turkey**

For years, Istanbul residents viewed street dogs with suspicion, and many believed culling was the only solution. Animal welfare groups began an extensive public education campaign, using social media, school programs, and even popular films that featured the city's dogs. City officials also started supporting "dog-friendly neighborhoods," providing food stations and medical care. As people saw improvements such as healthier, less aggressive dogs and fewer bite incidents, public support for humane management grew. Today, Istanbul's CNVR program is one of the world's largest, and many residents proudly care for "their" street dogs.

### **Legislative Reform: The Netherlands**

In the early 20th century, the Netherlands had a serious stray animal problem and high rates of rabies. Animal welfare advocates campaigned for new laws, and eventually, the government passed strict animal protection and pet ownership regulations. Microchipping, registration, and mandatory sterilization for shelter animals became law. Enforcement is strong, with well-trained animal control officers and clear penalties for abandonment. These legal reforms helped the Netherlands achieve and sustain Zero Strays, and the country is now a model for others.

### **High Migration Rates: Jaipur, India**

Jaipur implemented an Animal Birth Control program, but at first saw little improvement. New dogs kept arriving from nearby villages. The city responded by expanding CNVR to neighboring areas, coordinating with surrounding towns, and increasing public awareness campaigns in rural communities. By treating the city and its outskirts as one ecological unit, Jaipur finally achieved a dramatic drop in stray populations and rabies cases.

### **Cultural Barriers: Bali, Indonesia**

Bali has a cultural tradition of treating dogs as both protectors and pests. Early sterilization campaigns met resistance, with some believing it was unkind or against tradition. Change came when local religious leaders and village elders were invited to observe the humane procedures and see the benefits for both dogs and people. With their blessing, public attitudes shifted, and sterilization became widely accepted, helping to control rabies outbreaks and improve animal welfare.

### **Data Gaps: Cluj-Napoca, Romania**

Cluj-Napoca struggled to track its stray animal population. Instead of waiting for government funding for a high-tech solution, local NGOs created a simple reporting app. Citizens used their phones to log stray animal sightings, and the data was shared openly. This grassroots approach not only provided valuable population data but also involved the public in the solution, leading to more foster homes and adoptions.

### **Political Instability: Beirut, Lebanon**

During periods of unrest, Beirut's municipal animal services were disrupted. Local animal welfare NGOs stepped in, training networks of volunteers who could care for street dogs, distribute food, and coordinate with veterinarians even when official programs paused. Their resilience helped prevent a surge in stray animal suffering and disease, and built a stronger, more connected animal welfare community for the future.

Each of these stories shows that with creativity, cooperation, and determination, communities can overcome even the toughest challenges on the path to Zero Strays.

## Chapter 9: A Call to Action

Achieving Zero Strays is not a distant dream. It's a real, attainable goal. Around the world, communities have shown that humane, effective stray animal management is possible with commitment, creativity, and collaboration. Yet, the work is never truly finished. Every new generation, every new neighborhood, and every new challenge requires us to stay engaged, informed, and compassionate.

### **Why Your Role Is Important**

Whether you are a government official, a shelter worker, a teacher, a business owner, or someone who simply cares about animals, you have a part to play. Success comes from many small actions: spreading awareness, adopting instead of shopping, supporting spay/neuter drives, reporting strays in need, volunteering time, or advocating for better laws.

Even simple steps, like talking to neighbors about responsible pet care or sharing factual information on social media, can have a ripple effect. When individuals act, communities change. When communities change, countries do too.

### **Building a Movement**

Zero Strays is not just a policy or a program; it's a social movement. It's about building a culture of empathy, responsibility, and respect for all living beings. This requires:

1. **Continued education:** Making humane animal care a part of school curriculums and public messaging.
2. **Strong partnerships:** Governments, NGOs, businesses, and citizens working hand in hand.
3. **Transparency:** Honest sharing of successes and challenges to build trust and improve strategies.
4. **Celebrating progress:** Acknowledging milestones, however small, to inspire others.

## What You Can Do

- **If you're a pet owner:** Sterilize, microchip, and never abandon your animals.
- **If you're a teacher:** Incorporate animal welfare and empathy into your lessons.
- **If you work in government:** Support and fund humane CNVR, shelter, and education programs.
- **If you're in business:** Sponsor campaigns, offer resources, or promote adoption.
- **If you're a concerned citizen:** Volunteer, foster, adopt, or simply spread the word.
- **If you see abuse or neglect:** Report it and support efforts to strengthen laws and enforcement.

## The Power of Collective Action

The path to Zero Strays is paved with cooperation and compassion. When we work together, share knowledge, and learn from one another, real change happens. Each success story, from the bustling streets of Istanbul to the neighborhoods of Tbilisi or the villages of Sri Lanka, proves that no challenge is insurmountable.

## Looking Ahead

The journey is ongoing. As cities grow and societies change, new challenges will arise. But with the lessons learned, the networks built, and the compassion nurtured, the path forward is clear. Together, we can create safer, kinder communities: for animals, for people, for everyone.

## From Street to Family—Sasha's Journey

Sasha was just a small, skinny puppy when volunteers from an animal group in Batumi, Georgia, first spotted her shivering under a park bench. She seemed sick. Like most street dogs in this country, she was docile and friendly, and would eat the food that tourists and local animal lovers brought her, but she wasn't gaining weight. A local volunteer caught her with treats and soft words, and took her to a clinic

At the clinic, she was treated for parasites (which was the reason she couldn't put on weight), then she was vaccinated. Normally, a street-smart dog like "Sasha" would be released back to her territory, but because of her sweet, gentle nature and vulnerability, the volunteer decided to foster her. For the first time, Sasha slept on a warm bed and played

with toys. When she was strong enough, they had her sterilized. After 2 weeks, she began learning to walk on a leash and not long after posting Sasha's adoption ad on the group's social media page, a family asked to adopt her. After screening them to make sure they were a good match, and understood proper pet treatment (no chaining, regular meals & clean drinking water always available, twice-daily walks), they were accepted.

Today, Sasha is a beloved companion. She greets neighbors with a wagging tail, curls up with her "sister" (a rescued cat), and has become a gentle ambassador for former street dogs. Her story is just one among thousands, but it captures the hope at the heart of the Zero Strays movement: when communities care, every dog can have a second chance.

Sasha's journey from a frightened stray to a cherished family member reminds us that real change happens one life at a time. The path to Zero Strays is built by these small acts of kindness, multiplied by the power of community. Your actions, no matter how small, can help write the next success story.

## Chapter 10: A Future Without Strays

Across continents and cultures, the sight of a stray animal inspires a mix of emotions: compassion, concern, sometimes fear, and often a longing to help. This book has shown that the problem of strays is not just about animals, but about people: our choices, our communities, and our values.

We have seen that Zero Strays is not a utopian fantasy, but a practical, proven goal. Cities like Jaipur, Istanbul, and the Netherlands have demonstrated that with humane strategies, strong partnerships, and steady commitment, stray animal populations can be managed safely and compassionately. We have learned from challenges and setbacks, and celebrated stories of hope, rescue, and transformation.

Yet the journey is ongoing. Each community faces its own set of obstacles, shaped by history, resources, culture, and circumstance. But everywhere, the path forward is paved with the same tools: education, collaboration, transparency, and kindness. The most powerful changes begin not with grand gestures, but with small, everyday actions: a person who chooses to adopt, a child who learns empathy, a leader who champions humane laws, a volunteer who gives their time.

You, the reader, are now part of this movement. Whether you are a policymaker or a pet owner, a teacher or a teenager, you have a role to play. The world becomes kinder one act at a time, and each of us has the power to make a difference, for animals, for people, and for the communities we share.

Let's imagine a future where no animal is born to suffer or die on the street. Let's work together to make that vision real, step by step, story by story, until Zero Strays is not just a goal, but the way we live.

Thank you for being part of the journey.

## Resources: Animal Welfare Organizations in Case Studies

### **Indonesia (Bali)**

1. Bali Animal Welfare Association (BAWA)
  - Provides rescue, sterilization, and rabies prevention for Bali's street dogs.
  - <https://bawabali.com/>
2. Yayasan Seva Bhuana
  - Focuses on animal welfare, education, and humane population control in Bali.
  - <https://www.sevabhuana.org/>

### **Romania (Cluj-Napoca)**

1. Asociația NUCA
  - Local NGO working for animal welfare, rescue, and advocacy in Cluj and Transylvania.
  - <https://www.nuca.org/>
2. Animal Life Sibiu
  - While based in Sibiu, collaborates regionally on rescue and sterilization projects.
  - <https://www.animallife.ro/>

### **Sri Lanka (Colombo)**

1. Blue Paw Trust
  - Partners with Colombo city council for humane dog population management.
  - <https://www.bluepawtrust.org>
2. Embark
  - Promotes animal welfare and rescues strays across Sri Lanka, including Colombo.
  - <https://www.embarkpassion.com>

### **South Africa (Cape Town)**

1. Mdzananda Animal Clinic
  - Provides veterinary care and community animal welfare in Khayelitsha, Cape Town.
  - <https://www.mdzananda.co.za>
2. Cape of Good Hope SPCA
  - The oldest animal welfare organization in South Africa, serving Cape Town and surrounds.
  - <https://capespca.co.za>

### **United States (Los Angeles)**

1. Los Angeles Animal Services
  - City-run agency for animal control, sheltering, and adoption programs.
  - <https://www.laanimalservices.com>
2. Best Friends Animal Society – Los Angeles
  - National nonprofit with a local LA center focused on adoption, spay/neuter, and advocacy.
  - <https://bestfriends.org/locations/best-friends-los-angeles>

### **Brazil (São Paulo)**

#### **1. Ampara Animal**

- Works across Brazil for animal rescue, education, and policy, including projects in São Paulo.

- <https://amparanimal.org.br>

#### **2. Projeto CEL**

- São Paulo-based group focused on street animal rescue and adoption.

- <https://www.facebook.com/projetocelso>

### **Turkey (Istanbul)**

#### **1. Haytap (Animal Rights Federation of Turkey)**

- National federation with major projects in Istanbul for stray animal welfare and advocacy.

- <https://www.haytap.org>

#### **2. Yedikule Animal Shelter (Yedikule Hayvan Barınağı)**

- Istanbul's oldest and largest animal shelter, focused on rescue and adoption.

- <http://www.yedikulehayvanbarinagi.com>

### **Georgia (Tbilisi & Batumi)**

#### **1. Dog Organization Georgia**

- Tbilisi-based group working on rescue, sterilization, and adoption.

- <https://dogorganizationgeorgia.com>

#### **2. Republic of Georgia Dog Refuge (Batumi)**

- Provides shelter and adoption for street dogs in Batumi and the region.

<https://www.geodogs.org> AND <https://www.facebook.com/GeoDogRefuge/>

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## Appendix 1: Sample Policies for Humane Stray Animal Management

### 1. Comprehensive Stray Animal Management Policy

#### **Purpose:**

To humanely reduce and manage the population of strays, protect public health, and promote responsible pet ownership.

#### **Key Provisions:**

##### **A. CNVR Program (Catch-Neuter-Vaccinate-Return/Release)**

- All free-roaming dogs shall be humanely captured, sterilized, vaccinated (including against rabies), identified (ear-tagged or microchipped), and returned to their original location, unless adoption is possible.
- The municipality will maintain a public registry of treated dogs, updated quarterly.

##### **B. Shelter and Adoption**

- Establish and maintain municipal or partnered shelters meeting welfare standards.
- Promote adoption of stray and abandoned dogs through regular community outreach and partnerships with NGOs.

- Euthanasia is permitted only for animals suffering from untreatable illness or injury, upon veterinary recommendation.

### **C. Responsible Pet Ownership**

- Mandatory registration, microchipping, and vaccinations of all owned dogs.
- Mandatory sterilization of owned dogs unless exempted for registered breeders.
- Prohibition of abandonment, with clear penalties for violators.

### **D. Public Education**

- Develop ongoing public education campaigns about responsible pet care, rabies prevention, and the benefits of sterilization.
- Include animal welfare in school curricula at primary and secondary levels.

### **E. Data Collection and Transparency**

- Conduct annual or biennial stray animal population surveys.
- Publish annual reports on program outcomes, including population trends, bite/rabies incidents, and adoption rates.

### **F. Stakeholder Involvement**

- Create a multi-stakeholder Animal Welfare Committee, including representatives from government, NGOs, veterinary associations, and citizen groups, to oversee policy implementation and review.

## **2. Sample Municipal Ordinance: Responsible Dog Ownership**

### **Section 1: Registration and Identification**

- All dogs over three months of age must be registered with the municipal authority and microchipped.
- Registration tags must be worn at all times.

### **Section 2: Sterilization**

- Owners must have their dogs sterilized by six months of age unless a veterinary exemption is provided.

### **Section 3: Vaccinations**

- Annual rabies vaccination is mandatory for all dogs. DHPP vaccinations are mandatory

### **Section 4: Prohibition of Abandonment**

- It is unlawful to abandon a dog. Conviction will result in fines, community service, and disqualification from future pet ownership.

### **Section 5: Prohibition of Abuse and Neglect**

- It is unlawful to abuse or neglect a dog, including not providing food and water, beating, chaining, or confining to cage, pet box or closet. Conviction will result in pet confiscation, fines, and imprisonment

### **Section 6: Prohibition of Dog Fighting**

- It is unlawful to keep or train dogs for the purposes of dog fighting, or to conduct or bet on dog fights. Conviction will result in confiscation, fines and imprisonment.

### **Section 7: Prohibition of Dog Breeding**

- It is unlawful to run a dog breeding facility. Conviction will result in closure, confiscation, fines and imprisonment.

### **Section 8: Prohibition of Dog Meat Trade**

- It is unlawful to participate in any stage of the dog meat trade, including breeding or catching dogs for the purpose, or transporting, selling, confining, or killing dogs, or serving dog meat. Conviction will result in closure, confiscation, fines and imprisonment.

### **Section 9: Enforcement**

- Repeated violations of these ordinances are subject to escalating fines and imprisonment

## **3. Model Policy for Collaboration with Animal Welfare Organizations**

### **Purpose:**

To formalize cooperation between government and NGOs for effective stray animal management.

**Key Points:**

- Animal Welfare and Control: The humane capture and management of strays shall be the responsibility of the municipal animal welfare unit, in partnership with licensed NGOs and veterinarians.
- NGOs and veterinary partners may participate in CNVR activities, public education, and shelter operations under municipal supervision.
- The municipality will provide logistical and/or financial support where possible (e.g., use of facilities, purchase of vaccines).
- Regular coordination meetings will be held to review program data and address challenges.

**4. Sample School Curriculum Addition****Objective:**

To foster empathy, responsibility, and public health awareness among students.

**Outline:**

- Lessons on the needs and care of animals, the importance of sterilization and vaccination, and safe behavior around dogs.
- School visits from veterinarians or animal welfare professionals.
- Student-led community outreach projects (e.g., poster contests, dog feeding programs).

**5. Sample Data Reporting Protocol****Policy:**

- All stray animal management activities (captures, sterilizations, vaccinations, adoptions, euthanasia) must be recorded in a centralized database.
- Data shall be made publicly available in an annual report, including trends and program impact.

**Note:**

These samples are intended as templates and should be adapted to local legal requirements and community needs. Collaboration with local legal counsel, veterinary authorities, and stakeholders is recommended for successful implementation.

## Appendix 2: Template for a Memorandum of Understanding

This MOU is between a municipality and an animal welfare NGO for humane stray animal management. (adaptable for different contexts). This agreement expresses the intentions and mutual commitments of the parties. It is not legally binding, nor needs to be unless both parties desire it, in which case signatures should be witnessed and notarized.

### Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

Between [Municipality Name] and [Animal Welfare Organization Name]

#### Purpose

This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is entered into as of [Date], by and between [Municipality Name], hereinafter referred to as “the Municipality,” and [Animal Welfare Organization Name], hereinafter referred to as “the Organization.” The purpose of this MOU is to establish a collaborative framework for the humane management of strays in [Geographic Area/City Name].

#### Objectives

The parties agree to collaborate in order to:

- a. Humanely reduce stray animal populations through Catch-Neuter-Vaccinate-Return/Release (CNVR) and adoption programs.
- b. Promote responsible pet ownership and public education.
- c. Improve public health and animal welfare outcomes.

#### Roles and Responsibilities

##### 1. The Municipality will:

- a. Facilitate and support CNVR operations, including access to public spaces and provision of logistical assistance as needed.
- b. Provide funding or in-kind resources where possible (e.g., transportation, facilities, vaccines, supplies).
- c. Ensure legal and regulatory compliance.
- d. Participate in public education campaigns and assist with community outreach.
- e. Maintain a public registry or database of treated animals.

## **2. The Organization will:**

- a. Lead and implement CNVR operations, ensuring humane handling and veterinary standards.
- b. Recruit and train volunteers for field and shelter activities.
- c. Coordinate adoption and fostering initiatives for suitable animals.
- d. Conduct community education and advocacy activities.
- e. Collect and report data on program activities and outcomes.

## **3. Joint Commitments:**

- a. Hold regular coordination meetings (e.g., quarterly) to review progress, address challenges, and plan activities.
- b. Share data and best practices transparently.
- c. Publicly acknowledge the partnership on relevant materials and communications.

## **Duration**

- This MOU is effective from [Start Date] to [End Date] and may be renewed or amended by mutual written consent.

## **Dispute Resolution**

- In the event of disputes arising from this MOU, both parties agree to seek resolution through dialogue and, if necessary, mediation.

## **Termination**

- Either party may terminate this MOU with [30/60] days written notice to the other party.

## **Signatures**

Signed this [Day] of [Month], [Year]:

### **For the Municipality:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### **For the Organization:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 3: Animal Welfare Acts

While there is no single, unified "Animal Welfare Act" for all of Europe, there are several important frameworks, conventions, and national laws that shape animal welfare policy in European countries. Below

1. A summary of the main pan-European legal instruments
2. An example: The Council of Europe's European Convention for the Protection of Pet Animals (1987)
3. A sample excerpt from a national Animal Welfare Act (Germany, as one of the most influential and comprehensive in Europe)
4. Links to full texts and further resources

### 1. European Animal Welfare Frameworks

#### A. Council of Europe Conventions

- European Convention for the Protection of Pet Animals (1987)
- European Convention for the Protection of Animals Kept for Farming Purposes (1976)
- European Convention for the Protection of Animals during International Transport (1968, revised 2003)
- European Convention for the Protection of Animals for Slaughter (1979)

These conventions are legally binding for signatory states and set minimum standards for animal welfare across Europe.

#### B. European Union Legislation

- The EU does not have a single animal welfare act, but animal welfare is recognized as a principle in Article 13 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), and there are numerous regulations and directives (especially on farm animals, animal testing, and transport).
- Key EU regulations include rules on animal transport, laboratory animals, slaughter, farming, and trade.

## **2. European Convention for the Protection of Pet Animals (1987): Key Articles**

### **Preamble:**

Recognizing that man has a moral obligation to respect all living creatures and considering the importance of companion animals, signatories agree to ensure the welfare of pet animals and promote responsible ownership.

### **Article 3 – Principles of Animal Welfare**

- No one shall cause a pet animal unnecessary pain, suffering, or distress.
- No one shall abandon a pet animal.

### **Article 4 – Keeping**

- Owners must provide food, water, care, and adequate accommodation and cannot keep animals if it causes pain, suffering, or distress.

### **Article 5 – Breeding**

- Breeding that causes suffering or health problems in animals or offspring is prohibited.

### **Article 7 – Surgical Operations**

- Surgical procedures for non-curative purposes (e.g., tail docking, ear cropping, devocalization, declawing) are prohibited, except for health reasons or to prevent reproduction (i.e., sterilization).

### **Article 10 – Trading and Advertising**

- Trade in pet animals must comply with animal welfare standards.

### **Article 13 – Stray Animals**

- Parties undertake to reduce the number of stray animals humanely, preferably by sterilization, and shall encourage the finding of owners for stray animals.

### **Full text:**

Council of Europe - European Convention for the Protection of Pet Animals

<https://rm.coe.int/168007a67d>

### **3. Example: German Animal Welfare Act (Tierschutzgesetz)**

Germany's Animal Welfare Act ("Tierschutzgesetz") is among Europe's strongest. Here are selected articles (translated and summarized):

#### **Section 1 – Principle**

- No one may cause an animal pain, suffering, or harm without reasonable cause.

#### **Section 2 – Responsibilities of Owners**

- Anyone keeping, caring for, or required to care for an animal must:
- Feed, care for, and house the animal appropriately for its species and needs.
- Not restrict the animal's ability to behave according to its species in a way that causes pain, suffering or harm.

#### **Section 3 – Prohibitions**

- It is forbidden to abandon or leave animals behind.
- Unnecessary surgical procedures or mutilation are banned.

#### **Section 11 – Licensing**

- Keeping and trading animals as a business, operating an animal shelter, or breeding requires special permission.

#### **Section 17 – Penalties**

- Serious violations (causing death or significant suffering) are criminal offenses, with fines or imprisonment.

#### **Full text (English translation):**

German Animal Welfare Act (Tierschutzgesetz) – Unofficial English translation

[https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/englisch\\_tschg/englisch\\_tschg.html](https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/englisch_tschg/englisch_tschg.html)

### **4. Further Resources & Links**

- European Convention for the Protection of Pet Animals (full text, PDF)  
<https://rm.coe.int/168007a67d>
- EU Animal Welfare Legislation Overview [https://food.ec.europa.eu/animals/animal-welfare/legislation\\_en](https://food.ec.europa.eu/animals/animal-welfare/legislation_en)
- German Animal Welfare Act (English translation) [https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/englisch\\_tschg/englisch\\_tschg.html](https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/englisch_tschg/englisch_tschg.html)
- UK Animal Welfare Act 2006 (PDF, English)  
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/45/contents>

## Appendix 4: Animal Sentience Laws

The recognition of animal sentience (the idea that animals are capable of thinking, and feeling pain, pleasure, and emotions) has become a cornerstone of modern animal welfare policy in Europe. Here's a summary of how this principle has been recognized, with a special note on the Netherlands and its place in the movement:

### **Animal Sentience in European Law**

#### European Union (EU)

- Article 13 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), adopted in the Lisbon Treaty (2009), is the first major regional legal text to explicitly recognize animals as sentient beings:
- Excerpt: "In formulating and implementing the Union's agriculture, fisheries, transport, internal market, research and technological development and space policies, the Union and the Member States shall, since animals are sentient beings, pay full regard to the welfare requirements of animals..." (TFEU Article 13, 2009).

This clause means that, throughout the EU, animals are not just considered property, but recognized as beings with thoughts, feelings and welfare needs.

### **Council of Europe Conventions**

- The Preamble of the European Convention for the Protection of Pet Animals (1987) also refers to "man's moral obligation to respect all living creatures" and the "special relationship between people and companion animals," but does not use the term "sentient" directly.

### **National Laws: The Netherlands and Beyond**

#### The Netherlands

- The Netherlands was among the first countries in the world to explicitly recognize animal sentience in its national law.
- The Dutch Animals Act (Wet dieren, 2011, effective 2013) includes this language: "Animals are beings with intrinsic value. Their interests must be taken into account."

- Article 1.3 of the Dutch Animals Act states: “Acknowledging the intrinsic value of animals, care should be taken to avoid unnecessary pain, injury, or harm to the health or welfare of animals.”

- 

This recognition of “intrinsic value” (intrinsieke waarde) is considered by Dutch legal scholars and animal advocates to be a recognition of sentience (Dutch Animals Act, 2011).

### **Other European Countries**

- Switzerland (in its Civil Code, 2003) was actually the first country in the world to explicitly declare animals are not things but sentient beings (“Animals are not objects. They are living beings endowed with sensitivity.”).
- France amended its Civil Code in 2015 to state: “Animals are living beings gifted with sentience.”
- Austria, Germany, and Portugal have similar explicit recognition of animal sentience in their national law.

### **Sample Legal Wording**

- Dutch Animals Act (Wet dieren), Article 1.3: “In recognizing the intrinsic value of animals, care must be taken to avoid causing unnecessary pain or harm to the health or welfare of the animal.”
- France, Civil Code Article 515-14: “Animals are living beings gifted with sentience. Subject to the laws which protect them, animals are subject to the regime of property.”
- EU Treaty, Article 13: “Since animals are sentient beings, full regard shall be paid to the welfare requirements of animals...”

### **Main Points**

- The Netherlands was a European pioneer in writing animal sentience into national law with the Animals Act in 2011.
- The EU recognizes animal sentience in its foundational treaty (since 2009).
- Several other countries (Switzerland, Germany, Austria, France, Portugal) have similar, explicit clauses.

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~ Gina Goldini