OIE stray dog control standards and perspective

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Background

In May 2006, the OIE recognised the importance of providing guidance to members on humane methods of stray dog population control and decided to develop specific animal welfare standards for this important topic.

In 2009 at the OIE 77th General Session, the Chapter 7.7. on Stray Dog Population Control was unanimously adopted and included in the TAHC.
Why did the OIE develop this chapter?

- More than 55,000 people die each year from rabies. A majority are children and in many cases the source of infection is a stray dog.

- 99% human rabies deaths due to dog bites

- Many millions of animals contract and die of rabies each year.

- Stray dogs pose serious human health, socio-economic, political and animal welfare problems in many countries of the world, and especially in developing countries and in least developed countries.
Complexity of rabies control

- Public Health Services
- Public Veterinary Services
- Private Vets
- Wildlife and Environmental Agencies
- Livestock sector
- OIE
- FAO
- Donors
- Ministries
- WHO
- NGOs
- Public and consumers
- Local authorities
- Industry
- Attitudes and Expectations
- Values
- Policies, Laws and Regulations
- Culture and Religion
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Rabies epidemiology

The Terrestrial Code Chapter on the Stray dog control population falls within the OIE mandates for animal health, public health and animal welfare, as it addresses humane methods for the control of dog populations and the prevention of important zoonotic diseases, such as rabies and hydatidosis, in communities.
Dogs and humans

Dog ecology is linked with human activities → control of dog populations has to be accompanied by changes in human behaviour to be effective
Classification of dogs

• By location:
  - Urban
  - Rural

• By degree of roaming:
  - Owned free-roaming
  - Unowned free-roaming
  - Feral (domestic dog reverted to wild)

• By function:
  - Community dogs
  - Hunting dogs
  - Pets
  - Farm dogs
  - Transport
  - others
To study and evaluate the problem and collect relevant data, a questionnaire on dog population control was distributed to all OIE countries the survey comprised 17 questions. They were divided into two sections:

1. General information on the dog population (presence, distribution and problems)

2. Stray dog control (presence of official control programmes, different methods employed)
Are free roaming dogs a problem?

EUROPE (30 countries)

- Yes: 47%
- In some areas: 13%
- No: 40%

HDI - Human Development Index
TAHC Chapter 7.7.
Stray Dog Population Control
Art. 1 Guiding principles

• In addition to principles in Chapter 7.1.

• Promotion of responsible dog ownership can significantly reduce the numbers of stray dogs and the incidence of zoonotic diseases.

• The dog ecology is inked to human behaviour.

• Need to change human behaviour to be successful in stray dog population management programs.
Art. 2 Definitions

• **Carrying capacity** (upper limit of the dog population density supported by the habitat: resources & human acceptance)

• **Dog population control program** (aim of reducing stray dog population, art 7.7.3.)

• **Owned dog** (a dog for which a person claims responsibility)

• **Person** (incl. families/households, and or an organization)

• **Responsible ownership** (situation whereby a person accepts and commits to perform various duties in accordance with the legislation etc.)

• **Stray dog** (free-roaming owned dog, free-roaming dog with no owner, feral dog)
Art. 3 Dog population control programme objectives

1) Improve health and welfare of dogs;
2) Reduce numbers of stray dogs to an acceptable level;
3) Promote responsible ownership;
4) Assist in the creation and maintenance of a rabies immune or rabies free population;
5) Reduce the risks of zoonotic disease other than rabies;
6) Manage other risks to human health (e.g. Parasites);
7) Prevent harm to the environment and other animals;
8) Prevent illegal trade and trafficking.
Art. 4 Responsibilities and competencies

1) Veterinary Authority  
(enforcement of legislation, technical advice to prevent endemic zoonotic diseases)

2) Other government agencies  
(public health agency, environment protection, public safety)

3) Private sector veterinarians 
(key role in disease surveillance plans, diseases notification, animal abuse or mistreatment, responsible ownership promotion)

4) NGOs  
(public awareness and understanding, resources attraction, responsible ownership promotion & education)

5) Local government authorities  
(competencies on public health, environmental health & hygiene, legislation enforcement & control, subsidised neutering schemes)

6) Dog owners  
(satisfaction of physical and behavioural needs, public health and security, reproductive control, identification & registration)
Authorities should establish an advisory group, including veterinarians, experts in dog ecology, dog behaviour and zoonotic diseases, and representatives of relevant stakeholders (local authorities, human health services, environmental control services, NGOs and public), the objective being:

- to analyse and quantify the problem
- identify the causes
- obtain public opinion on dogs and
- propose the most effective approaches to use in the short and long term.
Art.4 Important Considerations in planning a programme

1) **Identifying the sources of stray dogs** *(owned dogs that roam freely, abandoned dogs, unowned dogs etc.)*

2) **Estimating the existing number, distribution and ecology** *(see Art. 8)*

3) **Regulatory framework** *(registration and indentification, Vaccination against rabies, veterinary procedures, control of dog movement, environmental control, regulation of dog shelters, animal welfare obligations of owners and authorities)*

4) **Resources available to authorities** *(human resources, financial, technical tools, infrastructure, cooperative activities, public-private-NGO partnerships, central state or province –local partnerships)*
Art.6 Control measures

“The following control measures could be implemented according to the national context and local circumstances. Measures may be used in combination.”

1) **Education and legislation for responsible ownership** (collaboration with local governmental authorities, AW NGOs, kennel clubs, private vets, and vet organisations have to assist Vet Authorities in establishing and maintaining programs)

2) **Dog registration and identification** (core component for the control of the dog population)

3) **Reproductive control** (surgical and chemical sterilisation, chemical contraception and separation during oestrus)

4) **Removal and handling** (CA should capture, collect and transport humanely dogs following the relevant legislation procedures in place)
Art. 6 Control measures (cont.)

5) Capture and return, rehoming or release *(clear procedure developed by the CA)*

6) Environmental controls

7) Control of dog movement – international *(export/import)*

8) Control of dog movement – within the country *(e.g. leash law, roaming instructions)*

9) Regulation of commercial dog dealers *(encourage dealers to form or join association respecting the rules and legislation)*

10) Reduction of dog bite incidence *(the most effective means are education and placing responsibilities on the owner)*

11) Euthanasia
“Euthanasia of dogs, used alone, is not an effective control measure. If used, it should be done humanely (see point 11 of Article 7.7.6.) and in combination with other measures to achieve effective long term control. It is also important that authorities gain an understanding of people’s attitudes towards dog ownership so that they can develop a cooperative approach to the control of dog populations.”

• Table 1 shows a summary analysis of methods for the euthanasia of dogs
1) To improve performance

2) To demonstrate that the programme is achieving its aims

3) To compare different strategies

4) Indicators (dog population size and related subpopulations, dog welfare, prevalence of zoonotic diseases, people attitudes and behaviour)

5) Sources of information (surveys, questionnaires, focus groups, expert opinions, direct observation)
Art. 8 Overview of appropriate methods for estimating the size of dog population

The choice of methods for assessing the size of a dog population depends on the ratio of owned versus ownerless dogs, which may not always easy to judge.

Counting of dogs visible in a defined area is the simplest approach to getting information on population size.

Methods using mark-recapture procedures are often considered more reliable.
Thank you for your attention

Organisation mondiale de la santé animale

World Organisation for Animal Health

Organización Mundial de Sanidad Animal