

KORINA

Friends of Dogs



Prijatelji Pasa



Animal Welfare Challenges and Opportunities in Montenegro

**REPORT TWO: A REVIEW OF STANDARDS IN
MUNICIPAL ANIMAL SHELTERS**

**Association Korina – Friends of Dogs Montenegro – Network for Animals
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**ANIMAL WELFARE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN MONTENEGRO
REPORT 2 – A REVIEW OF STANDARDS IN MUNICIPAL ANIMAL SHELTERS**

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Executive Summary

This second report in our series complements the review of municipal animal welfare strategies in report one and examines the extent to which municipal animal shelters in Montenegro meet the legal standards and regulations prescribed in law. A shelter alone will never solve the problem of stray and abandoned dogs, and it is necessary that every local municipality develop a detailed programme for controlling the dog population in the area. However, the welfare of dogs inside shelters remains of paramount concern.

The research was undertaken by a partnership of local and international NGOs in order to explore and inform the best ways to assist in improving animal welfare standards in the future and to lobby for change. The research did not aim to replicate the role of statutory authorities in monitoring and inspection of individual shelters, but to take a wider overview on how the legal standards to protect and enhance animal welfare, health and safety are applied in practice.

The methodology involved visiting each of the eight municipal dog shelters (there are no municipal cat shelters) and undertaking a comprehensive assessment of how they met key standards from the current legal guidelines. The visits were pre-planned with the cooperation of shelter managers at all sites.

The most significant finding is that no shelters meet all the legal standards, and many meet very few of the most important ones. Despite detailed standards being prescribed in law, an apparent failure to enforce the law means that the welfare of dogs in many shelters remains consistently poor, even after many years of routine inspections.

Key findings of concern include:

- Shelters in inappropriate and inaccessible locations which are less open to scrutiny and public involvement/partnerships.
- Only two of the eight shelters had all the necessary facilities prescribed by law.
- A lack of isolation or quarantine facilities and a lack of suitable hygiene equipment, facilities, knowledge and standards are continuously putting both dog and human health at risk.
- Most shelters do not have regular or adequate veterinary services.
- Only three shelters met the required standards for accommodation, with animal welfare suffering badly as a consequence. Many dogs are not allowed out to exercise regularly (if at all), are inappropriately grouped or isolated, housed in cages that are too small, unclean, or are not secure or protected from extreme weather.
- Staff attitudes, skills and experience varied widely between shelters, as did staffing levels, and there was little evidence of ongoing training or staff support, despite the law listing detailed content of essential training programmes for shelter staff.
- Report keeping practices vary between shelters, and while most keep some form of routine records there is little evidence of transparency, auditing, or the use of records to inform proactive future planning, monitoring or evaluation.

In general shelters that were meeting most standards had sustainable funding from municipal budgets, strong management systems, regularly paid workers, regular vet services, high level support within municipalities, and staff who were trained and cared about the animals.

Common weaknesses in shelters that met few standards were a lack of skilled staff or ongoing staff training, no formally paid staff integrated into the municipality, a lack of adequate space for the whole shelter and individual dog accommodation, a lack of quarantine space or hygienic facilities for disease control, and a lack of transparent records.

What is most glaringly obvious from this study is the ongoing failure to meet the legally required standards even in shelters which have been established for many years, and that dog welfare is suffering on a daily basis as a result. In particular, a review of, and stronger enforcement of the law and more frequent veterinary inspections are necessary and urgent in shelters which meet hardly any standards at all.

Local governments that have not yet established shelters should develop them only alongside population control and responsible ownership programmes, because significant ongoing financial commitment and managerial support is needed to ensure animal welfare standards are met within shelters. Detailed recommendations are listed in the body and conclusions of the report in relation to each standard assessed. In particular we suggest that action should be focused on developing stronger shelter management and skills, better enforcement of regulations, animal focused facilities and veterinary care, and partnerships with communities to reduce the number of unwanted, lost or abandoned animals.

We strongly recommend the following priority actions:

The competent state-level institutions and Animal Welfare Council should take careful note of all the findings and recommendations and include them in the process of drafting the new law on animal welfare law and development of national animal welfare and dog/cat population control strategies.

Local self-government units/ municipalities should set up a multi-disciplinary local animal welfare council to meet at least twice a year to oversee the improvements/construction of the shelters or foster homes, implement relevant national strategies and develop local strategies for better control of abandoned animals, with clear lines of accountability.

The communal police should work more proactively with municipal shelter managers and Mayors to define their responsibilities strengthen cooperation and support.

Shelter managers should ensure that all staff are given adequate training, supervision, support and equipment to undertake their jobs competently and safely. They should also develop stronger links with NGOs and community groups to improve and promote dog adoption and community involvement and volunteering. All shelters must also provide veterinary care and quarantine facilities.

Non-governmental organizations and civil society should work closely with shelters to promote and facilitate adoption through various events, to bid for project funds, and to raise for individual shelter improvements. Sharing ideas and good practice will enhance the effectiveness of such efforts and avoid duplication of effort.

1. Background and purpose of the project

Network for Animals (NFA), an international animal welfare NGO, funded this project, which was carried out by the Association Korina – Team Korina Animals and Friends of Dogs Montenegro. The aim was to undertake a structured assessment of the standards in municipal dog and related welfare issues in Montenegro, in order to:

- Try and identify common problems shelters face in complying with the legal regulations related to dog and cat shelter design and management
- To make contact with all the shelters and assess conditions and support needed to inform NFA about how best to target their future work in support of shelter development in Montenegro
- Enable NFA and partner NGOs to participate usefully and knowledgeably in discussions with the vet administration as animal welfare laws and strategies are revised and updated
- Highlight instances where municipalities are unable to comply with the current regulations, and incidences of animal cruelty, to inform future lobbying and reform
- Share good practice.

The project was not designed to “inspect” or assess individual shelter weaknesses and problems in detail, as this is outside the scope of the project, but to assess the extent to which the system (licensing/inspection etc) is working or failing to ensure that legal standards are met in all shelters. Where specific and serious concerns were found these were brought to the attention of the inspectorate in private discussions.

Both research and inspection are clearly necessary, but it is important to separate research functions such as this from inspection functions, for which we have no mandate. Each citizen has the capacity to lobby for changes and better management in individual shelters. We want to use this research to lobby for better strategic control and management, and to highlight where the current system is failing to enforce basic standards at a higher level, for example via lack of sanctions for non-compliance with legal standards.

While we provided individual feedback to shelters where issues of particular concern were noted, individual shelters are not identified in the report, with aggregated data instead giving an overall picture of the extent to which Montenegrin municipal dog shelters are meeting the standards as prescribed in law.

2. Methodology

All municipal shelters (Berane, Budva, Herceg Novi, Kotor/Tivat, Niksic, Pljevlja, Podgorica and Ulcinj) were visited by prior appointment and standards assessed against selected key articles in

the law¹. Appendix 1 shows the number of dogs in each shelter at the time of the visits. The full checklist used at the visits is included in Appendix 2. Shelters were rated according to whether they fully met, nearly met, half met, partly met, or did not meet the standards defined by the law in different articles.

The purpose was not to undertake “inspections”, because these can only be undertaken by the competent bodies (veterinary and communal authorities), but rather to assess each facility against the legal standards to better understand common shortfalls and issues, to inform future assistance and support for the shelters.

3. Findings and related recommendations

3.1 Location

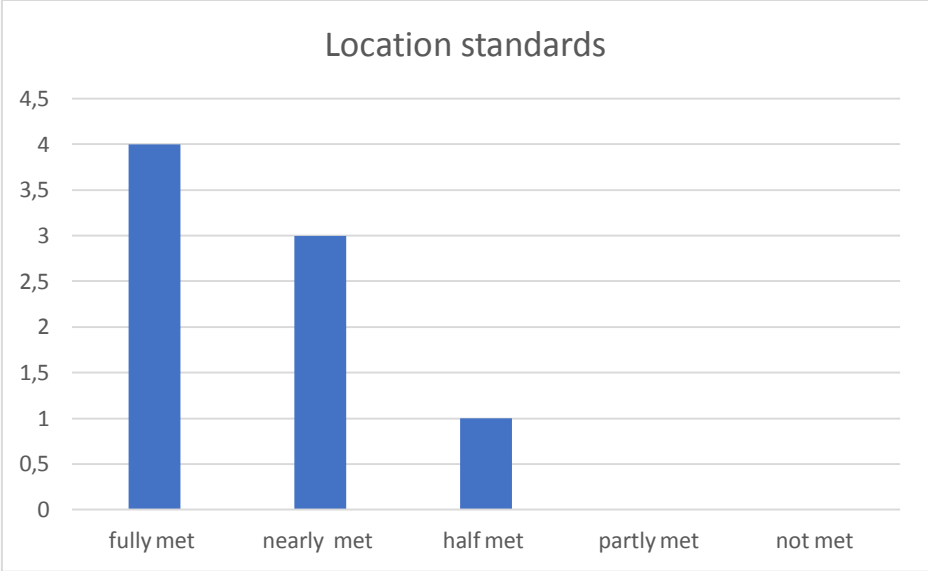
Article 2 of the regulations states that shelters should be in areas away from population centres, or sound-proofed and visually insulated from the surrounding area, with an enclosed fence to prevent uncontrolled access, and connected with the main roads.

Most shelters meet the requirement of being away from populated areas. Those which only partly met the standard were not protected by good fencing. This leads to dogs never being let out of cages to exercise for fear of their escape, and also makes the shelters accessible to unauthorised access.

However, while all are connected to main roads, many are a long way from the main population centres in their municipalities (some more than 20 km), making access for many people impossible. This is a barrier to potential volunteers who in many other countries are valued as an essential resource in helping to care for and socialise shelter animals, and will hinder adoption by making the dogs effectively invisible and impossible to visit. The next consequence concerns the direct functioning of the shelters themselves. Large distances from city centres creates additional costs for transporting dogs to and from shelters, and for purchase of supplies, as well as impeding regular visits by veterinarians. This is particularly relevant when it comes to shelters that do not have an employed veterinarian (“the veterinarian on the spot”), but a contract with a veterinary ambulance, where timely access by the veterinarian in emergency and urgent cases is of enormous importance for the health and life of dogs. Furthermore, some shelters are also

¹ Based on Article 26 paragraph 9 and Article 27 of the Law on the Protection of the Animal Welfare Official Gazette of the Republic of Montenegro, No. 014/08, 040/11, 047/15), Ordinance on conditions to be fulfilled for pensions and shelter for abandoned animals - Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (29/5/2015).

located in very elevated and exposed mountain locations, making them inaccessible in extreme weather in winter and late autumn. Animals in these seasons also suffer through exposure to wind, rain, snow and temperature extremes.



Recommendations

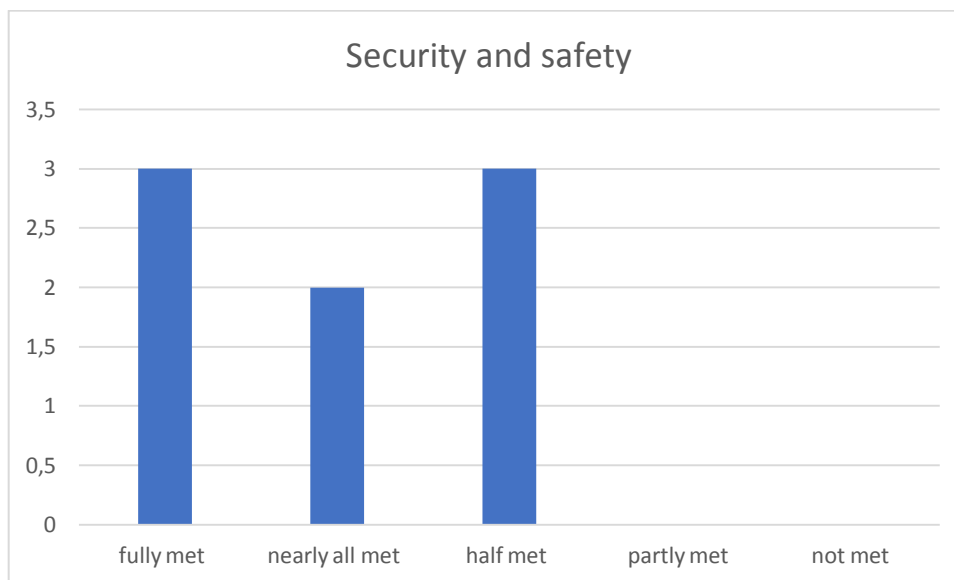
It is necessary to specify the fencing standards and the construction technique to the details and ensure that the upgrade of existing and construction of new shelters is done in accordance with the regulations.

We also strongly encourage that in the process of reviewing these standards, to ensure that newly constructed shelters are not more than 5 km away from populated places, and to be built in such a location that links to public transport lines are provided.

Shelters would not have to be from the city's environment if it was adequately soundproof and visually hunted (e.g. enclosed in greenery).

3.2 Security and safety

Shelters should have adequate fencing to prevent escape by dogs, and provide free access for the employees to access the animals, as well to exit when needed. They must also have appropriate safety equipment such as fire extinguishers.



For example there are poorly maintained fences with gaps, insecure closing mechanisms, or loose fences that could be blown open or over by strong winds. In some shelters the cages/dog boxes are fully enclosed, but the fence around the entire shelter is not. Similarly, in some areas, fencing was not high enough or covered with mesh to stop dogs from jumping out, or not properly fixed at the bottom, and less than half had well designed double gates to allow easy entry for staff without dogs trying to get out of the same gate. Three shelters at the time of our visit did not possess any fire extinguishers.

Recommendations

Adequate fence is a priority for safe and secure access to animals by employees at the shelter, including veterinary personnel. The minimum standards for the fence specification should be defined and set.

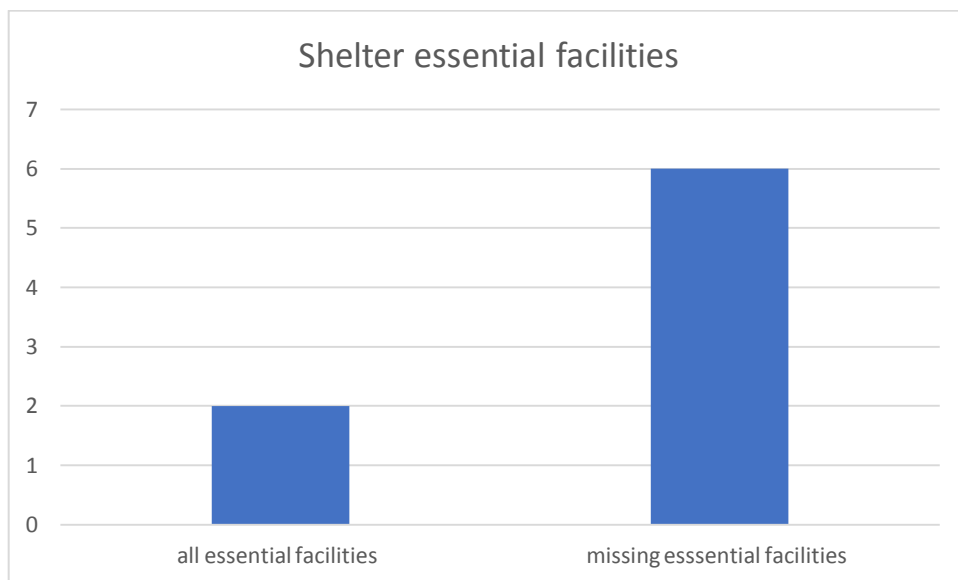
All inspections must ensure fire safety equipment is up to date and available.

Ongoing maintenance funds must be identified in budgets annually.

Volunteers and NGOs could assist if links with local businesses and communities were strengthened.

3.3 Essential facilities

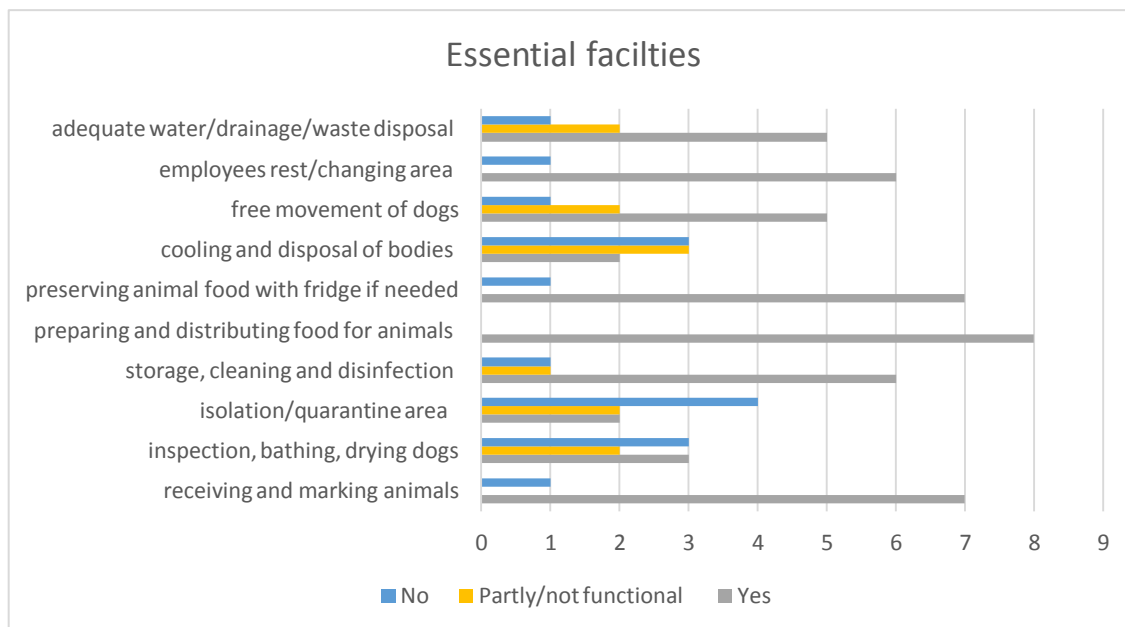
It is clear that many shelters do not have all functioning facilities deemed essential by article 5 of the regulations.



Only two shelters have all the necessary facilities, spaces and rooms, but even where facilities existed, they were not always functional. For example, many lack proper equipment and space for quality and necessary veterinary care, quarantine, individual kennels, and have poorly designed, maintained and installed dog washing facilities, and poor or only partial waste control. In most shelters the dogs are quarantined in areas shared with other dogs, and are not physically separated. Some shelters have no space to receive (log in) animals, and the lack of quarantine spaces leads to dogs being placed immediately with other dogs, which seriously endangers health and welfare of all dogs and aggressive or assertive dogs can attack newcomers². Both the welfare of dogs already in the shelter and the welfare of newly arrived dogs can be compromised by the spread of diseases wherever new dogs do not undergo an isolation period. It is of significant concern that so few shelters have any or adequate quarantine facilities, as this is likely to cause unnecessary spread of diseases and risks the health of both animals and staff.

Furthermore, even where adequate water supplies exist, basic supplies like soap and disinfectant were often missing. Disposal of dead dogs was mostly in open pits, buried in limestone or in city dumps - only two shelters have facilities for cold storage of dead bodies. This is very worrisome, because there is a risk of spreading diseases among animals and shelter employees.

² One of the most noteworthy examples was that in May 2017, in one shelter a dog was placed with a pack of other aggressive and hungry dogs and was killed by them, and then eaten, witnessed by volunteers on their later (the so-called cannibalism case).



Even where space for the free movement of dogs did exist, it was noted that in many cases it is not used, with dogs kept in cages/boxes for unnecessarily long periods. In shelters where dogs are kept in cages without an open exercise area employees admitted to only letting them out to run once a week or less. In some shelters, concerns about inadequate external fencing mean that dogs are never allowed out to exercise.

One shelter has no functional space for employees at all.

Recommendations

It is necessary to enforce the regulations and to urgently upgrade the missing rooms and premises in existing shelters with the supervision of competent authorities.

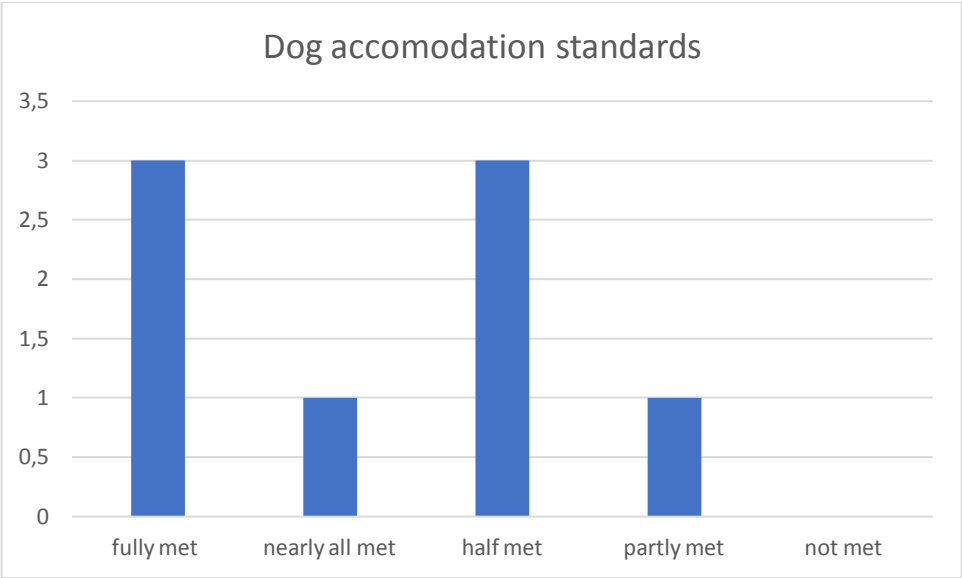
There is a need for better application of the law and to provide expert support for municipalities in designing, building and maintaining all shelter facilities. It may be useful for example to provide and cost standard designs for easily built, cheap and well designed quarantine blocks, rather than each area duplicating effort in this regard.

Storing food in refrigerators when not using only granules must be imperative, not discretionary.

3.4 Structural accommodation

Article 6 in the law specifies detailed requirements for the living areas for dogs within shelters, stating that they must be physically separated from social buildings, constructed so that there is

enough room for dogs to be able to walk, get up and sit in a way that is in line with their physiological needs, and safely designed. The surfaces of these rooms should be without sharp edges and angles that can hurt animals. All surfaces that come into contact with animals should be able to be regularly cleaned, washed and disinfected. Accommodation premises should be built in a way that allows animals to be kept clean and dry, providing protection against extreme temperatures and adverse weather conditions and preventing other animals from entering the shelter.



Only 3 shelters fully met these standards, which is a serious shortcoming in terms of animal welfare. At least three shelters provided inadequate shelter or insulation from extreme temperatures, wind and weather, with dogs in such shelters subjected to adverse weather conditions for a large part of the year. In some shelters, dogs were chained inside boxes or to kennels, and completely denied free movement. During the visits we found that the hygiene situation in some shelters was at a very low level, with dog houses stained with faeces, and dogs eating excrement. Furthermore, only one shelter has a specific separate accommodation area for puppies, with puppies in all other shelters left to roam free or mix with larger dogs with a risk of attacks, aggression and spread of disease. In one shelter where the dogs are housed individually, the puppies are housed with their mother. There are frequent reports of puppies going missing or becoming ill after arrival in shelters.

Recommendations

Due to the current situation, urgent and increased monitoring and inspections is necessary to ensure that hygiene standards are fully respected.

Action must **be taken and enforced** to solve the shortcomings in terms of the housing, cages, and boxes in which the dogs are held.

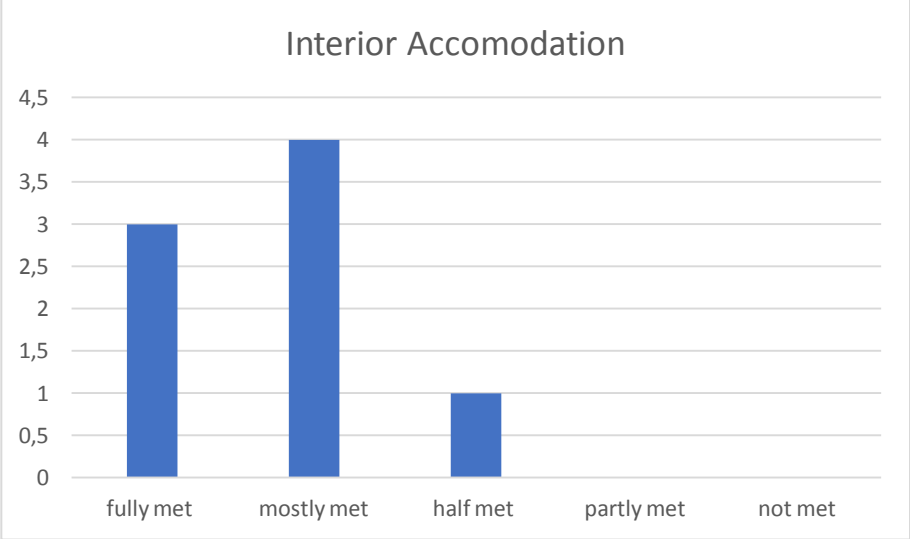
The legal regulations must be amended to specify that open parts of shelters must be protected during adverse conditions (from the sun in summer and rain and snow in winter).

We recommend a MINIMUM of 4 inspections per shelter per year be mandated in the revised law, with detailed action plans agreed and enforced at each inspection to ensure standards are met.

The regulations should be amended to include and specify the need for separate quarantine and accommodation facilities for puppies, and nursing bitches, designed to meet their specific needs.

3.5 Interior accommodation

The standards outlined in article 7 specify the need for adequate, safe, and easily disinfected flooring, proper drainage to avoid damp, adequate lighting and ventilation. Only 2 shelters fully meet these standards. Common problems included lack of proper drainage channels leaving damp and dirty flooring. Inadequate flooring and construction materials were also noted, making cleaning adequate disinfection problematic e.g. wooden boxes, gravel floors. Lack of consistent electric supply is a problem in some areas, and in certain shelters thunderstorms frequently cause power failure in the whole shelter. This is one of the consequences of the aforementioned problem of building shelters in remote and inaccessible locations.



Even if all technical conditions are met, in shelters where employees do not have proper employment contracts, regular wages, supervision, management, or appropriate equipment, hygiene standards are unlikely to be maintained. Cleanliness standards varied hugely between

shelters, but so did staffing numbers and skills and there is scope for better standardisation in this respect.

Recommendations

Better inspection monitoring and harmonization of standards between shelters is needed, addressing large differences in available municipal budgets to finance the work of shelters.

It is necessary to regulate the working status of employees in shelters where workers do not have employment contracts or do not receive salaries regularly.

Standard cleaning protocols and lists of mandatory cleaning equipment, procedures and quality control monitoring systems could be developed centrally and shared, and reported on at each inspection.

Centralised training for shelter staff on hygiene and disease prevention should be facilitated.

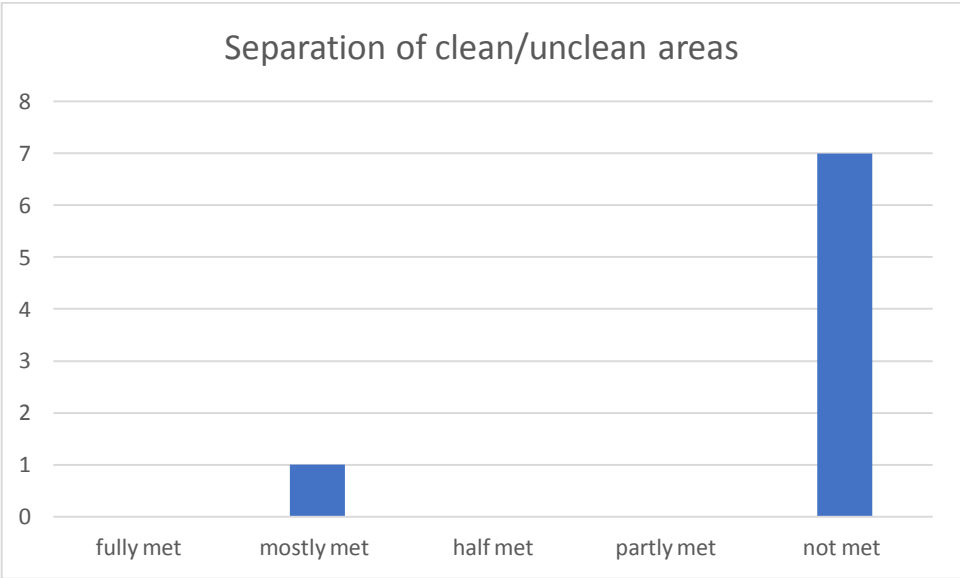
3.6 Clean and unclean areas

Articles 8 and 9 state that shelters should have two physically separated functional units in which animals are located: the unclean and clean part of the shelter. The unclean areas include reception, special accommodation facilities for dogs and cats, grooming/washing areas, room or space for temporary storage of corpses, disinfectant checkpoints for vehicles and areas for disinfecting equipment. In the unclean part, there should also be an area for aggressive and sick dogs and cats, especially those suspected of suffering from rabies. The clean part of the **shelter must also include** accommodation facilities for dogs and cats (**without disease**), insulators, areas for bathing dogs and cats, space for disinfection equipment, and space for walking dogs.

Thus the full range of specified facilities should exist in both clean and unclean areas of the shelter to avoid risk of spreading disease. However, no shelters fully met this requirement, one nearly met it, and seven did not have separate areas for clean and dirty tasks and functions. On the contrary, all these spaces are used equally for clean and unclean animals and tasks. A disinfection point for vehicles does not exist in any shelter. Areas for walking dogs are not precisely defined by this regulation, but given the vague delimit between clean and unclean parts in most shelters, exercise areas only in clean areas cannot be found. As previously stated most dogs in shelters rarely or almost never take a walk or are allowed to move freely outside their cages/boxes.

In practice this means a high risk disease transmission both between dogs and to workers. For example, sinks for bathing or washing animals are used for sick and healthy dogs, to wash hands, and also dispose of waste. Clean and unclean parts are mainly intertwined due to lack of space or

poor space planning and design, and disregard for the standards prescribed in the regulations, and a lack of enforcement of the regulations.



Recommendations

It is necessary to clarify these two articles in more detail regarding practical design suggestions for shelter managers, in order to restructure shelter spaces to meet the requirements.

It is clearly necessary to pay more attention to sanitary and hygienic conditions in all shelters, especially through the creation of disinfectant checkpoints. Vehicle entry should only be allowed to specified parking and not areas where dogs roam. Vehicles should also be regularly disinfected inside if they are used to transport dogs.

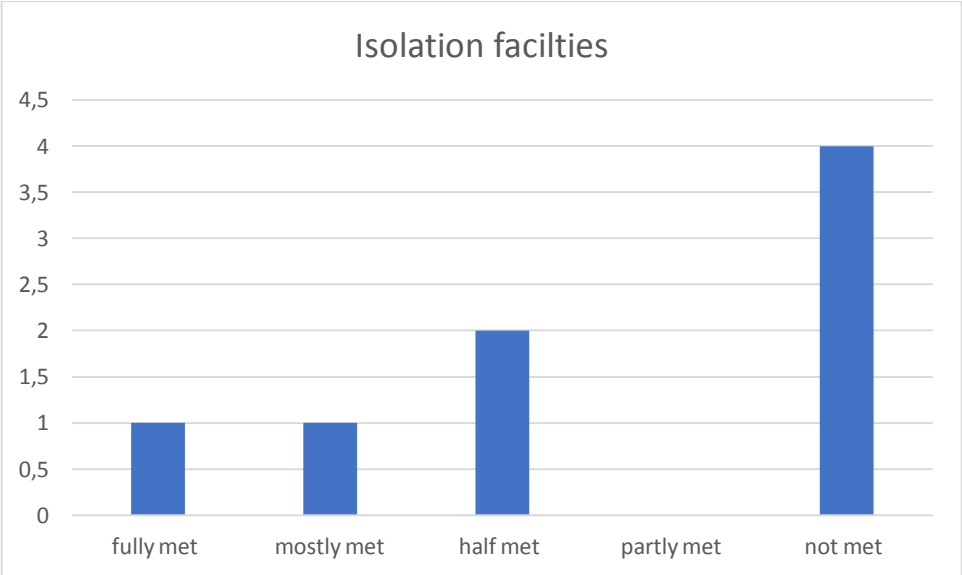
Centralised training for shelter staff on hygiene, risks and disease prevention should be facilitated, specifying and clarifying the rationale for clean/unclean space separation.

3.7 Isolation/quarantine areas

Article 10 of the regulations describes more specific conditions for the isolation area required by articles 5 and 9. Although this article mentions only “boarding facilities” specifically (not shelters), because no other article specifies conditions for isolation areas in shelters, we were guided by this article in the assessment of the isolation areas during the visits.

The isolation area should be a special building or unit in the shelter area, far enough away from other facilities where dogs and cats are placed not to spread disease, and with the same standards of accommodation.

It is clear that most shelters are unable to meet this requirement, as also noted above, which is of significant concern regarding the spread of diseases. Even in shelters where isolation facilities are provided, only one shelter has the correct proportion to the number of dogs overall – specified as 20% of the total number of accommodation places. Isolation areas are often in a poorer state of repair than the main facilities, and more exposed to weather conditions. They are often in the same area with other accommodation and facilities, with no proper separation barriers. Furthermore, they are used predominantly for newly arrived animals, and there are few places suitable for sick dogs, puppies, those recovering from surgery, or bitches just after birth (e.g. heated and enclosed spaces).



Recommendations

It is urgent and necessary that every shelter which does not have an isolation area that meets the standards develops one as soon as possible and practical, because this is one of the main conditions for protecting animal welfare and preventing the spread of disease.

Develop and share concrete examples of how isolation areas can be constructed to different budgets.

Future changes to the regulations should address the detail of this article, to make sure there is no ambiguity regarding the extent the regulations apply to public shelters as opposed to private boarding houses.

3.8 Bedding

Article 11 of the regulations states that bedding for dogs should be soft, have good absorbent and thermal insulating properties and not be harmful to the dog's system if bitten, chewed or scratched, and it can be of old paper, sand or rubber that can easily be disinfected.

Instead of a mat, it is possible to use weight bearing beds that are raised from the floor, made of natural materials (wood), protected from moisture and of sufficient size and with rounded edges to prevent injury. If there are more than two dogs in the boarding box, they should have special sections/bedding areas for each dog ³.

While many shelters provide some kind of wooden pallet for some dogs to sleep on, and some have their own kennels, they provide in general the bare minimum required to meet this standard. There is still room for improvement, with scope to provide softer and better insulated bedding materials, separate sleeping areas for dogs and more hygienic materials for sleeping platforms in most shelters. Many bedding areas are made of material that is hard to clean and not protected from damp, heat or cold. In the shelters in the north during the winter straw is used on pallets for insulation.

Recommendations

Shelters should be provided with clear suggestions and examples of good practice and have the opportunity to learn from each other, not necessarily to aim for standardization that cannot be fully achieved, but to better protect the welfare of animals being placed in the shelter.

Damp and unclean bedding areas will rapidly spread disease and must be improved.

3.9 Food and water containers

Article 12 stipulates that shelters are required to have stainless eating and drinking bowls for dogs that are easy to wash, clean and disinfect.

While all the shelters stated that they had food and water bowls on site, they were not always in use during our visits, and in some they were dirty. In shelters where multiple dogs share the same space communal bowls are used, which can cause fights and aggression. In previous and subsequent visits to certain shelters it was noted that food was placed on the floor where dogs

³ See the last recommendation in 3.7

relieve themselves, instead of in bowls, which is unacceptable from the aspect of hygiene and sanitary conditions.

This article does not adequately specify the animal feeding process, because the mere existence of the correct containers does not guarantee that dogs will be adequately fed and watered. When visiting one shelter we saw written information suggesting that bags of dry food intended for shelter dogs was taken out of the shelter with management consent. The veterinary inspectorate or vet in charge of the shelter should specify the minimum amount of food per kilo needed for all dogs, and listed in the rules of the shelter, although this is rarely monitored.

Recommendations

Water must be available to dogs throughout the day and not only during the feeding period.

Each dog must have a separate feeding dish.

Written procedures for adequate feeding of every dog must be in place and the feeding process must be clearly arranged by the administration.

If the dogs are housed in a group, it must be ensured that smaller dogs are not attacked over food by larger and more dominant dogs, which we witnessed in individual shelters before these visits. The fight for food in these situations can lead to injury and slaughter, especially of smaller dogs. Separate feeding areas, times or processes for different sized dogs may be needed.

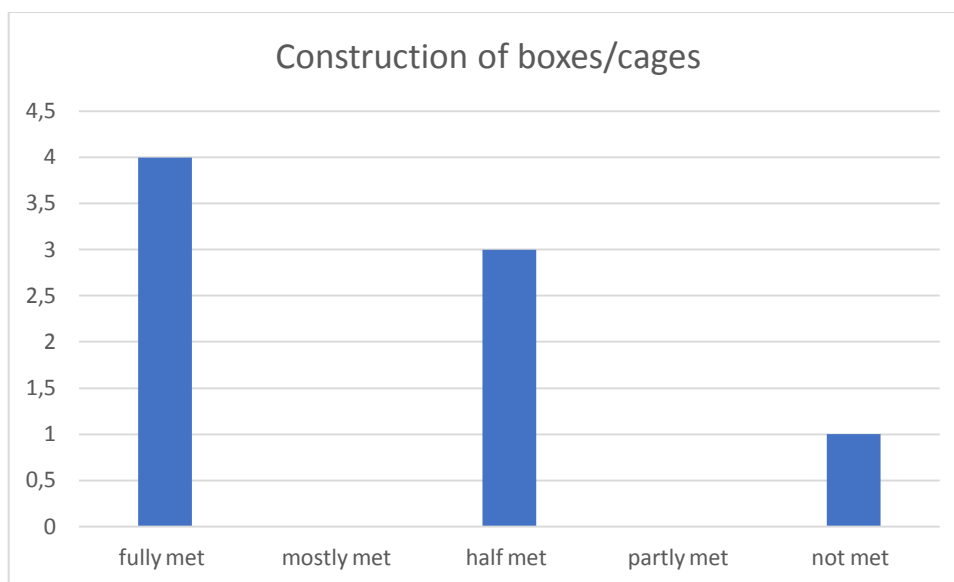
It is essential that control of food consumption and quality is maintained. Donations to food shelters must be under strict control.

The article should be amended to specify minimum standards for feeding processes, amounts and nutritional requirements. The article should be written from the animal welfare perspective, and not only relate to the fulfilment of technical conditions.

3.10 Construction of boxes and cages

Article 13 specifies that dog boxes and cages should be separated by partitions of at least 1.2m, fully closed, and if there is a risk of a dog jumping out they should be covered with a wire mesh. The end wall of a dog box should be made with full height wire mesh of at least 0.6 m. They should be made of non-corrosive material, with gaps between bars or mesh not exceeding 50 mm.

Four shelters meet this standard, one third meets half and one shelter does not fulfil the standard at all. Most of the problems are related to poor initial planning and construction of facilities that was not in accordance with the regulations, and it is now very difficult to modify such construction to meet the standards.



Recommendations

This is one of the articles with most variations between shelters. The likelihood is that most shelters are unaware of how the boxes/cages can and should actually be constructed.

The amendment of this article should be considered, as it is not focused on animal welfare, and its full application would lead to the restructuring of most existing shelters, which is not realistic. Furthermore, dogs should not always be placed individually because this alone will not guarantee their well-being, especially in the current situations where dogs are almost never allowed out of cages/boxes.

Practical design and construction suggestions could be developed and shared to assist in future construction projects.

3.11 Size of accommodation

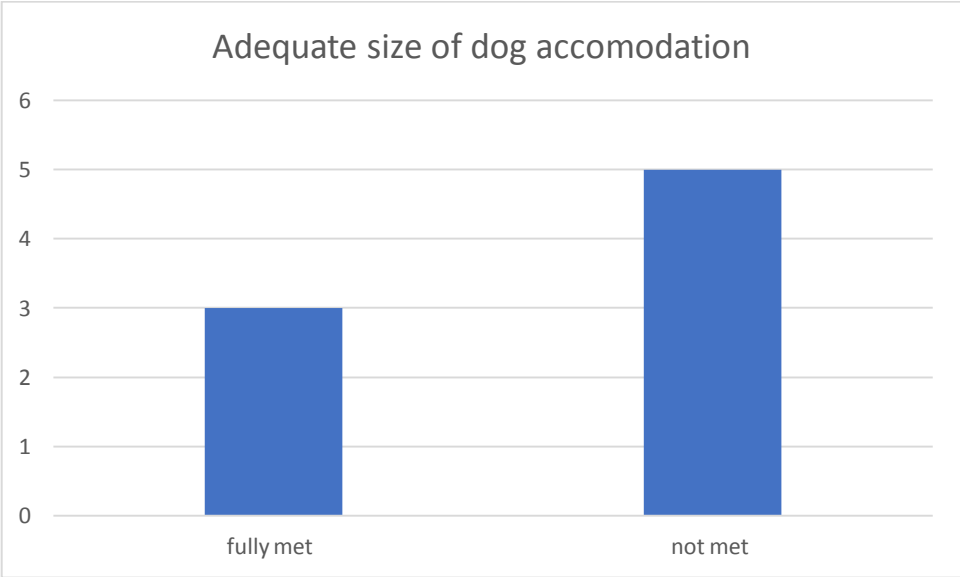
Article 14 of the regulations and the associated annexe specifies in detail the size requirements for dog accommodation inside and outside. The dimensions differ for individual and group kennelling. It also specifies special dimensions for unclean parts of the shelter, although as previously noted no shelters divide their space in this way.

The majority of shelters do not provide adequate space for the number of dogs they house, but this is not related to the total number of dogs, with the shelter with most dogs fulfilling the standard, and the shelter with the least dogs this not meeting it due to bad design.

This is clearly a significant problem for general animal welfare, hygiene, and the spread of disease, as well as fuelling aggressive behaviour. Furthermore, many dogs stay in shelters for long periods, of up to 7-8 years. Although a small number of municipalities in the central and north part of the country are conducting trap-sterilise-release programmes, municipalities in the south have a policy of not killing dogs but also not releasing them back onto the street (even though they are sterilised and vaccinated), because they fear it will create problems for tourism. It is interesting to note that many tourists readily recognise the problem of abandoned animals in Montenegro and react negatively to it, reaching out frequently to animal protection organizations in order to help the animals they encounter.

Municipalities implementing trap-sterilise-release programmes also report problems with citizens who disturb dogs on the street, even though they are sterilized and vaccinated.

The number of dogs in foster care is generally very low, and no municipality has a policy to promote fostering of dogs in smaller homes, mainly leaving this activity to local volunteers and non-governmental organisations.



Recommendations

It is necessary to find more imaginative solutions for the use of space, in order to avoid restricting dog socialisation, for example using stand alone kennels in larger enclosed areas rather than small fenced kennels, even if this involves changes in regulations.

Fostering, adoption and re-homing must become a priority, with clear action plans and lines of responsibility. Local communities, NGOs, civil society groups, and schools can all help, and shelters should seek open and transparent engagement to assist with adoptions.

All shelters should work on the socialization of dogs in preparation for foster care or adoption because many shelter dogs have never lived in a community with people. While this should not constitute an obstacle to their domestication, more detailed information about individual dogs for future owners would be useful and help to prevent re-abandonment. For shelters to be able to develop such policies, employees must be trained and have access to adequate support and equipment.

All municipalities should ensure plans are enacted to reduce the street dog population rather than just house it – building bigger or more shelters will not solve the problem. All municipalities should support such activities with initiative and oversight, because reducing the abandoned animal population requires implementation of **all** of the following: socialisation, catch-sterilise-release programmes, sterilization, responsible ownership and law enforcement.

For the sake of successful implementation of catch-sterilise-release programmes, it is necessary for local governments work alongside citizens to increase their willingness to accept such programmes by highlighting and promoting the advantages. For this to happen, individual local governments firstly have to accept the need for such programmes (especially coastal cities).

3.12 Training for shelter staff

Article 15 lists the content of essential training programmes for shelter staff, including basic animal welfare, behaviour, physiology, protection, compatibility and grouping, and transport and handling. It is clearly of significant concern that in most shelters (6 of 8) employees have not been given the appropriate training. As previously mentioned, in a number of shelters employees do not even have employment contracts, and are not paid regularly.

Many shelters also suffer staff shortages, with managers then needing to replace field workers rather than spend time on management and coordination of core tasks. Understaffing and poor working conditions also leads to demotivation and disinterest from workers. The unsurprising result is that animal welfare is low in many areas. Welfare standards were best in shelters that employed veterinary technicians or better trained/supported staff.

In practice these standards are rarely applied, with few shelters employing people with the required training, except for veterinarians. As in any workplace, not all workers can take on all roles without a decline in quality, expertise and specialised skills. A mix of skills is needed.



Recommendations

Amend the article to include or mandate a core list of tasks and competencies for jobs in shelters, with appropriate requirements regarding the qualifications and skills required for recruitment.

Staff must be recruited and educated according to the duties and needs of work in the shelter and **MUST** be able to demonstrate a caring attitude towards animals and animal welfare.

It is desirable to include in the recruitment process a test and training to take place immediately after employment commences.

Through changes of the law, it is necessary to define that any shelter must employ at least one qualified veterinary technician.

An ongoing training programme for staff in shelters must be organized as soon as possible, prioritizing those who have had not training to date. The veterinary administration and NGOs can support the development of training programmes, for example via joint delivery and joint funding bids.

Shared training between shelters or regions should be considered, as well as opportunities for regular networking opportunities between shelters to share knowledge and good practice. This will be especially useful for shelters currently at a lower level.

It is necessary to amend the regulation to specify minimum staffing levels and number of employees per dog, which should be mandatory and checked during inspections.

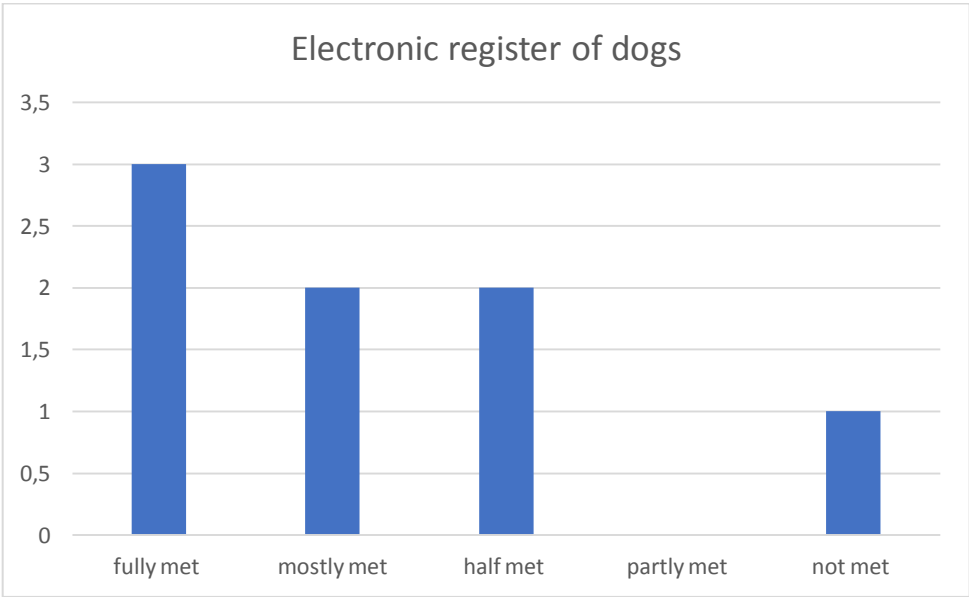
Every municipality must regularise employment contracts and ensure that the health and safety of staff working in shelters is adequately addressed, including regular health checks and the provision of essential equipment.

3.13 Record keeping

Article 16 of the regulation states that a central electronic register of all shelters meeting statutory requirements must be maintained. It also specifies that every shelter is obliged to keep a public record of all dogs found, in their care or euthanised. The records are required to be kept in electronic form, although only 3 shelters comply with this. The remaining shelters keep records in paper form in the shelter itself, and later the data is transferred to an electronic version, usually in the office of the Public utility company that manages the shelter. Only one shelter does not keep the necessary data.

However, it should also be noted that the quality and thoroughness of record keeping was not analysed. Simply keeping a register is not adequate if it not audited regularly, and if the data is not used for future planning.

Electronic registers, apart from being required by law, can promote transparency and support better planning, management, monitoring and evaluation. The biggest barriers to electronic record keeping are a lack of motivation, staff skills, equipment and suitable databases.



Recommendations

More transparency is needed in the work of all shelters, with a special focus on data about the flow of dogs through the shelter. It is also very important to establish a system of subsequent monitoring dogs who are fostered dogs in order to ensure their wellbeing after leaving the shelter, ideally through cooperation with volunteers and animal protection organizations.

Regular auditing of records should be undertaken.

A standard log database format should be centrally developed and shared, to be used by all shelters in the same format. This could be followed by training to use the database.

Municipalities, i.e. public utilities, must provide adequate hardware and software to shelters under their management.

4. Conclusions and final recommendations

What is most glaringly obvious from this study is the ongoing failure to meet the legally required standards even in shelters which have been established for many years. In particular stronger enforcement of the law and more frequent veterinary inspections is necessary and urgent in shelters which meet hardly any standards at all. All inspection reports should be publicly available, with all remedial action required clearly listed, and sanctions imposed for non-compliance. Veterinary supervision is also required in all shelters, with options for shared problem solving in relation to common health problems found in shelters.

A shelter alone will never solve the problem of stray and abandoned dogs. It is necessary that every local municipality, especially those with shelters, develop a detailed programme for controlling the dog population in the area. Local governments that have not yet established shelters should develop such a programme as the cornerstone of further activity, because they can see from existing examples that building a physical shelter before addressing the whole range of activities needed to solve the problem of stray is more likely to complicate the situation rather than simplify it.

Local self-governments that have not yet built municipal shelters should consider constructing or contracting smaller group shelters, where dogs from the street can receive the necessary health care, be sterilized and tagged and fostered for a short time or returned to their initial location. Of course, care must be taken to ensure the welfare of dogs in such shelters is not compromised at any time. Smaller municipalities and municipalities with less funding should consider the possibility of building or contracting joint shelters.

A major problem is that vets are not present on a daily basis in most shelters, and dogs do not have access to timely medical care. An illustrative example is one shelter that had a contract with a veterinary ambulance over 80 km away, so that dogs only had access to health care 4 times a month. Another recent example is one shelter that had no veterinary care for over a year. Although this situation violates legal norms (Clause 27, paragraph 4 of Animal Welfare Law), no penalties were imposed. It is essential that the law be enforced.

Furthermore, shelters with veterinary services are also able to routinely vaccinate and sterilise dogs which is essential for long term health and population control and should be mandatory in all shelters. Only five shelters currently sterilise dogs routinely.

Shelter veterinary services must be transparent and ideally visibly displayed and accessible, with a sign and details on the ambulance door if one exists at the shelter.

Each shelter should have its own official vehicle (the type of pick-up), in order to ensure the safety of dogs and staff during transport, and to meet hygiene requirements.

It is necessary to keep transparent records and inventories of all goods and supplies, including dog food. The aforementioned example of taking food intended for dogs in the shelter outside is unacceptable, and therefore supervision must go in both directions (shelter ↔ the competent authority of local self-government). The presence of volunteers in the shelter in such situations is of great importance in enhancing transparency.

We recommend that:

The competent state-level institutions and Animal Welfare Council should take careful note of all the findings and recommendations and include them in the current review of the animal welfare law and development of national animal welfare and dog/cat population control strategies. They should also instigate more regular shelter inspections alongside transparent reporting and clear plans of action to remedy problems, apply sanctions if needed and ensure that legal animal welfare standards are enforced in all shelters as a matter of urgency. A national microchip and registration database is essential to assist in more transparent record keeping, planning, monitoring and evaluation and should be enacted as soon as possible. In order to ensure adequate staffing levels (number of staff per dog and essential roles) and skills in all shelters, we believe that minimum standards and competencies must be set at state level and included in revised standards for shelters. Finally, the state level institutions should continue to develop and support civil-sector projects in the field of animal welfare, education and responsible ownership.

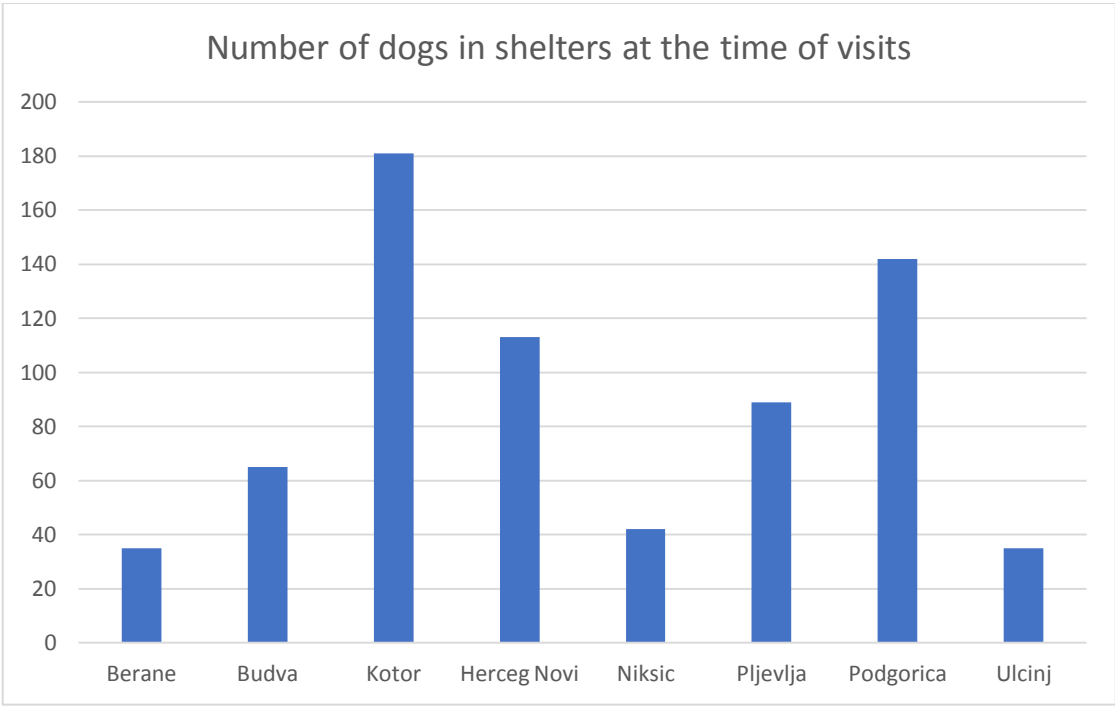
Local self-government units/ municipalities should set up a multi-disciplinary local animal welfare council to meet at least twice a year to oversee the improvements/construction of the shelters or foster homes, implement relevant national strategies and develop local strategies for better control of abandoned animals, with clear lines of accountability. It must be recognised that adequate ongoing financing of shelters, including veterinary care and shelter management is essential to enable safe functioning and good levels of animal welfare. They should also strengthen links with local organizations and communities to promote the benefits of mass sterilization and responsible ownership, to reduce the number of dog sin shelters overall.

The communal police should work more proactively with municipal shelter managers and Mayors to define their responsibilities strengthen cooperation and support, for example with reference to pet ownership, preventing cruelty and abandonment, enforcing new standards regarding microchipping and identification of dogs, and suitable punishment of the owners who do not comply with the law.

Shelter management should ensure that staff are given adequate training, supervision, support and equipment to undertake their jobs competently and safely. They should also develop stronger links with NGOs and community groups to improve and promote dog adoption and community involvement and volunteering. Transparency, public accountability and stronger partnerships can be developed by encouraging public access, for example by providing spaces for families to visit the shelters and interact with dogs looking for homes and support their socialisation.

Non-governmental organizations and civil society should work closely with shelters to promote and facilitate adoption through various events, for example displaying dogs from the shelters at events, providing accessible information about the dogs in the shelters, their nature, age, and characteristics. Only three shelters have good ongoing co-operation and relationships with local animal welfare NGOs. NGOs can also work alone or in partnership to bid for projects, and raise funds and donations for individual shelter improvements, parasite prevention medicines, dog kennels and beds and other animal welfare projects. Sharing ideas and good practice will enhance the effectiveness of such efforts and avoid duplication of effort.

Appendix 1 – Number of dogs in shelters



Appendix 2 – Checklist tool

CHECK LIST OF COMPATIBILITIES OF THE PUBLIC SHELTERS IN MONTENEGRO WITH REGULATIONS ON THE CONDITIONS IN THE PENSIONS AND SHELTERS FOR ABANDONED ANIMALS

SHELTER:

ADDRESS:

SHELTER MANAGER:

PERSONS PRESENT:

Date:

Stamp

1. Shelters should be far from the populated place. If the shelters are built in a populated place, they should be sound-proofed and visually insulated from the surrounding area, with an enclosed fence to prevent uncontrolled access to the animals and the people, and connected with the main roads. (Article 2)

Comment:

2. Shelters should be equipped with a closing device which animals cannot open.

Comment:

All the security methods used in the shelter should be such as to provide free access for the employees to access the animals, as well to exit when needed.

Comment:

All shelters should have the appropriate fire equipment. (Article 3)

Comment:

3. In the shelter there should be rooms and spaces for:

- 1) reception (marking-registering) of animals;
- 2) examination, cleaning, bathing and drying of animals;
- 3) isolation of animals with an appropriate number of cage boxes, which should be locked;
- 4) storage (warehouse) space;
- 5) storage, cleaning and disinfection, which should be locked;
- 6) preparing and distributing food for animals, and washing dishes;
- 7) food preservation for animals with fridge if needed;
- 8) cooling and disposal of bodies, if containers are not used;
- 9) free movement of animals;
- 10) employees;
- 11) sanitary unit. (Article 5)

Comment:

4. Accommodation spaces where dogs and cats are kept, pensions and shelters, should be physically separated from the other objects and premises and constructed so that there is enough room for the animals to be able to walk, get up and sit in a way that is in line with the physiological needs of the animal in relation to her race, gender, and size.

Comment:

The areas of accommodation space should be without the edges and corners which can injure the animals.

Comment:

Accommodation spaces are maintained so that all areas that come into contact with animals are regularly cleaned, washed and disinfected.

Comment:

Accommodation spaces should be built in a way that enables maintenance of dogs and cats clean and dry, providing protection from extreme temperatures and adverse weather conditions and prevents other animals from entering the board or shelter. (Article 6)

Comment:

5. The floors in the rooms in the shelter should be made of a leak-proof material; which can easily be washed, cleaned and disinfected and has a drainage system and a drop to the drainage channel.

Comment:

The covering floor area should be resistant to water, urine, faeces and disinfectants, to be easily and quickly dryable, and comfortable for moving and lying of dogs and cats.

The floor should be made in a way to protect the extremities of dogs and cats from injuries.

Comment:

Illumination in the shelter should be of a duration and intensity similar to the external light.

If necessary, man-made illumination should also be provided to allow the animals to be examined and the shelter area to be cleaned.

Comment:

Appropriate natural or artificial ventilation should be provided in the shelter, in order to avoid the appearance of damp and unpleasant odours.

The ventilation system in the shelter should be connected to an alarm system that warns of a failure in the ventilation system. (Article 7)

Comment:

6. In addition to the rooms referred to in Article 5 of this regulation, there should be two physically separated functional units in which animals are located:

- 1) the unclean part of the shelter; and
- 2) the clean part of the shelter.

Accommodation facilities for dogs and cats in shelter should have boxes and cages for their accommodation. (Article 8)

Comment:

7. The unclean part of the shelter consists of:

- 1) triage/reception rooms;
- 2) accommodation facilities for dogs and cats;
- 3) rooms or areas for bathing dogs and cats;
- 4) rooms or areas for temporary storage of bodies;
- 5) disinfectant checkpoint for vehicles;
- 6) Area for disinfecting resources and equipment.

Comment:

Accommodation facilities referred to in paragraph 1 item 2 of this Article should have a section for aggressive and sick dogs and cats, especially those suspected to have rabies.

Comment:

The clean part of the shelter consists of:

- 1) accommodation facilities for dogs and cats;
- 2) isolation area;
- 3) a room or a bathing area for dogs and cats;

4) room or space for disinfecting equipment;

5) space for walking dogs (Article 9)

Comment:

8. The isolation area should be a special building unit in the shelter area, far enough away from other facilities in the pension, where dogs and cats that got sick in the pension are accommodated and should be located down the (in extension of) accommodation facilities for dogs and cats.

Comment:

Boxes in the dog and cat isolator should be of the same dimensions as boxes for healthy animals and should have open area and spaces suitable for the physical activity of the animals during the recovery phase.

Comment:

The accommodation capacity of the isolation area should be at least 20% of the total number of accommodation places in the boarding house, separately for dogs, and separately for cats.

Comment:

In the pension, the temperature in the room where the animals are kept should be between 15 and 27°C, and in the room where the sick and injured animals (isolator) or the puppies and kittens are kept should be between 22 and 24°C. (Article 10)

Comment:

9. The shelter or the pension should have a sufficient amount of mat to be regularly changed and it must not be harmful to cats.

Comment:

Mat for dogs should be soft, have good absorbent and thermal insulating properties and not be harmful to the dog's system if it comes into the interior of the body by biting and chewing, and it can be of old paper, sand or rubber that can easily be disinfected.

Comment:

Instead of the mat, it is possible to use bedding that is raised from the floor, made of natural materials (wood), protected from damp and of sufficient size and rounded edges so that the dog could not be injured.

Comment:

If there are more than two dogs in the pension box, each dog should have its own bedding. (Article 11)

Comment:

10. Shelters should have water and food bowls made from stainless material that is easy to wash, clean and disinfect.

Comment:

Containers for the physiological needs of cats should be filled with commercial material for these purposes or sand. (Article 12)

Comment:

11. Boxes and cages for dogs should be separated by full partitions at least 1.2m tall, fully closed, and if there is a risk of dogs jumping over the top, they should be covered with a wire mesh or bars from the bottom.

Comment:

The wall of the dog boxes should end with lattice or mesh with a height of at least 0.6 m, which continues to the full partition of the box. Dog box walls should be made of non-corrosive and non-porous materials.

Comment:

Boxes in the pension should be separated by full partitions or partitions of a galvanized wire mesh, i.e. metal bars between which the gap should not be more than 50 mm. (Article 13)

Comment:

12. The living space of the dog in the shelter consists of:

Closed area, adequately ventilated with appropriate temperature, with cover up to 1/3 of the surface, whose size is at least 1.2m x 1.8 m, and an open part of a size of at least 1.2m x 2.4m, and in that is possible to reside one animal;

A separate fenced area within the shelter circuit, suitable for the safety of the animal and in which dogs can move freely according to their needs.

Comment:

If there is more than one dog in one area, each dog needs to have a space of at least 1.5 m² in the closed area of and at least 2 m² in the open area.

Comment:

In the unclean part of the shelter boxes must not have open area and should have a 1.2 m full partition in the front of the box and a 1.5 m tall full partition on the side of the box. (Article 14)

Comment:

13. Training for animal care is done at the seminars, according to the program that contains:

- 1) the basics of animal welfare in the pension or shelter;
- 2) the basics of animal physiology, food and water needs, animal behaviour and stress;
- 3) the basics relating to the conditions for the protection of the welfare of the animals in terms of space, premises and equipment, which must be fulfilled by the pension or the shelter;
- 4) the basics of animal behaviour, animal acceptance, animal compatibility, grouping and classification of animals, animal needs in terms of physical activity;
- 5) the basics of the way and means for collecting abandoned and lost animals;
- 6) the basics of means of transport and handling of animals during transport;
- 7) the basics of the conditions regarding the means of transport. (Article 15)

Comment:

14. The record is kept in electronic form and contains information about:

- 1) animals found by type (gender, race, colour, age, visible physical characteristics, animal picture), time and date of animal reception;

- 2) necessary health and veterinary treatment (curing, vaccination, etc.);
- 3) the number of registered and recorded animals and the number of vaccination certificates against the rabies for dogs and cats;
- 4) collar, leash or other objects with which the animal was found;
- 5) housing, referral to other shelter, etc.; and
- 6) killing. (Article 17)

Comment:

NOTES: