



IN

International News

THE RSPCA NEWSLETTER
FOR ANIMAL WELFARE
ORGANISATIONS OVERSEAS

RSPCA INTERNATIONAL

Spring/Summer 2011



▲ Community dogs are part of the system in some countries.

Is a shelter the solution?

Although many organisations see an animal shelter as the most pressing need for their community, this will not always be the case.

Shelters are expensive to run and require a great deal of planning and organisation. In addition, building a shelter will not solve a long-term stray control problem on its own. It may even make it worse if pet owners see it as an easy way to dispose of their animals.

Basic issues to consider before deciding to build a shelter include thinking about the capacity of existing shelters in the region and the number of animals that potentially need help in an area. An accurate estimation of the stray population is essential, otherwise a shelter can soon become

overwhelmed, leading to a poor standard of care for the animals and distress for the shelter staff.

Local attitudes to dogs and cats and the financial situation in the area are crucial – are you likely to be able to fund the shelter from public donations or local authority funding? How successful is rehoming likely to be? Is it good for your organisation's image to be collecting and possibly euthanasing strays?

Champa Fernando from RSPCA associate KAPCAW (Kandy Association for Community Protection through Animal Welfare) contributes to a national spay programme for dogs in Sri Lanka. She made the very difficult decision to close the organisation's shelter after 12 years, having rehomed more than 3,500 animals. She explains: "We could not have continued to run the shelter amidst a chronic lack of hands-on help. We continue to offer free spaying of dogs and contribute to the national effort of the government to humanely curb

the increase of dog populations. We provided a model that is being used by the government for its national spay programme. While running the shelter, we constantly concentrated on finding a long-term humane solution to the problem of overpopulation of dogs and our main focus will remain on that issue.

"In countries like ours where community dogs are a part of the system, spaying is the best solution, not shelters. Community dogs can be looked after in the community provided that the numbers do not multiply. In order to ensure this, female, owned dogs need to be spayed systematically across the island. The lack of a country-wide spay service can also make running shelters very risky as people tend to dump animals at them. Overcrowding soon converts the shelters into hellholes for the animals and a nightmare to manage."

RSPCA associated group Dýrahjálpi Íslands has 230 foster homes across

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



NEWS updates

Mago paves the way for better bear welfare.



NEWS from you

Chingola SPCA in Zambia.



NEWS from the UK

Cat chaos crippling rescue centres.

..... CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Iceland and assists fosterers with pet food and other necessities. It also pays for medical bills and covers neutering and vaccination. So far, the organisation has managed to rehome all its foster home animals. On average it takes five days to rehome a dog and 20 days to rehome a cat.

Of course, every situation is different and requires its own solution, however, it is good to remember that there are different options to stray animal control available, and that sometimes a shelter is not the best option.

There are lots of useful publications you can download from our website, or write to us for a hard copy.

Guidelines for the design and management of animal shelters

Operational guidance for dog-control staff

Humane dog population management

Stray animal control practices (Europe)

Improving dog ownership

The welfare basis for euthanasia of dogs and cats and policy development

Look out for new cat population management guidance due to be published soon on the ICAM website: <http://icam-coalition.org/>

Shelter alternatives

- Catch, neuter and release programmes
- Microchipping schemes
- Pet registration schemes
- Education and awareness-raising programmes
- Collaboration with an existing shelter
- Fostering schemes
- Campaigning, and lobbying local authorities to act



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▲ Shelters are a popular, but not always the best, option.

Message from the editor

Most of the enquiries we receive from overseas organisations and individuals relate to stray animal control, particularly shelter construction. It was also the top item on the last association consultation. This issue of *International News* explores whether a shelter is necessarily the best option for stray management and discusses other strategies. In addition, following on from our last issue which focused on wildlife, you can read an update from Agnieszka Sergiel on the bear campaign we have supported in Poland, and on the fate of the UK's last circus elephant, Anne, in Updates on page 3.

In News from you on page 4, Chingola SPCA highlights the common problems of maintaining tenure of shelter land and of funding the day-to-day running of a shelter. In their case, upkeep of the shelter is dependent on the close relationship they have with the local mine and the provision of free services.

News from the UK on page 5 profiles the RSPCA case for dog licensing as a solution to dog welfare, and discusses how rising cat numbers have been affecting RSPCA animal centres. Finding the right solution for stray populations involves diagnosing numbers and sources correctly. Follow our current project counting roaming dogs in the Western Balkans in Training and projects on page 6, where you can also find links to new FAO and EU dog issue forums. Finally, Miranda Luck talks about her extensive experience as an RSPCA shelter management trainer and offers her advice on page 7.

Please send any feedback to: kkilving@rspca.org.uk. We would love to hear your reactions to any of the stories in this issue or your own experiences with any of the issues.

Updates

Mago paves path for better bear welfare

By Agnieszka Sergiel and Robert Maślak

Department of Vertebrate Biology and Conservation, University of Wrocław

Captive bear management in Poland became a highly controversial issue in September 2006 when Mago, a 15-year-old European brown bear in Wrocław Zoo, hit the headlines. For 10 years Mago had been kept in a six-metre-square concrete cage with no outdoor access.

Mago's story began in 1991 in the Tatra Mountains, when his mother, a nuisance bear with three cubs, was taken into captivity at Wrocław Zoo for safety reasons. His mother died shortly afterwards along with one of her cubs. Mago, a male, and Mania, a female, survived and were kept together in an enclosure until 1997 when Mago was enclosed indoors for the next 10 years. One of the reasons given was a high level of aggression.

Animal welfare organisations, the public and the press exerted a lot of pressure for change. In February 2007 Mago was

released into the outdoor enclosure for the first time and reunited with Mania and their two cubs. Since autumn 2008 they have been kept in a 1.2 hectare natural enclosure as a group of four.

Two attempts to investigate the case in 2006 and 2007 were closed before the case could get to court. In August 2007, despite pressure from Viva! Foundation, the district court upheld a decision not to prosecute. As a result, Viva! Foundation started a private prosecution against the zoo director in February 2008. After the court returned a verdict of not guilty, Viva! Foundation appealed. After losing the appeal in February 2009 the organisation appealed to the highest court in Poland, which found evidence of inappropriate procedures and inaccurate legal reports in earlier proceedings. The case was returned to the district court and finally, in January 2011, the zoo director was found guilty of animal abuse.

The zoo director, Antoni Gucwinski, had been the director of Wrocław Zoo for 40 years. His efforts to promote knowledge of animals were well-known due to a famous TV series on zoo animals that had been broadcast for 32 years. He was replaced in January 2007.

The case of Mago was a great breakthrough in animal welfare decision-making and the verdict confirmed that the zoo director had failed to meet the animal's welfare needs sufficiently. It showed that people responsible for zoos are equally obliged to meet an animal's welfare needs. The verdict reinforced that causing suffering by neglect, particularly – as in this case – over a long period of time, is as serious as causing suffering through deliberate cruelty.

Details and press articles on the case can be found on *Gazeta Wyborcza's* website: www.Wroclaw.gazeta.pl/Wroclaw/8,36813,3856230.html



▲ Mago in his concrete cage in 2006.

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Sanctuary for the UK's last circus elephant

Anne, the UK's last performing elephant has been relocated from the circus where she has worked since 1957 to Longleat Safari Park after undercover media footage showed a circus worker mistreating her.

The RSPCA helped by visiting Anne with a vet to examine her and to talk to her owners about the possibility of her living out her last days in a sanctuary or safari park. We have also offered our help and assistance in

relation to any prosecution. We have been campaigning for a ban on the use of wild animals in circuses for the past 10 years and this latest development is a huge step forward.

News from you

Association PROFILE

Barry Thorley from the Chingola SPCA and Associated Kennels, Zambia talks to us about its work.

I am unable to find out when the Chingola SPCA and Associated Kennels was first started, but I think that it was in the late 1940s or early 1950s. It is located in Chingola, in the Zambian copperbelt. Since 1989 I have been involved with the Society in various positions, as chairman, secretary, committee member and now treasurer.

The local copper mine has changed hands a few times since the 1980s and is now owned by Vedanta of India. It has decided to build a new copper treatment plant and the only practical space available is where the existing SPCA is located. SPCA has located a new area for the kennels adjacent to its existing location and discussions are underway regarding ownership of the proposed new SPCA facility.

The SPCA and Associated Kennels are run by a dedicated volunteer force, spearheaded by Mrs Val Franklin. As a charitable organisation, the SPCA relies heavily on donations to continue operations. We are fortunate that electrical, water and sanitation services are supplied by the mine free of charge, as without this assistance we would probably have to close, and our two paid staff would be out of a job.

Without the SPCA, Chingola residents would have to travel 60km to the next town, Kitwe, for their animal needs, and the veterinary surgeon in Chingola would have no recuperation area for recovering animals. We also have visits from out-of-town vets who sometimes make use of our surgery and clinic

facilities, giving donations to the Society for this use.

Our buildings comprise 90 kennels, 12 catteries, the administrative building, clinic and a house for our senior kennel worker. There are also four quarantine kennels, as well as an office for the mine police dog handlers. The kennels are now mainly used for kennelling the animals for various local security companies. There are 46 kennels on permanent allocation to the mine security force; 16 are allocated to other local security companies for their guard dogs.

When there were many expatriate employees in Chingola, working both for the mines and in the private sector, there was a substantial number of stray animals, usually dogs that had been left after their owners left the district and, occasionally, also badly mistreated animals. Now that the expatriate population has declined, there are very few animal collections. We spay female animals for adoption at the SPCA's cost prior to rehoming. If a member of the public wishes to adopt an animal, they are requested to pay an adoption fee compatible with their means.



Chingola SPCA

▲ A resident of Chingola SPCA looking for a home.

News from the UK

Licensing could solve UK's dog welfare problems

An annual dog licence fee of as little as £21.50 could help reduce the number of strays and help tackle irresponsible dog breeding, according to an RSPCA report released in September 2010. The cost to owners would be less than the average price of a chocolate bar per week but would result in huge improvements to dog welfare and dog control services.

RSPCA director of communications, David Bowles, said: "The dog licence would achieve three important goals. It would raise money for dog welfare,

increase the numbers of responsible dog owners by getting people to think before they get a dog, and start to reverse the surplus of dogs on the market by providing incentives such as reduced fees for neutering dogs."

Twenty-three countries in Europe currently have a dog licence or registration scheme. In some countries such as Germany, Slovenia and the Netherlands there have been improved dog control provisions and low numbers of strays, with more than 50 percent of dog owners complying with the scheme.

Groups call on Prime Minister for improved dog laws

In August 2010, 20 groups, comprising animal charities, law enforcement agencies and unions, came together to demand action against irresponsible dog owners by the government and the provision of necessary resources for those tasked with policing dog control laws.

Their statement says: "We believe that irresponsible dog ownership, whether it is allowing dogs to stray, be dangerously out of control or indiscriminately breeding, causes significant problems for the safety and welfare of both humans and animals. Current legislation

is proving inadequate in many cases to ensure sufficient protection.

"We believe that both the provision of sufficient resources at a local level for local authorities and the police, and updated and consolidated legislation that has a genuine preventative effect, are needed to address this problem."

Current legislation is proving inadequate in many cases to ensure sufficient protection.



▲ RSPCA animal centres have been inundated with cats and kittens.

Cat chaos crippling rescue centres

RSPCA animal shelters throughout England and Wales are inundated with cats and kittens in desperate need of new homes. Since the beginning of 2010, the RSPCA has been taking in an average of 21 cats every day at its 16 regional centres.

Margaret Marden from Enfield Branch said: "It's really dreadful at the moment, this is the worst I have ever seen the situation."

The RSPCA is urging people considering getting a cat or a kitten to avoid answering ads in newspapers or visiting pet shops, but instead to take home a rescue animal that desperately needs a new home.

The usual RSPCA adoption fee includes the neutering operation, microchipping, a full veterinary check, worming and flea treatment, and any vaccinations required. The rehoming process aims to make sure that the cat and the owner are suitably matched, which includes a home check and follow-up visits in some cases.

Training and projects



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COUNTING ROAMING DOGS IN THE WESTERN BALKANS

In 2010, RSPCA International supported the Western Balkans Veterinary Network's (WBVN) initiative to count stray dog populations in the region. The network organises and supports stray population survey work where public authorities are taking clear steps to implement humane animal control strategies.

By measuring the efficacy of various strategies and disseminating its findings, the WBVN plans to contribute towards the creation of a practical and scientific approach to humane stray animal control in the region. In this way, it will be building on the considerable experience that the RSPCA has accumulated on this issue, delivering practical training and assisting in the development of tailored dog population strategies in the region. The network translates and distributes the latest research and documents from forums such as the International Companion Animal Management Coalition.

Two counts of the roaming population

were combined with questionnaire surveys to indicate the significant factors for maintaining the roaming population, and from this information the best form of intervention will be decided. Further surveys will help to monitor changes in the roaming dog numbers and indicate, in combination with other factors like disease prevalence and bite incidence, the effectiveness of the programme.

In addition to our work in the Western Balkans last year, we also ran successful shelter management and humane dog-control training projects in Thailand, Turkey and Greece. Consultant Miranda Luck talks about her experiences of being the lead trainer on several RSPCA-run courses, including projects in Turkey and Greece, on page 7.

Find out more about the WBVN at: www.wbvn.net

DOG POPULATION MANAGEMENT

On 23 January 2011, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) launched a new dog population management forum.

◀ We have been supporting roaming dog counts in the Western Balkans.

This forum provides an opportunity to exchange information, engage in professional discussions, and request or give advice on issues related to dog population management, dog health and welfare, and socioeconomic assessments of the importance of dogs.

Anyone is welcome to use the forum and contribute to its development. Relevant information to be uploaded can be sent to: Dog-Population-Management@fao.org

Information on dog population management can be found at: www.fao.org/ag/againfo/themes/animal-welfare/blog/

The CAROdogg website (www.carodogg.eu) is another portal aiming to provide, generate and disseminate reliable information about dogs in Europe, focusing on canine overpopulation and resulting animal welfare problems.

It offers scientific, legal and practical tools for political strategies, and concrete projects to build up a European-wide culture of responsible dog ownership.

Its mission statement says: "If every dog can be identified and has a visible, responsible and well-informed owner, there will no longer be any unwanted dogs, the existence of stray animals will cease, and with it their suffering resulting from illegal dog breeding and trade, and problems of dog aggression."

The RSPCA believes that dog licensing could result in more responsible pet ownership. Read the RSPCA's new publication *Improving Dog Ownership – The economic case for dog licensing*, which can be found on our website: www.rspca.org.uk/getinvolved/campaigns/doglicensing

Sharing shelter management expertise

Miranda Luck of Miranda Luck Associates has been the lead trainer on several RSPCA-run shelter management training courses in countries including Portugal, Latvia and Turkey, and has also managed consultancy projects for the RSPCA in Greece and the United Arab Emirates. Miranda used to be the manager of the RSPCA's South Godstone Animal Centre. We asked her about some of her international training experiences.

What are the key components of the shelter management training course?

Working in shelters can be very emotional and shelter managers, staff and volunteers often find themselves 'fire-fighting' problems. Training helps to reassure participants and find ways to alleviate problems. We focus on developing policies (for example, for neutering and vaccination) and creating standard operating procedures that provide individuals with a set of skills to take back to their shelter, enabling them to run it more effectively.

Training often brings together key stakeholders and enables small-group work for the development of need-specific solutions.

What general differences have you found between UK and overseas shelters?

Financial resources and animal welfare understanding are the main issues. Buying toys for dogs, for example, may be considered quite extravagant so this is where I can show creative use of empty cartons, boxes and other dog friendly 'rubbish' that can be turned

into interesting, stimulating objects for shelter animals.

Abandoning, poisoning or eliminating stray or unwanted animals still sadly happens in many places, however, training courses offer an alternative solution by improving shelter management, including rehoming policies, and changing public opinion.

How have the shelters you have worked with varied from country to country?

Shelters can vary greatly within a country and even between municipalities. Much depends on the individuals involved and their ability to persevere in difficult situations.

Is it difficult to train people working in conditions that are very different to those in the UK?

It can be difficult as there are so many national variations on equipment, products, and services, e.g. the 'squeegee' – a type of mop for cleaning floors – often doesn't translate particularly well!

What has been the most challenging course you have led?

Each course has its own challenges, with different languages, cultures and relationships with animals, but one of the most challenging was in Portugal where municipal shelter workers felt



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▲ Miranda demonstrating practical cleaning techniques on a training course in Portugal.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

..... CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

Sharing shelter management expertise

that their role was held in very low regard. It was a challenge to get the participants to understand the importance of their role, develop a sense of self-worth and appreciate they had real skills that in many other countries would be considered specialist and highly thought of.

What memorable experiences have you had on international training courses?

Every course is different and brings with it different surprises. One very memorable experience was in Turkey when the shelter workers first trialled their 'home made' dog toys. The group had been sceptical but the results were brilliant, with the

shelter workers interacting with the dogs to chase, play and retrieve the toys. Before we left the shelter, the carers were already developing new toys and telling me of ideas they had to introduce the 'toys' to their own shelters.

How do you measure the success of the training you run?

Participants fill out an evaluation form at the end of every training course and I also ask students to keep in touch to let me know how things are progressing at their shelter.

I recently ran into a course participant from 2005 who told me with much

enthusiasm how things had improved since the training course and how she had been able to share the things she had learnt with others. I consider that a success.



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▲ Participants engage with shelter management training in Turkey.

Shelter solutions

If you have reached the end of *International News* and still think that a shelter is the best option for you, or if you are an existing shelter looking for some fresh ideas, Miranda has put together a few simple tips to help you get the best out of your facility.

- A shelter should have a maximum capacity as problems most frequently occur when maximum capacity is exceeded.
- Have written policies and routines to ensure consistency and to eliminate any difficult personal decision-making in the running of the shelter.
- Keep cross-infection to a minimum by using colour-coded equipment in specific areas.
- Prevent kennel and cattery routines becoming too predictable by making meal times interesting – bury food, for example, or place it inside a sealed (but safe) box.
- If exercise time is limited, provide 'sniff sensations' such as a plastic ball daubed into different smells, for example, soil or fresh grass.
- Ask local hotels or airlines for old linen and use it at your shelter as bedding. Ask local gyms and tennis clubs for old balls, exercise mats and towels.
- Use social media such as Facebook and Twitter to promote your shelter or individual animals desperate for a home. It is quick, free and gets results.
- Write out kennel or cattery cards and expand on the animal's details, highlighting particular points about them e.g. "I'm fully house trained!"
- Help settle animals into their new homes by asking adopters to bring an old blanket or toy from their home and give this to the animal a few days before the animal leaves. Provide the adopters with a supply of the food that the animal is used to eating so that it has something familiar to enjoy.
- Visit other shelters to get ideas on best practice – this may be locally or in another country. Money invested in a study visit to the UK to look at how different shelters are managed could save you a lot of money in the long run.



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