

Memorandum

To: Dr. Teena Carnegie

From: Andrea Tobar

Date: January 28th, 2017

Subject: Stray Dogs and Cats

Introduction

The social issue surrounding stray animals is an ongoing problem in American society. The content of this report will provide a discussion on the leading causes and reasons for the homelessness, the effect on society, and possible effective programs or actions by individuals or organizations in helping solve the issue. This report will then discuss the different effective programs and actions in depth, looking into the reasons that make them successful.

Stray animals for this report will be defined as dogs and cats that have never had owners or caretakers, were once dependent on an owner for care, or free-roaming of the community or neighborhood and depend upon different humans for resources.

This ongoing social matter regarding stray animals consists of problems coming from many different roots. There are the problems directly caused by these animals, such as rabies and aggressive animal biting and injuries. There are problems that cost money from taxpayers and the government; animal welfare expenditures have increased over the past few decades. In 1972, American shelters spent approximately \$800 million on animal welfare versus around \$2,400 million in 2008 (Rowan, 2009). Lastly, there are problems regarding animal welfare itself—euthanasia is a sad reality for unwanted animals to leave a world that has no place for them.

To further document this issue, the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) gives figures for national estimates regarding stray animals (there is no institution responsible for tabulating national statistics regarding all stray animals in the United States). According to ASPCA, each year, approximately 2.7 million animals are euthanized. In addition, about twice as many animals enter shelters as strays compared to the number that are relinquished by their owners, also according to ASPCA.

Possible Leading Causes

Although numerous causes of stray animals exist, some causes are exceedingly more prevalent. One of the leading reasons is “abandonment behavior by owners” (LYU, 2015). Abandonment has many explanations, such as family tragedies, moving, sickness, intolerable characteristics of pets, or lack of motivation or money for animal care, treatments, or food. People who become pet owners are often times not properly educated on the realistic nature of being an owner, and all the responsibilities it entails. People that become pet owners may understand the responsibilities, but suddenly or over time become unable to care for them, and then not follow through with an appropriate response of finding further support for their pet.

Another leading reason is the multiplication of more stray animals caused by stray animals themselves. According to a current state summary report at AVMA, it is currently not required to have your pet spayed or neutered. Considering the number of animals that become lost or are abandoned, (according to ASPCA) owners who do not take the time to get the procedure done could be a potentially major cause of this issue.

Effect on Society

Some effects on societies of stray animals include the issue of diseases. Dr. Trotman of the Ministry of Agricultural and Rural Development talks about “zoonotic diseases”, meaning diseases that can be transmitted from animals to people, such as rabies, scabies, ringworm, and toxoplasmosis. Since the animals are poorly cared for, they can easily and frequently be carriers of these diseases. Not only to humans, but these diseases can pose a threat to people’s pets as well.

Trotman also speaks about the nuisance problems that arise from stray animals. He mentions “worrying of walkers and joggers, scavenging of garbage cans, faecal pollution, urine spraying (cats), noise and especially in the case of roaming dogs and cats, and neighbourhood friction.” This is listed as a leading negative effect on societies as well.

Finally, the effect on the economy is to be considered when discussing effects on society. Not only does the presence of stray animals create the image of a low-income or less taken care of neighborhood, but it makes the neighborhood appear less safe due to the possibility of a stray dog attack. Not only the potential health hazards of stray animals on humans, but the overall cost of animal control and humane societies in general must be considered as well. It costs the government as well as the taxpayers.

Effective Solutions

Although solutions exist that are common thoughts for the majority of people, such as sheltering, euthanizing, vaccinating and neutering, and rescue programs (government and non-government based), these options have been around for several decades, and have not been enough to solve the problem, either on the surface or at its roots. Dogs and cats need more than just food, water, and a cage (which there exists only a limited amount of funding). These animals need love and some kind of greater quality of life. There needs to be a solution at the root of the problem, most importantly. Overcrowding at animal shelters greatly reduces animal welfare.

With that in mind, a unique solution idea to help solve this complex issue is one from Patricia Turner, Jim Berry, and Shelagh MacDonald from the journals of US National Library of Medicine. It is one of the best solution plans I have stumbled upon during my research. She states the idea about “reducing relinquishment and abandonment of dogs and cats, as well as addressing irresponsible breeding.” This wonderful solution appears to be one of long-term status, because of starting with a public awareness campaign, they explain, about “responsible per ownership including spaying/neutering of non-breeding pets, encouraging acquisition of pets from pounds and shelters instead of breeders and pet stores, and municipal enforcement of animal licensing and owner registration.”

As mentioned earlier, one of the leading causes of this issue is multiplication of more animals caused by strays. With a community geared towards adopting from a pound or shelter versus a breeder or pet store, there will be more attention as well as room in shelters for stray animals roaming around the community.

Further, this article speaks about another fascinating solution known as a “trap-neuter-release” program. This solution applies more towards cats than dogs, although still within the realm of stray animals. To have subsidies for programs like this is less at the root of the issue, however, but it still addresses the problem while it is in its tracks.

Finally, there exists another potentially world-changing solution known as permanent chemical neutering vaccines. According to Kuladip Jana and Prabhat Samanta from the journals of US National Library of Medicine, “A single bilateral intra-testicular injection of calcium chloride solution is effective, economical, and easy to perform.” They speak about no harm coming to these animals, besides the initial injection itself. This solution could especially benefit the “trap-neuter-release” program I had discovered and mentioned earlier. It could make the program operate exceptionally faster, and far more stray animals could be addressed, equating to many less stray animals to euthanize.

Conclusion

There is an awareness of the ongoing problem of stray animals in America, and there appears to be many different solutions in the works to helping the issue. While this issue is obviously one of a complex nature, the APSCA numbers do reflect an upward trend of the issue slowly getting fixed. The issue can continue to become lessened once citizens become more and more educated and confronted with this problem, its negative effects on society, and the steps they can take to prevent the sad reality of the immense amount of euthanasia that currently takes place. These solutions in place could mean a great outlook for the future, once it becomes easier or cheaper to implement them. All the unique circumstances that create stray animals can differ depending on the territory in question, however.

Works Cited

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