

STRAY DOG SITUATION IN ROMANIA

ANIMAL CRUELTY

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PART I

THE STREET DOGS SITUATION IN ROMANIA KILLING, INCARCERATION OR STERILIZATION?

1. THE PROVENIENCE OF THE STRAY DOGS

The houses' demolished during the communism period, has brought in the street owned dogs who formed the stray dogs. They start to multiply. Moreover, most of the people who started to "civilise" themselves did not kill the offspring anymore (as they did and some still do by drowning, abandoning them in the forest at a few days old) but brought them in towns at the age of 2-3 months. They grew up and multiplied. For about 10 years the authorities did not want to take any measure, so the streets of Romania (especially some areas) became full of dogs.

2. DEALING WITH THE STRAY DOGS

2.1 CATCH & KILL

After years when nobody had done anything to stop the breeding and the abandon of the dogs, these animals started to be hunted, poisoned, killed.

In almost all the cities of Romania the beginning was the same: "Catch and Kill"

2.1.1 The situation (theoretical and reality)

a) 2001- 2008:

Hundreds of thousands of street dogs have been killed in all of Romania at a cost of tens of millions of Euros.

Despite legislation (in force since 2001 by the Government Emergency Ordinance OUG 155/2001 regarding the management of street dogs) regulating the methods of catching the dogs, good shelter conditions, killing the dogs by euthanasia etc, in general the reality on the ground is:

- legislative provisions were not respected
- most dogs were hunted, tortured, beaten to death, stabbed, strangled, being dragged over the streets often bleeding from mouth and nose and treated like rubbish. After that the common fate of all: a pitiful and miserable prison, where they waited, exhausted by fear, hunger and thirst, until they were finally killed by the cheapest possibly method after 7 days, even if the killing methods used were illegal.
- The methods for catching the dogs were cruel. Some of the dogs not even reached the extermination camps, i.e., the public dogpounds, they were strangled in the street by the catching teams or died suffocated in vans with no ventilation.
- even if the shelters were paid from public budgets and were officially public places, and the law permitted the access of the press, the animal organizations and the public access to these "shelters"

was usually denied. Visitors were often allowed access only if the mayor approved an advance request in writing, which he would not do if he feared there was something to hide.

- Dogs were often kept in inhumane, illegal conditions without water, food or room to move. Puppies were kept together with adults, ill dogs with healthy dogs, in urine and faeces, in fear and distress, cannibalizing one another etc.
- “Euthanasia” in fact meant starvation, poisoning, strangulation, being burnt alive or injected with magnesium sulphate. Thousands of dogs have been poisoned. Others were shot. Sometimes dogs were thrown into deep pits from which they could not escape. Most publicly financed shelters were illegal extermination camps managed by untrained, poorly educated, underpaid and brutalised personnel.
- Residents living close to such extermination centres were distressed by the moans and howls of the dogs.

b) after January 2008

- animal protection legislation improvements:

The case of a street kitten beaten to death by some schoolboys was shown on television and shocked Romania. This was the start of a television campaign (Stop torturing the animals!) and citizens started to oppose openly to what they had already been seeing for many years, sending movies and information to show the cruelties to animals. This “wave of revulsion” has contributed to recent improvements in animal welfare legislation.

Thus euthanasia of dogs and cats (excepting those with incurable disease) has now become illegal and cruelty to animals has become a criminal offence (with the law no. 205/2004 for animal protection modified and completed by law 9/2008)

- reality

While some animal welfare legislation exists on paper there is no effect in the real life. Despite improvements of animal protection legislation, and the euthanasia being prohibited, in fact **the stray dog management means the same illegal methods** to catch and kill dogs, and the same public camps where the dogs are killed by starving to death.

photos, stories - English - http://www.protectiaanimalelor.ro/dogs/dogs_romania.html

The most cities, because they don't want to understand the necessity to implement the Neuter & Return policy, because they lack the funds but, mainly, because of corruption, exploit the apparent contradictions and vagueness of the current legislation, so they continue to kill or dump dogs. Many cities collect and dump dogs in other towns or in rural areas.

- dog management legislation proposal:

In 2007 a legislative project (PL 912) for modification and completion of OUG no. 155/2001 regarding the stray dog management program was proposed. At the end of 2007 the Senate of the Romanian Parliament adopted it unanimously, but since then **it has been stalled at the Chamber of Deputies** within the Committee for Public Administration, Territorial Planning and Ecological Balance.

The main points of the legislative proposal (developed by the initiator, in collaboration with representatives of Romanian animal welfare organizations, the ANSVSA and the College of Veterinarians) are:

- **sterilization, vaccination, identification** (with ear clip and microchipping), **registration** in the national data base of strays dogs and **return** to their territory; keeping the animals that are not returnable in shelters until they are claimed or rehomed;
- **sterilization, identification** (by microchipping) and **registering of pets** (excluding pedigree dogs)

The inexplicable delay in debating the proposed law leads to overcrowded municipal shelters, the impounded dogs are killed, while other dogs are born and die on the streets, since the nature limits the overall dog population to the carrying capacity of the area.

“Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again expecting different results”, Albert Einstein

Moreover, meantime, the bill adopted by Senate in the form of “Sterilization & Return” was amended by deputies members of the leading party, PDL, and transformed in “Catch & Kill”. The large pressure on the parliamentarians and our lobby to the other political parties made the proposal to be again discussed within the Committee for Public Administration, Territorial Planning and Ecological Balance but only after September 2011.

2.1.2 The results of mass killing

Hundreds of thousands of dogs have been killed in Romania. The number of killed dogs is much higher than the number of dogs found in the street at the beginning of the killing program. The efficiency of the program: ZERO - the streets are crowded with dogs up to their carrying capacity.

Examples:

BUCHAREST

2001 – the stray dog population: 70,000

2001 – 2007, **144,339 dogs killed at a cost of 9 million Euro**

2011: stray dog population: 40,000

which means **62 euro to kill a dog**

The reproduction rate is rising with the killing rate. The 50% drop (maximum possible through the killing method) is also explained by the number of spays carried out by dog lovers, animal protection organizations and ASA (currently ASPA).

BRASOV (answer no. 1172/11.05.2009 at FNPA's request)

2001 – the stray dog population: 4,000 stray dogs

2003-2008, **20,000 dogs killed at a cost of 1.45 million Euro**

that is: **72 euro to kill a dog.**

In Braila 10,000 dogs were killed over the period 2006-2010 by a private business paid by the townhall, which runs a dogpound that has no veterinarian authorization, as requested by law. The town hall paid over 500,000 euro this private business. According to the official data, in 2009, 40% of the impounded dogs died in this private dogpound, the other 60% being euthanized - even if the law bans the euthanasia of healthy animals.

Arad, Slatina, Timisoara, Tulcea, Focsani, Onesti, Constanta, Boldesti-Scaieni etc. - all the captured dogs die from starvation or disease or are killed in the public dogpounds at huge costs.

The experience of other countries with the same stray dog situation: Bulgaria, Turkey, regions of India proved that the mass killing programs had no results, and therefore have been replaced by sterilization and return law.

2.1.3 Why “Catch & Kill” has failed

- Dog removal (Killing or Incarceration) method aims at the effects and not at the cause.
- The reproduction rate of the canine population is larger than authorities capacity to catch and kill the animals.
- The reproduction rate will rise directly with the catching rate (in an area where 50% of the dogs are caught and removed from the territory the rest of the 50% will breed in larger numbers due to the fact that they will use the whole food resources available)
- An empty place after the dogs have been removed will be occupied by other ones in search of food and shelter.

- The animal lovers boycott the activities of the stray management services
- Technically, logistically and financially speaking, it is impossible for the dog catching services to capture (without the help of the population and the animal protection organizations) all the stray dogs.
- There is nothing to prevent the abandonment of new dogs, nothing to hold the irresponsible dog owners responsible for the costs they cause to society and for the suffering they cause to animals. Most dogs of breeding age on the streets are the offspring of dogs with owners or feeders.
- there is no national programme to educate people in the spirit of responsible pet ownership and compassion towards animals
- The World Health Organization, OMS Geneva:
„The research conducted by OMS between the years 1981 and 1988 as part of the .G.F.U.N.D. / O.M.S. program against human and canine rabies in developing countries revealed the fact that the programs involving the elimination of the dogs by catching and euthanizing are inefficient and expensive.”, Nr.824, 1992, page. 33

“In none of the territories where the studies have been developed the method of dog elimination by any means has had any effects on the number of the canine population.”, 22-25 feb.1988, page 11

2.2 NEUTER & RETURN

In contrast, **mass sterilization, where it has been applied, has proved to be the ONLY SOLUTION to reduce the stray dog population - up to disappearance.**

Some municipalities (Oradea, Lugoj etc.) cooperate with neuter & return programs (including Bucharest that just has started a Neuter & Return program) and a few others show signs of wishing to embrace a new strategy.

2.2.1 Results of “Neuter&Return”

Examples:

ORADEA

2006 – stray dog population: 4,000

2011 – stray dog population: 270

Costs incurred to spay/neuter a dog: 14 euro – program run and funded by Robert Smith - FPCC/Dog Project Oradea, UK, in collaboration with city hall Oradea

LUGOJ

2008: 2,500 stray dogs

2011: 235 stray dogs

Costs to spay/neuter a dog: 12 euro – program run and funded by city hall Lugoj in collaboration with local animal welfare organization, Free Amely

2.2.2 Why “Neuter& Return” is successful:

- Sterilization is aiming at the cause of the problems: animal birth control
- for a period of 4-5 years it is preferable to have in the area known, healthy, gentle dogs instead of an permanent flux of unsterilized, unvaccinated new dogs
- The citizens will collaborate at the catching of the dogs with the purpose of sterilization which implies a reduction of costs and an increase of the speed of the sterilization process.
- Foreign animal protection organizations supports (part) with funds the sterilizations campaigns for dogs with and without owner.
- The World Health Organization, OMS Geneva:
„the dog population control is based with priority on sterilization, vaccinations (involving registering and tagging) plus education programs and control”, Nr.824, 1992, pag.34

“The most efficient long term strategy is the reproduction control of the canine population., 1990, page.72

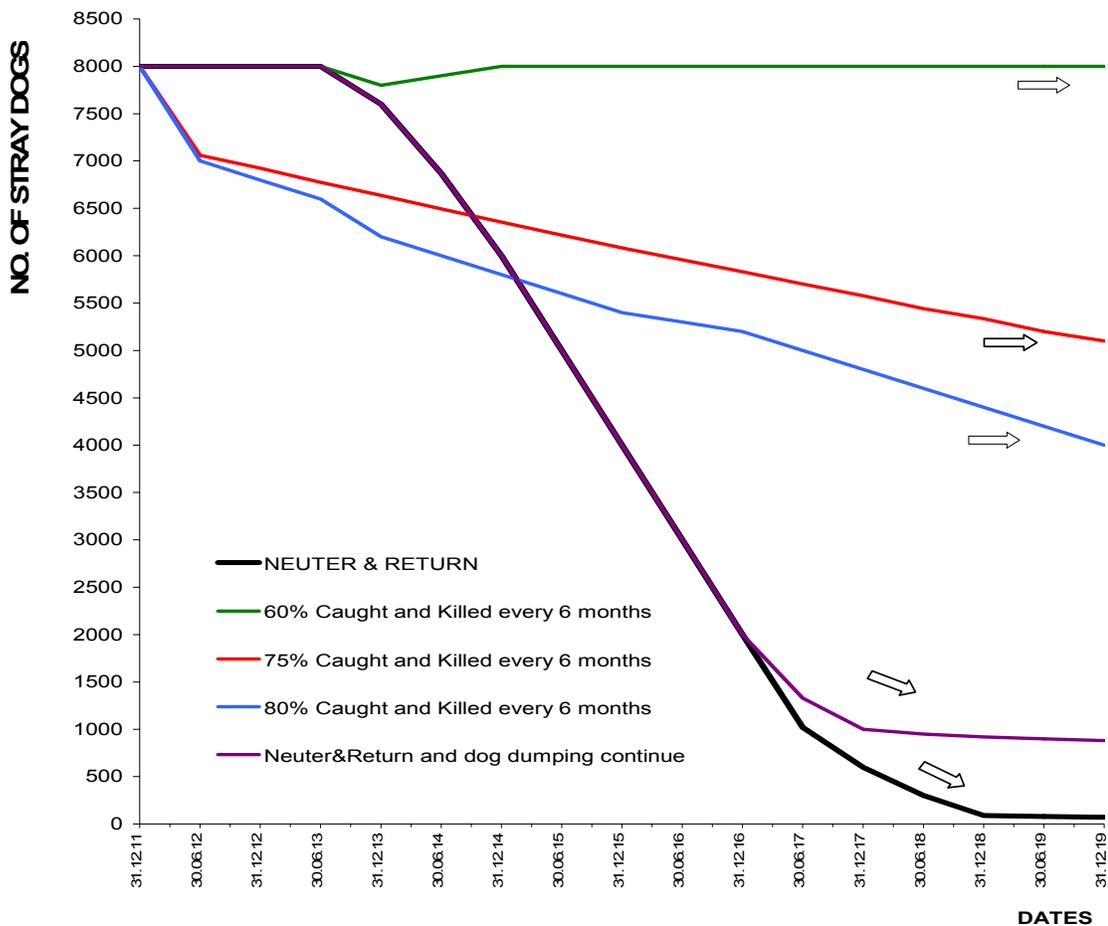
The experience of India

In India, Madras, the „catch and kill” program started in 1860.

In spite of continuously killing, the number of the stray dogs being killed continued to increase year by year, so did the number of dogs on the street, the number of dog bites and the number of human rabies deaths. If in 1860, in the municipality’ shelters an average of less than one dog per day was killed, in 1995 the number of dogs killed daily went up to as high as 135 per day with no result in the street. 25 million dogs have been killed.

In 1995 ABC program (Animal Birth Control), neuter & release, has been implemented. The result was the decreasing of dog population by 28 per cent in the period 1992-2002, decreasing the dog bites (from 170 to 25 in only one year and half), the humane rabies cases from 120 in 1996 to 5 in 2000. (*The Success of the ABC-AR -Animal Birth Control – Anti-Rabies-Programme in India, Dr. S. Chinnny Krishna*)

Neuter & Return versus Catch & Kill - in graphic



**Stray dog population
for a town with 8000 stray dogs initially,
during running dog management program**

(by Robert Smith, UK)

3. REQUEST OF EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT: Neuter & Return

On March 10, 2011 the Intergroup on the welfare and conservation of animals from European Parliament sent an official letter to the Parliament of Romania: *“we politely and urgently ask the Romanian Parliament, to consider the position of the European Parliament, which also represents the Romanian people, and vote in the European spirit, based on your ethical responsibility and for the only sustainable solution, based on the WHO approach of catch neuter, release programmes”*.

4. THE ATTITUDE OF THE ROMANIAN PEOPLE TOWARDS THE STRAY DOGS. MENTALITY, EDUCATION, BEHAVIOUR

In general Romanians are tolerant towards stray dogs; hence most community dogs are deliberately fed by compassionate people or kept as guard dogs for businesses. However, most people lack the money, poverty and education to care for dogs responsibly as it's normal in Western Europe.

A legacy of communism is that the most ordinary citizens are afraid to confront the authority and passively accept the removal and killing of their dogs.

Most officials believe that they are the masters of the citizens rather than public servants; corruption feeds off bureaucracy, and bureaucrats benefit from corruption. Municipal officials use their powers for personal gain or satisfaction; there is no culture of the public service.

Many compassionate animal lovers try to save dogs from the dog catchers by cramming them into unsuitable premises; they unintentionally end up producing canine prison camps of their own, as they lack the money and space to care for their dogs properly.

Dog catchers usually take the path of least resistance and catch friendly dogs, usually fed by people, dogs that are most likely to be neutered and vaccinated, either by semi-owners or NGOs. Shy, fearful, feral dogs are almost always fertile and are almost never caught by municipal dog catchers.

Most municipal politicians and officials are not deliberately cruel to animals. They are simply ignorant, lazy, with no feelings and often corrupt. They delegate the management of dogs to uneducated, poorly paid and poorly motivated municipal employees.

Most dogs are yard dogs, not pets, they are never kept indoors; they are kept outside to protect property and reduce vermin. Dogs are often kept on chains.

There is general ignorance on the benefits of neutering; some vets still tell owners that it is healthy for their bitches to have at least one litter during her life time – puppies that most often end up on street. Other dog owners believe that their dogs should “enjoy” life pleasures, they refuse to sterilize them.

5. FALSE STATISTICS: dog bites, aggression, surveys

The statistics presented in mass media regarding the number of people bitten by dogs is false. For instance the (false) statistic for Bucharest presented by authorities was: 13,200 people was bitten in 2010.

■ In reality, 789 people have been bitten by dogs (owned+stray) in Bucharest, according with the Institute of Infectious Disease “Matei Bals”

■ In reality:

- the number of registered dog bites includes also other animal bites (cats, rats etc.)
- the people are advised by the medical staff / friends/ other patients or on their own initiative, to declare that they were bitten by unknown, stray dogs – in order to avoid paying for the related

treatment costs. About 70% of the citizens bitten by dogs with owners declared the troubles were caused by street dogs.

- the statistic reported for a town includes actually the cases from the surrounding areas, too.

The Centre for Disease Control in Atlanta states that there are about 4.5 to 4.7 million people bitten by dogs each year in the **United States. It means 1 from 60 people is bitten each year by dog.**

Comparing the statistics of USA (where the bites involved the owned dogs) and Romania where there is a dog population we can admit that **EVEN THE FALSE statistic from Romania (1 from 151 people is bitten each year in Bucharest)** is much lower than in USA where the people does not confront with strays. Therefore, also according to that, it comes evident that the most bites in Romania involve the owned dogs.

Even the complains point to **aggressive dogs**, in fact, the aggressive stray dogs (attack without being provoked) are very rare.

The most serious cases of aggression were caused by dogs with owners even dogs kept on a leash. The biggest problem is not that the dogs are free on streets (many dogs with owners, much more numerous, are often let to roam on streets) but how aggressive they are. Even if the most stray animals are gentle, mild animals they are mass killed.

Other manipulating method is **the surveys**:

- the question is "do you agree with the dogs in the street?" Of course, the majority answers "no" (including animal lovers); the result of the survey is: "the majority wants the dogs to be killed"
- the results of the surveys in the newspapers (web or written), the polls are controlled and altered by those who acts under command of some politicians

A correct survey for example was made by eResearch Corp, with clear and correct questions (like "how do you think/like the stray dog problem to be managed: by euthanasia, sterilization, incarceration?") it shown that 67% is against dogs euthanasia and 70% considers sterilization as the best solution.

6. THE STREET DOG BUSINESS

Mass euthanasia, applied in Romania for 10 years, has failed in the street, but has brought instead huge profits to those directly or indirectly involved in the "management" of stray dogs. **The stray dogs**, that incur the state no costs to live on street, **are hunted by another type of mafia**. Their killing, starvation, torture in the townhalls extermination camps bring profits to a "fat" business of tens of millions Euro.

The first profiteers are the **dog catchers** who, to not take the stray dogs protected by the people, require a "protection fee" (around 25 Euro/dog)

The **local authorities (and those behind them)** allocate huge budgets - just on paper, reporting fictive consumption for sheltering, feeding, sterilization, identification, euthanasia, incineration. 'Legal' frauds on public money, at the expense of animal suffering, are possible by making partnerships or signing service contracts with dubious companies that require exorbitant prices, whose profit from the dog management is shared between the parties involved, and one hand washes the other.

The staff of dog shelters makes its profits by selling the dog food and veterinary medicines, that are supposed to be used for the stray dogs.

Rehoming and adoption of dogs from municipal shelters is expensive, even up to 125 Euro (in the conditions the pension, the income of many people is the same amount). The dogs are nor spayed, neither vaccinated.

Such an example of fraud on public money is the **NGO APAM Horez** in Braila; in 2008-2009, years of budgetary restrictions, the contract with the townhall brought him a profit of over 65,000 euro, each year of contract since 2006 ending with profits, while thousands of dogs were killed, starved to death and let to

cannibalize in its dogpound. In 2009 the NGO owner, worried by the constant complaints on his activity, replaced the NGO with his new company, to put an end to all questions regarding the huge profits from public money going to a non-profit organization. So the profits became private property, the NGO didn't declare and pay VAT, nor profit tax, the total duty amounting to 92500 euro. Even if the authorities on all levels were informed on this fraud that would have had serious legal repercussions in any other European country, they didn't held him responsible. He sued the townhall, pretending more money, to be able to pay on the account of his due taxes, and eventually his new company was granted a new contract for another 4 years of street dog management.

Other example: ***the Dog Inferno " Herescu"*** (in Boldesti-Scaieni, Prahova). Emilia Herescu is a veterinarian and the president of the College of Romanian Veterinarians - Prahova County. Her activity has began many years ago, meantime the euthanasia became criminal offence but she can not stop killing, signing illegal "catch and kill" contract with different municipalities. More than 7000 dogs she killed in the period 2008-2010. Since 2009 the police received a lot of criminal complaints against her, then joined in a criminal file for murder and cruelty against animals, file no. 3920/P/2009 (advocated by foundation's Robert Smith). Nothing! Dr. Emilia Herescu is continuing her job. Totally lacking water, food, medical care, skeleton dogs, dogs dead of starvation or disease, whose bodies feed those who are still alive and subsequently killed by Herescu, lack of minimum conditions of accommodation, all violations of sanitary norms for animal and environment, have not ever been sanctioned by the Sanitary Veterinary Direction Prahova, Police - institutions often seized by NGOs or individuals.

The top of iceberg is **PROTAN, a controversial company of incineration.**

The costs of incineration per kg dead body and the transport for dogs is abt 15 euro.

The reporting is often fictive so that 1 kg dead body can mean even 10 kg on paper, with the profit 10 times increased. Therefore, considering the actual number of dogs that are at present in the street, up to 80 million of Euro could be generated only by the incineration of the dogs killed in the extermination camps – and this is only the beginning. Taking into account that the **number of stray dogs is 0.5 millions** and not 3 millions, as it is reported by authorities, **250 millions Euro could be gained in this first stage.**

Examples:

Bucharest: in the period 2001-2007, 9 millions Euro were spent for killing 144,000 dogs (meaning 62 Euro/dog);

Timisoara: in the period 2006-2010, 1,139 millions Euro were spent for killing

Arad: in the period 2008-2010, 2,986 dogs were killed, spending 308,048 (meaning 103 Euro/dog)

Slatina: in the period 2008-2010, 1111 dogs were killed, spending 205,500 euro (meaning 184 euro/dog)

Brasov in the period 2003 - 2008, 20,000 dogs were killed, 1.45 millions Euro were spent (meaning 72 Euro/dog)

Constanta in period 2008-2010, 20,000 dogs were killed and 1.5 millions Euro were spent (meaning 75 euro/dog)

With an industry-funded by the public budget already developed around the stray dogs there is a major interest to maintain a relatively constant stray dog population.

Because extermination doesn't solve the problem, the streets being permanently populated with new or dumped dogs, **more and more dogs have to be collected so that "managing" the dog problems becomes a constant and reliable source of easy profits at tax-payers' expense.** A gravy train for contractors with good relations with mayors.

That is why a strong mobilization has been created by the authorities who got profits from the existence of stray dogs in order to reintroduce the mass euthanasia and the legislative proposal (PL 912) adopted by Senate in the form of "Sterilization & Return" to be amended and transformed in "Catch & Kill".

That is why the townhalls don't want to implement Neuter & Return programme on its own initiative or on the basis of Governmental Decision 955/ 2004, because of ignorance, short-termism and corruption. They prefer to do nothing (even if NGOs offer free sterilization campaigns) or to kill dogs unofficially, in response to complaints, or to cram dogs into municipal holding facilities where the dogs die shortly after from starvation or disease.

7. MANAGEMENT OF THE STRAY DOGS - CONCLUSIONS

Both dog haters and dog lovers have the same aim: to make the streets of Romania like those of Western Europe, with no unsupervised and unwanted dogs. The only question is: how can this common aim be achieved?

- If killing had been a solution, the stray dog population would have disappeared long time ago.
 - Removal from the territory, whether it is killing or incarceration, with or without euthanasia, is futile, never-ending and unaffordable; it is perpetuating the problem!
 - For decades dog elimination policies have been an expensive failure
 - The “Catch and Kill” method is impractical, unnecessary, cruel and endless.
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- The experience Oradea, Lugoj - Sterilization & Return the stray dog population was reduced with 93%.
 - Studies by the World Health Organization (WHO, Geneva) show that the only solution is mass sterilization, registration and return of the stray dog to their territories
 - Sterilization involves infinitely less costs than killing.
 - Control of reproduction, combined with education in responsible dog ownership, is the only practical solution: free neutering and returning of all dogs, with and without owners, to the territory where they were found or to their owner or keeper. ‘Neuter & Return’ is the only practical and permanent solution, but it requires central finance, political will and efficient implementation.

PART II

THE IGNORANCE AND COMPLICITY OF THE AUTHORITIES RESPONSIBLE FOR MONITORING THE ANIMAL LEGISLATION “FEED” THE CRUELITIES

The authorities responsible with the monitoring, control, enforcing the animal protection law and managing the stray dogs are Sanitary Veterinary and Food Safety Directorates (DSVSA). But, occasional controls and checks (generally as the result of many complaints by citizens or NGOs) by DSVSA don't change anything. They are ineffectual and for the most times, art and part of the animal abuses. For example, in the case of municipalities' dog camps their usual answer is *“as result of the control made, the sheltering, feeding, care conditions are according to the law”*.

Even if the abandoning, mistreating, torturing, killing animals are criminal offences since January 2008, the results of official investigations are normally to brush problems under the carpet or to impose symbolic, derisory fines. Such that, **cruelities against animals** (including those presented by mass media, horrifying the international world), **NEVER were punished by the prosecutors, NOBODY has ever paid any criminal fine or has ever been jailed for cruelty to animals.**

Therefore, in Romania :

- even if in 2004 the European Convention for the Protection of Pet Animals was ratified in Romania by the law no. 60, 7 years later the article 12 of this Convention is still being ignored in Romania. Thus **dogs and cats are not identified, not registered**, and there is no promoting of the neutering of the animals to reduce over-population
- **thousands of puppies and kittens continue to be abandoned each year**
- **stray animals** in Romania continue to be **beaten, tortured, poisoned or killed** by the tens of thousands by more or less barbaric methods in the townhalls dogpounds;

- the **owned dogs continue to be kept for years in chains, beaten, starved, deprived of veterinarian** and minimum, basic care, abandoned and sometimes brutally killed by their owners
- the **horses continue to endure cruelty, no rest, inadequate food and water, exploited to exhaustion, abandoned and cruelly killed** by their owners; Beaten, tired, with harness wounds on their bodies, these animals walk in the streets pulling overloaded carts whipped by their owners in a brutal manner.
- the **bears** continue to be **caught and kept in squalid cages** by owners of hotels and lodges;
- still there are **zoos with undernourished animals**, deprived of minimum care, living encaged for their whole existence in tight cages;
- dozens of multimillionaires from around the world continue to take delight year after year by **slaughtering wild boars kept in enclosures** while other hundreds of hunters spend hundreds of thousands of Euros in real mass killing of animals;
- **travelling circuses** continues to flaunt their "collections" of **tortured lions, tigers, crocodiles, elephants and hippos**; the "conclusions" of sanitary veterinary directions is standard: "no bad treatment of animals is"
- people continue to **NOT stun pigs and lambs before slaughter**, maintaining that the suffering of animals is the nature of these "traditions"
- **animal markets** where brokers sell horses **are cruel places**; in order to prove to potential buyers the physical capacities of the horses, the horses are often atrociously mistreated
- the **slaughtering of animals for food in animal markets** are taken place under the eyes of sanitary-veterinary inspectors; they generally **turn a blind eye to the cruelties in animal markets**
- **animal transports** are carried out in **illegal conditions producing pain, wounds, fractures, death to the animals**