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Guide for the set-up of a project to reduce the population of stray dogs and cats based on "CATCH, CASTRATE, RELEASE"

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INTRODUCTION

In many southern and eastern countries there is a large number of stray animals. Every year thousands of friendly and healthy cats and dogs are killed in these countries, often in the most cruel ways. The absurdity of such measures, which are strictly dismissed by animal rights activists, is shown by the fact that the number of stray cats remains the same despite the killing. New approaches are necessary if the overpopulation and the related misery of the stray dogs and cats is to be reduced.

Considerable personal commitment of individual animal lovers often fails due to the stubbornness of authorities, or the only aim reached despite intensive efforts is that individual dogs or cats are saved from death, while their conspecifics are still killed in the thousands. Of course, we do not fail to acknowledge here that saving each individual animal is of significant importance. But this guide is directed above all at those who want to set up a project in their country to reduce the number of stray animals in the streets. This means the guide has been conceived as a detailed orientation presenting how to best implement the various project stages. We are aware that the requirements presented in the guide are very high. In no way do we want to discourage committed animal rights activists. Our aim is rather to contribute to the success of your time-consuming and exhausting efforts. Also, all steps described in this guide need not be met in absolute detail from the very start. However, before you are able to implement the actual measures of the project (catch, castrate, release), the following prerequisites need to be met:

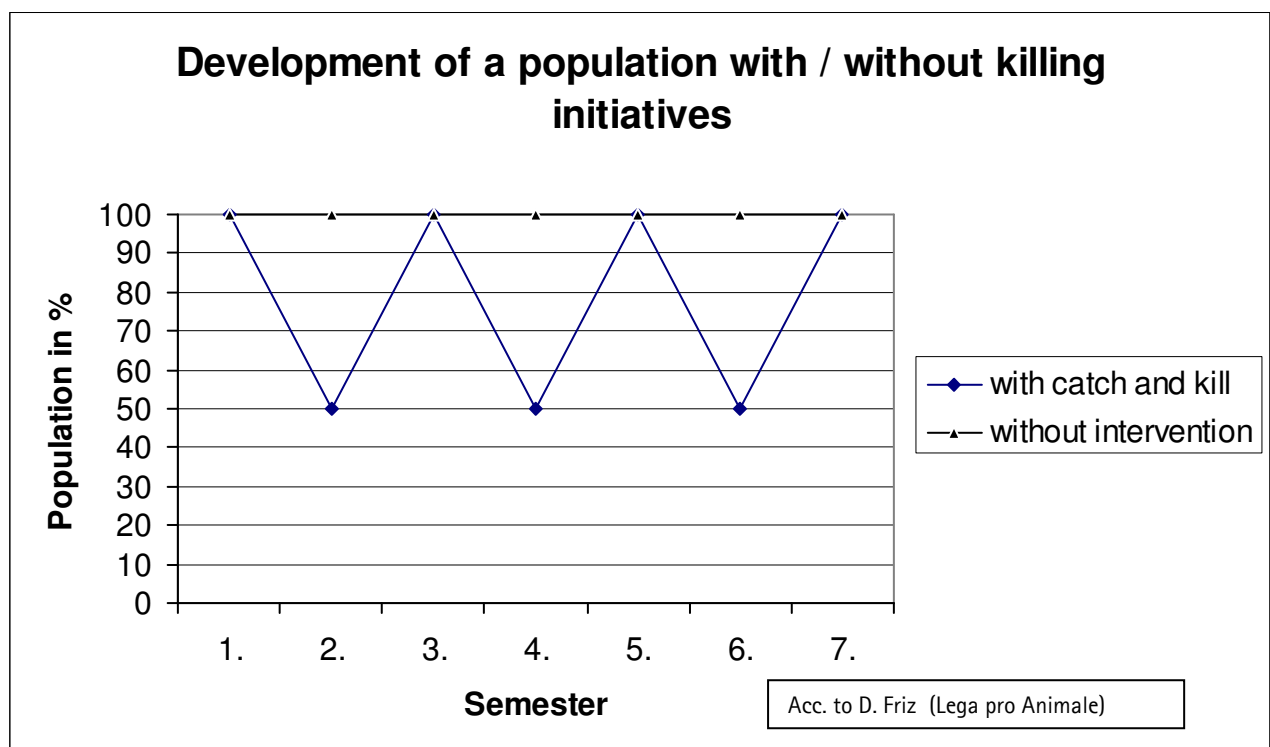
- You need to have found a sufficient number of fellow activists with the same goals.
- No project can be successful without permission from the competent authorities, therefore they need to give permission first. If they reject the project try to build up pressure and to break the resistance. The more people, including tourists, support your intention, the more likely it is that the authorities will finally agree to the project.

The aim of the project must be to reduce the number of stray animals and therefore to alleviate the misery connected with this. According to population biology, the only tangible solution is the castration of the stray animals and their release in their original area. Of course, the cats and dogs from private households have to be castrated as well and it must be ensured that no new animals are thrown out onto the street again and again by these households.

BASICS OF BIOLOGY

Every habitat offers the basis for the subsistence of a certain number of animals of the same species (carrying capacity). The number of animals that can live in this area is determined by the food supply, water and options for shelter. Now, if a species starts to populate a new area, the balance between the birth rate and the death rate will prevail after a certain amount of time, so that the number of the individual animals of that species remains the same. Now, if the death rate increases (e.g. through human interference), this is compensated quickly through the increase of the survival and procreation rate of the remaining individual animals and through other conspecifics occupying the land that has become free through such killing initiatives.

In short this means: Catching and killing initiatives as they are common in many southern and eastern countries up to this day are not just cruel but also completely useless. This is shown by the following figure:



CREATION OF AN OVERPOPULATION OF DOMESTIC ANIMALS

In many countries of Europe and other parts of the world, large numbers of the existing dogs and cats are straying, i.e. they are not fed and cared for by a responsible owner. The reason for this with those people that refuse to control the procreative behaviour of their animals. Many people in southern and eastern countries reject the concept of castration as a thing against nature. During the day the animals stray freely in the communities together with their conspecifics. Adding to this is the fact that many people, especially in the eastern countries, such as Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Romania, are poor and not able to sufficiently feed the animals. Such animals go on the search for food during the day. This loosens the ties between an owner and his animal. It is also a sad truth that the cutest puppy of a litter is allowed to stay in the house while the other offspring and their mother are simply released onto the streets. These animals have no longer a home, seeking shelter in empty houses or parks, living off waste and field mice, begging humans for food. The animals flock together in groups and try to find their way through and raise their offspring. Misery is pervasive.

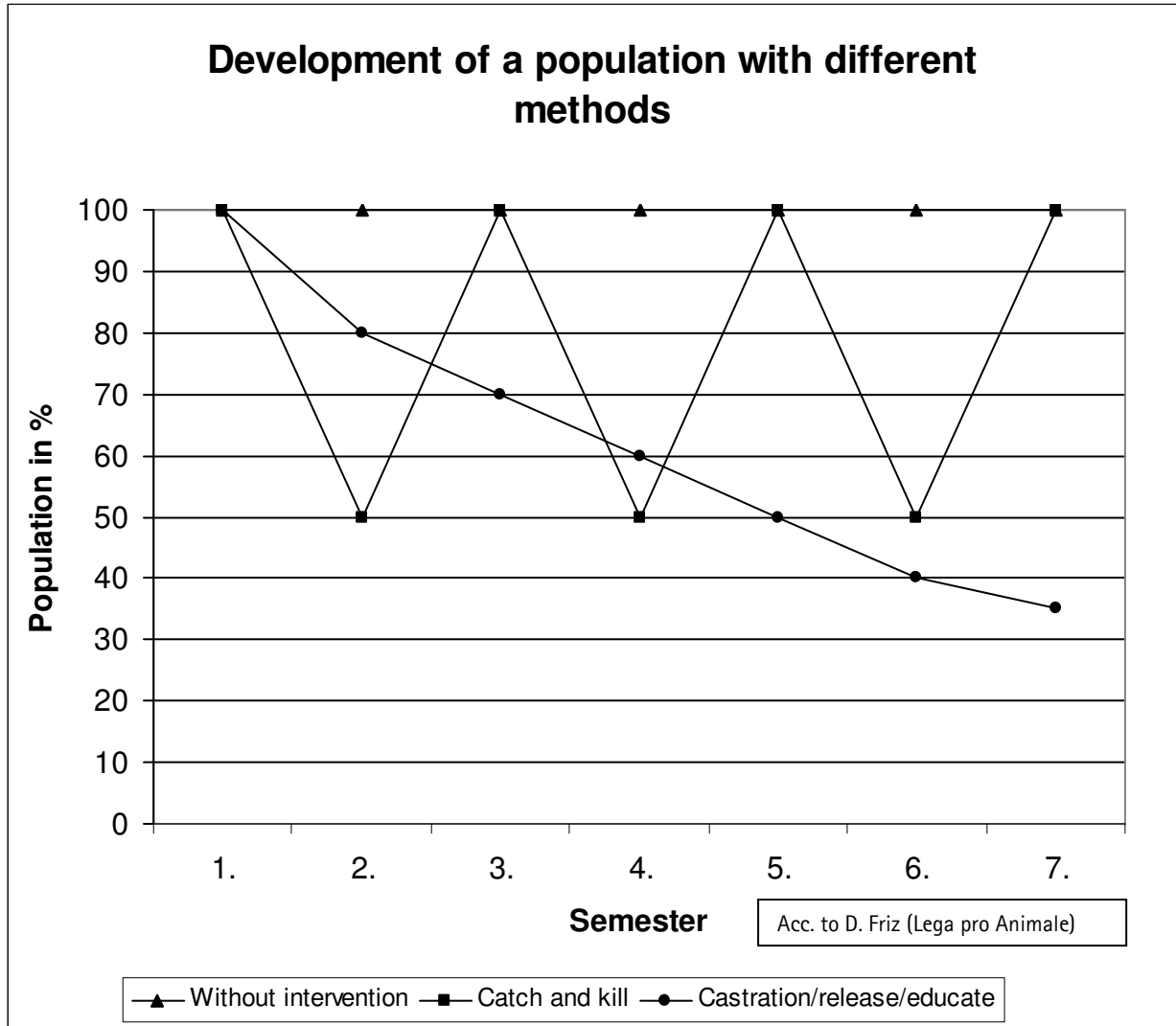
Being domesticated and used to being near humans, they keep in the vicinity of human dwellings on the search for food, water and shelter.

The consequences are resentment among the population and, above all, fear of stray dogs. The communities often react with catching and killing initiatives. As described earlier, the supply situation of the remaining animals improves, which in turn leads to a higher rate of procreation. At the same time, new animals immigrate from the surrounding areas. Finally, these catching and killing initiatives, which in no way contribute to solving the problem, are pursued by the communities at high financial and personal costs.

WHAT COULD SUCH A PROJECT LOOK LIKE?

Voluntary animal welfare activists or municipal animal catchers catch stray animals and bring them to the castration centre / the veterinary clinic, where the animals are castrated, inoculated and marked, for example with a tattoo. For a few days, the animals are cared for in the animal shelter or in the castration centre before being released in their original area, where the animal welfare activists visit and inspect them on a daily basis. If possible, the inoculation is repeated once a year. At the same time, the citizens must be included in the project through educational programmes. Above all, it must be established that the dogs and cats living in private households are also not allowed to procreate and that no more new animals may be released onto the street from there.

The figure below illustrates the development of the population with the different methods (no intervention / killing initiatives, castration/release/education):



STAGES OF IMPLEMENTATION

At this stage, it should be pointed out once again that the subsequent project stages are by design presented in strong detail. In every country, different conditions apply for the implementation of such a project. Do not be put off if you are not able to implement individual process steps exactly as described here. The important thing is that several like-minded people within a country join forces and that you involve the local authorities in the project.

STAGE 1: DETERMINING THE STATUS QUO

1. Data collection to determine the number and type of population of stray cats and dogs

This is the basis needed to determine the size and type of the population so as to have the possibility of a result check later on. The two figures in the first part of this guide require knowledge about the number of individual animals within a specific area.

This means the first step must be to count the existing animals within a specific area. In most cases it is not possible to record all individual animals, the figures have to be surveyed in such a way that the total number can be extrapolated from the number actually counted. In population biology, this is achieved with the so-called "Catch-recatch method". The important thing is that the animals are uniquely identifiable. If, for example, stray dogs are surveyed, they need not be caught; it should suffice to take photos of them or describe them.

One specific city or district is searched for stray dogs or cats over several days. Now the total number of animals observed per day and the number of newly observed animals per day allows to draw conclusions on the total population within a specific area.

In detail, the total population is calculated as follows with the help of a mathematic formula from wild biology:

The sum of all animals counted on all observation days multiplied with the total number of all animals that were new since the last count. This product is then divided by the total number of animals observed once or several times.

To be able to make statements on the reproductiveness of a population, the following data should also be collected during the subsequent catching and castrating measures:

- The approximate age of the animals, determined by the state of their teeth.
- The sex ratio, determined through separate counting of male and female animals.
- The share of fecund bitches, determined through the inspection of the uterus and the teats during the subsequent castration.

The most important preliminary work is to record in a street map where the animals find their sources of food and water as well as shelter. You should determine in detail the location of waste dumps, markets, butcheries etc., which could be frequented by the animals for food.

2. Determining the situation in the households

As described earlier, the cause for the problem of stray animals lies within the households of the communities, where the procreation of the animals is often not controlled.

This is also an opportunity to determine the status quo in the form of a survey. Below follows a list of examples for questions that need to be determined:

Basic data	
Date of the survey; interviewer; name and address of the household	
Number and age of the family members and other persons living in the household	Babies younger than 2 years; children 2-10 years; adolescents 11-17 years; young adults 18-25 years; adults 26-50 years; older people over 50 years
Type of housing	Apartment/ flat/ house/ number of rooms
Surroundings of the house/flat	Surrounded by fence/wall; If yes: state of the fence/wall; no fence/wall.
Storage of waste	Where is waste stored; Is it collected? Is it transported to a landfill? How often?
Toilets	Where are the toilets? Inside/ Outside/ none exists.
Number of other animals in the household	Sheep, goats, cattle, pigs, poultry, other animals.
Questions concerning the own household animals (dogs/cats)	
Number in the household	
Sex	Male, castrated male; female, castrated females, lactating female.
Age	Puppies; young animals under 1 year; over one year.
Origin	Bought/ strayed to/ present/ own breed
If dog – use?	Watchdog/ herding dog/family dog etc.
If dog – keeping?	At chain/ roaming free, supervised/ roaming free unsupervised/ within the house

Feeding?	What? Where? When? How much?
How many falls did the individual dogs / cats have?	
What happened to the young?	How many are still living in the household; how many were killed, sold, given away, released on to the street, ran away?
Are the animals in the household inoculated?	
Opinion of the household regarding castration	
Are the animals in the household castrated?	
If no – Why are the animals not castrated?	
Are there other measures carried out to prevent them from procreating?	e.g. keep dog in the house during the heat?
Would the owner agree to a castration at no charge?	If no, why?
Questions concerning dogs/cats in the neighbourhood	
Are there any dogs without owners known in the neighbourhood?	
Do any dogs/cats other than the own ones feed from the household?	If yes, regularly? Always the same animals?

3. Collection of the legal basis

The collection of the legal basis provides an overview about if and which laws and regulations affect the subject of stray animals.

This concerns not only existing laws for the protection of animals but also laws that regulate the risks for humans from vicious dogs / rabid dogs or from animals in road traffic.

4. Collecting information on important persons and institutions

The most important task is to survey all groups of persons that may be involved at some point of the project:

Who is a public figure in the village?

Are there any vets in the community?

Where is the next veterinarian clinic?

How many schools, libraries or other cultural organisations are there?

Are there groups whose interest is in dogs or cats (breeding associations, dog schools, environmental organisations etc.)

Are there groups active in animal welfare?

Are there individual persons active in animal welfare?

Are there individual persons or companies (dog food manufacturers for instance) that could provide financial support?

STAGE 2: Analysing the collected data

The biological data collected constitutes the basis for a subsequent scientific check of the success of the measures implemented. On the other hand, they could also be used to prove that the catching and killing measures pursued by many communities are of no avail.

Among other things, the analysis of the survey provides important information on the opinions of the citizens regarding their animals as well as on the willingness to take part in such projects. And it also allows conclusions as to whether or not certain stray animals have ties to specific households. The survey shows possible preconceptions and provides information on the education and social status of the people.

The collection of the relevant legal provisions can show if any laws for the protection of animals have been infringed by the citizens / the administration of the community. In return it is possible to prepare argumentative strategies even at this early stage in case representatives of the community should assert adverse legal provisions as a pretext to block the project in its subsequent presentation.

The following table shows how the individual persons / institutions can participate in the subsequent launch of the castration project:

WHO?	WHAT TO DO?
Public figures, neutral personalities	Representation, mediators
Vets	Castration, medical care for the animals
Schools, libraries, cultural institutions	Mediating knowledge, education; breaking down preconceptions
Breeding associations, dog schools, environmental organisations	Mediating knowledge; assistance with catching measures, care for and observation of the animals
Animal welfare organisations, animal rights activists	Binding engagement on the execution of catching measures and follow-up care
Industry, wealthy persons	To be won over as sponsors

STAGE 3: Creation of an "alliance"

Animal rights activists with the same aim prepare a rough concept and invite people from the different groups (see table above) for an exchange of ideas. A detailed concept is carved out in several meetings with those who are willing to get involved further in the project.

This is the point when it turns out how many people are actually really interested and willing to become involved:

- If no generally accepted representative can be found, the whole implementation of the project is at stake.
- If no vets or sponsors can be found, the implementation becomes impossible.
- If the breeding associations, dog schools, schools, libraries etc. are against the project, it will hardly be accepted by the citizens.

However, if enough people from the various groups with the same aim can be found, a plan should be prepared as follows.

STAGE 4: PREPARATION OF A PLAN

A detailed plan is prepared at this stage, which shall be presented to the administration of the community at a later stage.

The plan is to include the following:

- Purpose of the project
- Biological basis
- Legal provisions
- How will it be implemented?
- Which group is to do what?
- How is it financed and what else is required?
- How to perform the evaluation / assessment of the selected project measures.
- What is the contribution to be made by the community?

STAGE 5: PRESENTATION OF THE PROJECT BEFORE THE COMMUNITY

The completed project proposal is presented to the administration of the community.

This stage will reveal whether the project can to obtain an official authorisation. The project cannot be successful without authorisation.

Do not expect to obtain an authorisation straight away with the first presentation of the project. If it is rejected, keeping up the pressure is important, maybe even by involving tourists.

STAGES 6: THE AGREEMENTS

The written agreements are to contractually specify the tasks and duties of the contractual partners to contribute to the success of the project.

WHO	WHAT
Administration of the community	The catching and killing of animals is stopped. The release of animals caught is legal. Wilful torture of killing of the animals released is penalised. The community prepares a schedule to ensure a registration duty for household animals in the near future. Households releasing animals onto the street are penalised. The community supports the project in spirit as well as with material contributions(e.g. use of the animal catchers for the project; promoting the castration of household animals among the citizens).
Vets / veterinary clinics	Specifying the services and remuneration.
Animal welfare associations	Catching the animals, follow-up care, observation.
Industry, wealthy persons	Sponsorship agreements

Generally, it will not be possible to conclude agreements on the educational tasks, as this requires the commitment and the persuasion of the individual participants.

STAGE 7: FOUNDING A SANCTUARY OR AN ANIMAL SHELTER / CASTRATION CENTRE

The next stage (stage 8) describes the practical implementation of the project "Catch, Castrate, Release". Sick animals, puppies and newly castrated animals need to receive special care. As there is not usually a sufficient number of places for private animal care, the animals need to be cared for temporarily in a sanctuary (animal shelter).

The first priorities when building an animal shelter are:

- appropriate shelters for dogs
- appropriate shelters for cats

If the financial means are sufficient, the sanctuary should have the following functional areas:

- Surgery room to perform castrations and other required operations
- Storage room for animal food
- Food kitchen
- Quarantine shelters
- Shelters for sick animals
- Treatment room for veterinary care
- Administrative rooms

To provide appropriate living conditions for the animals in the sanctuary, the dogs and cats should be kept in groups. This is also an important aspect because the sanctuary is thus able to demonstrate to the citizens (who inappropriately still keep their dogs on a chain in many countries) the needs of a dog or a cat living with humans and what it means to treat one's animals with respect.

STAGE 8: THE IMPLEMENTATION

As described earlier, a project could have the following structure:

- The animals within the defined and surveyed area are caught.
- Puppies are brought to the sanctuary, before they are found new appropriate homes, locally if possible. Puppies are not released into the open again, since their chances of survival in the wild are thin. Sick animals are to receive veterinary treatment and care.
- Healthy adult animals are castrated, inoculated and marked in the clinic.
- The marking must be well visible (e.g., in case of a castration, scribe the skin in one ear laterally and vertically using a scalpel, tint with tattoo colour, tattoo) and is always added under narcosis.
- Following the castration, the animals are cared for under human observation (sanctuary) for a few days.
- Then they are released in their original territory.

- If possible, the animals are visited and observed on a daily basis.
- Additional feeding: only if other surveyed sources of food in the area are eliminated.
- The citizens are offered to have their animals castrated.
- Educational programmes are conducted (animal welfare lessons in school, reports in the media, leaflets, posters, information stands, informational events, telephone hotlines etc.).

STAGE 9: THE CHECK-UP

It is important to check up on the success of the project. The population needs to be counted from time to time to be able to control and document its development. In parallel, it can be helpful to determine the opinions of the citizens with a new survey (using scientific methods if possible) so as to be able to assess the acceptance of the measures.

STAGE 10: OUTLOOK / FOLLOW-UP MEASURES

The number of animals being released onto the streets can be reduced if the animals have been registered. Every community could stipulate with the appropriate legal provisions that dogs must be registered with the communities.

Requiring owners to have their cats and dogs marked could also contribute to such a reduction. Appropriate methods are tattoos with a unique combination of numbers of letters in the ear or on the inner leg of the animal or the implantation of a microchip under the skin. The chip is read with a special device. The marking is to be carried out by the vet. As the tattooing may only take place under narcosis, it would make sense to combine it with the castration of the animal. The important thing is however that the name and address of the owner is documented at a central registration department together with the ID of the animal. Releasing an animal onto the streets must be penalised and the loss of a household animal has to be reported by the owner without delay. The Deutscher Tierschutzbund demands to establish such a regulation for Germany with a much needed household animal law.

GUIDELINES OF THE DEUTSCHER TIERSCHUTZBUND FOR ITS MEMBER ORGANISATIONS THAT ARE ACTIVE ABROAD

Finally, these are the priorities of the tasks for cooperative member organisations that are active abroad as prepared by the Deutscher Tierschutzbund e.V.:

Working in animal welfare means

- Educational initiatives through the information of the local citizens, on the appropriate keeping and treatment of animals, animal ethics and the applicable laws for the protection of animals in the respective country.
- Informing the local animal welfare organisations about the activities of the own initiatives in the country and about the possibilities of jointly solving animal welfare issues through cooperation.
- Collaboration with local authorities.
- Informing the authorities of incidents that were observed or infringements of the applicable laws for the protection of animals.
- Telling tourists about the issues in the country and how everyone can help.
- Collaboration with local vets.
- Implementation of castration programmes for the targeted regulation of the stray animal populations.
- Telling the citizens about the use and advantages of castration measures.
- Veterinary care for stray animals.
- Permanent marking of the animals for identification.
- Following the castration and care, either release of the animals into the original area after consultations with the authorities or temporary accommodation in animal shelters with the aim of finding new owners for them, locally if possible.
- In exceptional cases, finding reputable sanctuaries for the animals in Germany.