



NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF THE STRAY DOG POPULATION

*A humane, effective and sustainable approach
for the control of the stray dog population in
the Republic of Kosovo*

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Animal Rights Foundation Kosovo

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ACRONYMS

AI	<i>Administrative Instruction</i>
AIS	<i>Agency of Information Society</i>
ARF	<i>Animal Rights Foundation</i>
CNP	<i>Comprehensive National Program</i>
CNVR	<i>Catch, Neuter, Vaccinate, Release</i>
CSO	<i>Civil Society Organizations</i>
EU	<i>European Union</i>
FVA	<i>Food and Veterinary Agency</i>
IRKS	<i>Institutions of the Republic of Kosovo</i>
KAPS	<i>Kosovo Academy for Public Safety</i>
LT	<i>Long term</i>
MAFRD	<i>Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development</i>
MESTI	<i>Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation</i>
MH	<i>Ministry of Health</i>
MIA	<i>Ministry of Internal Affairs</i>
MIIG	<i>Municipal Inter-Institutional Groups</i>
MLGA	<i>Ministry of Local Governance Administration</i>
MT	<i>Mid term</i>
PMO	<i>Prime Minister Office</i>
SDPMM	<i>Stray Dog Population Management Measures</i>
SHT	<i>Short term</i>
TCC	<i>Temporary Care Centers</i>

ANIMAL RIGHTS FOUNDATION

Animal Rights Foundation (*original name: Fondacioni për të Drejtat e Kafshëve*) was established in April 2018 and focuses on the legal and policy aspects of improving animal welfare in Kosovo and improving human-animal relations. The organization is committed to all animals, whether they are stray, domestic, farm, experimental, sport or wildlife.

The organization focuses on the legal commitment by exposing the proper implementation of current legislation and providing concrete suggestions for its improvement in order to lay firm foundations for more animal-friendly, ethical and biocentric regulations and laws and their consistent enforcement.

Since 2018, ARF has made more than three hundred (300) monitoring visits at different entities keeping and treating stray animals. Most of these monitoring visits have been conducted at the veterinary subjects that were contracted by the FVA for the state CNVR program. Due to the organization's monitoring activity, every unprofessional and abusive work of unqualified veterinarians has been exposed and reported to the responsible institutions, including the judicial bodies in Kosovo.

Besides the monitoring area, ARF also works in the field of direct legal protection of animals (law implementation). More specifically, the organization files criminal complaints against perpetrators/animal abusers in Kosovo. ARF has a hired lawyer who provides legal services such as the preparation of official requests, lawsuits, complaints, contracts, extraordinary legal remedies, criminal reports, etc. Up to now, ARF has filed dozens of criminal complaints against cruel acts such as dog fighting practices.

Since its establishment, ARF has been working on educating and building capacities of institutions, NGOs, individuals, etc., on the rightful implementation of laws and policies and on adopting animal friendly projects and measures. The organization has proposed humane projects and measures, to create strategic concepts on the humane and sustainable management of stray animals.

Apart from institutional, monitoring, and legal work, ARF has a big presence in the media (TV, radio, and social media). Kosovo's media reach out to ARF for every topic related to animals or animal welfare and rights.

A big achievement of ARF is the amendment of the regulation for the companion animal registration. The regulation was signed by the Minister of the MAFRD on March 1, 2021 and entered into force on March 10, 2021.

Apart from the identification and registration regulation, together with the Food and Veterinary Agency, the organization worked on changing another administrative instruction which regulates the financial compensations for veterinary services for the registration of companion animals.

In addition, ARF in cooperation with the FVA, has delivered to the MAFRD for revision and approval within this year, a new administrative instruction that regulates the breeding of companion animals.

The above regulations represent the most important pillars in managing the stray dog population. The rightful implementation of these bylaws, along with other proposed measures in this strategy, will lead to a humane and sustainable reduction of the number of stray dogs in Kosovo.

The main donors of ARF include: Stumme Brueder Foundation, PETA Germany (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals), StrayCoco Foundation, LAV (Lega Anti-Vivisezione) and ATB (ATB – Associazione Trentino con i Balcani), Benito Mares – founder & director of “South Kosovo Dog and Cat shelter (a US citizen who helps people and animals, since after the last war in Kosovo).

INTRODUCTION

1. THE IMPORTANCE OF A NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF THE STRAY DOG POPULATION

This strategy has been drafted for the governmental bodies and intergovernmental organizations which are involved in the management of the stray dog population, by focusing on the sustainable and humane reduction of the number of stray dogs and the protection of the welfare of stray dogs in the Republic of Kosovo.

This strategy also aims to guide private entities, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other entities that are interested parties, as stakeholders in the management of the stray dog population through humane and effective measures.

This strategy serves to support the implementation of state and non-state measures and projects for a **sustainable, humane, and effective management of the stray dog population in Kosovo**, which is based on the knowledge and experience of the most developed countries and the experience and findings of ARF from the field work and the work with Kosovo institutions.

During the monitoring work of ARF, it was discovered that the state programs for reducing the number of dogs on the streets with the CNVR¹ method have never brought the desired outcomes because of improper management and lack of inter-institutional coordination for the measures taken so far, meaning that the number of stray dogs hasn't managed to be reduced effectively and sustainably and often, not even humanely.

This strategy will intend to explain the current state of the stray dog situation as well as to propose recommendations within a **Comprehensive National Plan (CNP)**, which is implemented through the **Stray Dog Population Management Measures (SDPMM)** that are essential to be implemented, so that the number of stray dogs is significantly reduced in the next five (5) years.

.....
1 Catch, Neuter, Vaccinate, Release

It is essential that state bodies seriously consider and address the phenomenon of continuous growth of the number of stray dogs and dedicate sufficient funds for the significant improvement of the situation, by 2026.

From many practices of developed EU countries^{2,3}, the legal and executive responsibility for the proper management of the stray dog population rests with the local and central government, as provided by the legislation in force in Kosovo as well. Non-governmental and non-profit animal welfare entities should not be encouraged or attempt to assume the primary responsibility for managing the stray dog population, except through a contractual agreement, within the mandate of a relevant institution, with appropriate funds and resources to carry out effective work in the management of projects that affect the increase of welfare through legal and humane treatment of stray dogs.

However, animal welfare NGOs play an important role in supporting any institutional measure and ensuring that the competent authorities responsibly apply the best legal practices for managing the stray dog population in the country.

This strategy provides a clear picture of the timeline, institutional, administrative and technical responsibilities, resources and personnel needed, with a realistic plan to establish a system in line with the highest international and EU standards in terms of the treatment of companion animals and stray dogs in Kosovo.

The lack of data in this field, in Kosovo is more than obvious, which complicates the work of this nature, because so far no relevant state body has conducted an assessment study about stray dogs in the country, more specifically counting the number of stray dogs, eventual stray animal diseases, and human-animal relationships to avoid potential incidents. On the other hand, in Kosovo, **the origin of the problem of the large number of stray dogs is clearly known** (explained in Chapter II, point 5) and based on the source of the problem, the most humane, effective, and sustainable solutions can be offered to reduce the number of stray dogs in Kosovo.

Dog populations can vary considerably between and within different countries, based on different situations of human and institutional behaviors towards animals and companion animal management projects. This shows that it cannot be claimed to intervene with single or identical measures for each country, but it is nevertheless worth noting that some essential measures for a comprehensive program should always be respected when it comes to sustainable management of the stray dog population.

This strategy will also clarify the legal responsibilities of the relevant institutions and the financial cost that is implicated in the measures that the central and local level must undertake in order to prevent and reduce the proliferation of stray dogs in the country.

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2 <https://dutchreview.com/culture/how-did-the-netherlands-manage-to-become-the-first-country-to-have-no-stray-dogs/>
3 <http://www.stray-afp.org/nl/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/WSPA-RSPCA-International-stray-control-practices-in-Europe-2006-2007.pdf>

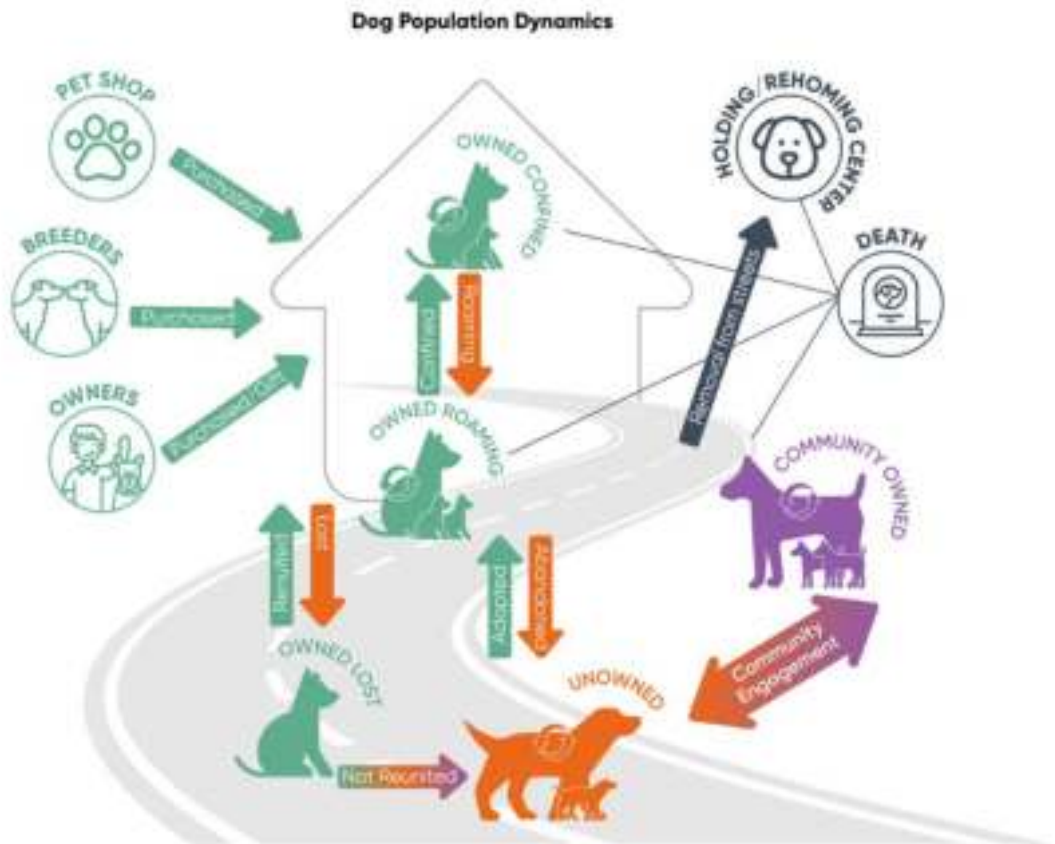
2. DOGS IN COMMUNITY

For more than 10,000 years, dogs have coexisted with humans, offering many benefits to them. Despite the benefits, the lack of control dogs as companion animals, can cause concerns in the community. These concerns include the increase in the number of stray dogs, which endangers public health and safety, and the well-being of street animals themselves.

2.1 DYNAMICS OF DOGS IN THE COMMUNITY

Stray dog population dynamics is created by different sub-populations of dogs on the street, which interact/reproduce and form the entire stray dog population. This dynamic considers the processes of abandonment, births, deaths and reproduction, to understand how dogs enter and leave this population.

As can be seen in the picture below, stray dogs end up on the street from the houses where they have previously been kept. Dogs as companion animals (or known also as 'pets') are usually bought from pet stores or donated by a friend or family member. Normally, dogs as companion animals should be kept with full responsibility, by providing them with safe shelter, veterinary medical treatment, and daily activities to meet their physiological and psychological needs.



Picture 1: Dog population dynamics

In Kosovo, it is more than evident that the poor conditions of keeping dogs as companion animals, cause those dogs to end up on the street.

Irresponsible keeping of dogs is explained below:

1. *Uncastrated/unsterilized dogs that are kept only in the open yard and never walk outside the house;*
2. *Uncastrated/unsterilized dogs that are free to roam in the yard and on the street, i.e., dogs guarding animals in the farms, or many dogs kept in villages;*
3. *Uncastrated/unsterilized dogs that are kept in chains throughout their lives;*
4. *Dogs that are kept in an organized manner to train them for fights and aggression;*
5. *Dogs kept for breeding - uncontrolled and unregistered;*

By keeping companion animals in the conditions mentioned above, the decision of many people to abandon their dogs becomes quite normal. On the other hand, many Kosovar families who keep dogs in their homes do not have enough financial income to keep a dog responsibly. As is well known, veterinary treatments involve a cost which is unaffordable for many dog owners.

Unfortunately, people in Kosovo have never received proper information about responsible keeping of dogs, and as a result, given the challenges that can arise from keeping dogs as companion animals, many citizens decide to abandon their dogs from their homes or keep them chained in poor conditions their entire lives.

State support for the castration and sterilization of dogs with owners would be a relief for citizens, and there would be more castrated/sterilized dogs - so that even if they potentially end up lost or abandoned on the street, they will not reproduce with other dogs.

It often happens that even dogs that have been used for dog fights, end up abandoned on the street. It may happen that dogs outside their territory will not show aggression, but the chances are high that the dogs that have been taught to be aggressive with other people and animals, might attack and cause problems for the community. Fighting the phenomenon of breeding dogs for dog fights **is a challenge in itself and also requires the attention of the judiciary and public institutions with great seriousness and priority so that the organized crime committed with dogs is stopped as soon as possible, as provided by Article 346 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Kosovo as well.**

2.2 BENEFITS AND PROBLEMS

DEFINITION	CONSEQUENCES
Specific animal diseases, zoonotic and parasitic diseases	DISSEMINATION OF DISEASES
Physical and mental trauma for those affected, economic costs for families and potential for disease spread	DOG BITES
Barking, noise, fear, perception of impurity, and trouble for people (e.g. need to use alternative routes)	NUISANCE
Pollution and waste, health implications for animals and humans	CONTAMINATION
Perception of unclean roads, fear of bites and greater possibility of waste disposal	INCREASED NUMBER OF DOGS ON THE STREET
Sick, injured dogs; Cruelty and mistreatment of dogs due to negative perception of them	POOR ANIMAL WELFARE
Increase in the number of animal carcasses on the street, increase in animal suffering, economic cost for car owners	TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS
Economic costs associated with managing the dog population, treating zoonotic diseases, removing corpses, protecting wildlife and livestock, and damaging tourism. Political costs associated with damage to reputation due to acceptance of inhumane treatment of dogs.	EFFECT ON THE GOVERNMENT

CONCERNS RELATED TO THE DOG POPULATION

CAUSE	DEFINITION
LACK OF INFORMATION	Lack of education about animal welfare, animal behavior, disease transmission, zoonosis and responsibilities such as vaccination and identification
GOVERNMENTAL ISSUES	Lack of government funding, lack of prioritization of the issue by the government and a lack of knowledge of dog population management concepts
LACK OF FINANCIAL INCOME	Humans do not have the financial means to care for animals
IRRESPONSIBLE DOG KEEPING	Abandonment, allowing dogs to roam freely, impulsive dog purchases, giving dogs as gifts, lack of identification and registration, lack of proper veterinary treatments
IRRESPONSIBLE DOG BREEDING	Lack of licensing and control of breeders, irresponsible breeders who do not respect animal welfare
LACK OF LEGISLATION	Lack of sufficient legal basis and lack of implementation of current legislation in force
UNCONTROLLEED BREEDING OF FREE ROAMING OWNED DOGS	Breeding dogs that lack proper supervision by owners
AVAILABILITY OF MULTIPLE RESOURCES	Excessive food surpluses, lack of proper waste management and people volunteering to feed stray animals
ILLEGAL SALE AND TRAFFICKING OF DOGS	Sale of dogs in pet shops, uncontrolled import of dogs, illegal transport of dogs
LACK OF COORDINATED VETERINARY INPUT	Failure of veterinarians and authorities to engage with municipalities, private sector veterinarians and stakeholders. Lack of supplies and training of veterinary professionals and veterinary technicians

DEFINITION	BENEFITS
Reduced costs associated with dog bite treatments, veterinary and health care, tourism benefits, and cost reduction for drivers. Reduced costs for drivers are due to fewer road accidents as a result of fewer dogs on the street	ECONOMIC BENEFITS
Reduction and elimination of diseases, reduction of the number of cases of dog bites, cases of aggressive behavior, barking, pollution and road traffic accidents and an increase of tolerance towards dogs	REDUCED NUMBER OF DOGS ON THE STREET
Healthier and happier dogs	IMPROVED ANIMAL WELFARE
Improved animal welfare in the community	IMPROVED AWARENESS
Improved awareness, responsible dog keeping, better dog population management and bite prevention	EDUCATED COMMUNITY
Improved waste management	CLEANER ENVIRONMENT
The community is as involved as state officials, ensuring shared responsibility and a well-structured program	INTER-INSTITUTIONAL GROUPS WILL KEEP THE PROGRAM ACTIVE
Improved reputation of local and central governments	POLITICAL BENEFITS

DOG POPULATION MANAGEMENT

SOLUTION	DEFINITION
RESPONSIBLE DOG KEEPING	Promoting animal health care including vaccination, sterilization and removal of parasites, good nutrition, identification and registration, socialization, training, supervision, play and regular exercise
IMPLEMENTATION OF LEGISLATION IN FORCE	National, local or international laws that take into account the following: abuse, neglect, human security, responsibility for dogs, breeding, stray dogs, abandonment and control of pet shops and animal markets
GOVERNMENT COMMITMENT	Financial contribution, trained staff and establishment of dog management programs as a Government priority
MEDIA EXPOSURE	Improved community awareness on issues such as responsible dog keeping, dog management programs and controlling rabies and other diseases
NEIGHBORHOOD CARETAKERS	Engaging 'Neighborhood caretakers for stray animals' would increase animal welfare, would affect the improvement of dog management programs and provide innovative solutions to problems with stray dogs
CONTROLLED BREEDING	Control and licensing of breeders, promotion of adoptions and setting standards for breeding
SHELTER MANAGEMENT	Registration of shelters and setting minimum standards for shelters including sterilization, vaccination, euthanasia, improving animal welfare and promoting adoptions
ADEQUATE VETERINARY SERVICES	Specialized and experienced veterinarians in the treatment of small animals such as dogs
LIMITED ACCESS TO FOOD WASTE	Better environmental management, including waste disposal, cleanliness and proper disposal of animal waste
MUNICIPAL INTER-INSTITUTIONAL GROUP	This would include local and central governments, NGOs, veterinary communities, international organizations, shelters and the media
ANIMAL WELFARE EDUCATION	Supported by NGOs, the veterinary community and the media, and implemented in schools by education professionals
ZOOBOTIC CONTROL PLAN	The zoonotic disease control plan includes rabies, leishmaniasis, echinococcosis and parasites, and affects public health safety as well as better animal welfare.

2.3 CULLING IS NOT A SOLUTION

To control the stray dog population easily and quickly, in the past, some governments have chosen the method of control through culling, to reduce the number of stray dogs to an acceptable number.^{4,5}

These measures have often been taken using inhumane methods and causing unnecessary suffering and death to animals.

Research also shows that measures to kill stray dogs, in addition to being inhumane, are expensive and ineffective.^{6,7} While the population of stray dogs after organized killing may decrease, this number will rapidly rise again. If there is no focus on the sources of the problem, the dead dogs will be replaced by other stray dogs, who will adapt across the territories freed from the dogs that have been killed.

Another negative effect of the mass killing of dogs, is the reduction of herd immunity to rabies disease, where the discriminatory killing that occurs usually also involves dogs that are owned or cared for by the community and are healthy and vaccinated. The killed dogs who were immune to rabies, will be replaced by young, unvaccinated, and untreated dogs⁸, thus increasing the risk of zoonotic diseases in one hand, and on the other hand, reducing the herd immunity in regards to rabies disease, thus endangering the community as well.⁹

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- 4 *Huffington Post (2014) Was the Romanian stray dog killing law based on false information? [http:// www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/rita-pal/romania-stray-dogs_b_5792862.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/rita-pal/romania-stray-dogs_b_5792862.html)*
 - 5 *Jakarta Post (2014) Stray dogs must be culled, Bali governor says. <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2014/06/27/stray-dogs-must-be-culled-bali-governor-says.html>*
 - 6 *World Animal Protection (2013) Controlling rabies. One humane solution, three reasons why. http://www.worldanimalprotection.org/sites/default/files/int_files/controlling_rabies-one_humane_solution.pdf*
 - 7 *Haesler, B., Gregory, N., Bennani, H., Gilbert, W., Fornace, K. & Rushton, J. (2012) Evaluation of rabies control in the province of Bali, Indonesia: A comprehensive framework to evaluate rabies control strategies taking into account economics, animal welfare, epidemiology, social acceptability and ethics. London, UK: Royal Veterinary College.*
 - 8 *Cleaveland, S et al. (2014) The changing landscape of rabies epidemiology and control. *Journal of Veterinary Research*. 81(2) 8 pages. doi: 10.4102/ojvr.v81i2.731*
 - 9 *World Animal Protection (2013) Controlling rabies. One humane solution, three reasons why. http://www.worldanimalprotection.org/sites/default/files/int_files/controlling_rabies-one_humane_solution.pdf*

3. CNVR METHOD FOR THE HUMANE MANAGEMENT OF THE STRAY DOG POPULATION

The **CNVR** method, whose abbreviations stand for C-capture, N-neuter, V-vaccinate and R-release, which is also foreseen by Administrative Instruction (MAFRD) 04/2017¹⁰, is one of the most successful methods of controlling and managing the stray dog population, according to worldwide organizations such as WHO¹¹, OIE¹² and the European Convention for the Protection of Companion Animals¹³.

'Catching', according to the CNVR method and according to AI (MAFRD) 04/2017, must be done by staff who are trained and qualified to catch dogs in ways in which the animal is not injured or feels unnecessary distress. After catching, the stray dog is placed in the transport vehicle which must contain adequate conditions for proper transport of dogs, and is sent to the veterinary clinic where it will be prepared for surgery. Once the dog is brought to the veterinary clinic, it is placed in the quarantine, where it is given a general check-up and diagnosed if it has any dangerous infectious diseases for dogs or humans.

After the pre-surgery period, the dog is placed under anesthesia and is prepared for castration or sterilization.

After the surgery, the dog must be carefully placed for rehabilitation, in a suitable box/room where it can move freely. The release of a male dog is done 3-5 days after surgery, female dogs depending on the surgery.

Small cut ovariectomy¹⁴ heals fast and the release can be done five (5) days after surgery. If a hysterectomy¹⁵ has been performed, the dog needs up to ten (10) days for recovery. It is recommended to train the veterinarians in the small cut ovariectomy, which is fast, the cut is small and heals faster.

In the meantime, **the dog must also be vaccinated against rabies**, which is legally required.

Prior to release, treated stray dogs are given an identification number (ear tag) to inform citizens that the dog is no longer breeding and has been vaccinated against rabies. The dogs must be released in the same place they were caught, and the release should be done no later than 10 days after catching, because otherwise the former territory might be occupied by new dogs which can lead to fights between dogs.

Releasing the dogs exactly where they were taken is very important, because dogs are accustomed to a specific location and know where to look for food in the neighborhoods where they grew up and know the surrounding residents; this means that the risk of their attacks on people is very low, because the dogs are accustomed to a specific neighborhood or place. Dogs belong to the community, it is also the duty of the community to treat them well, without violence and with respect.

10 <https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=15166>

11 https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/61417/HO_ZOON_90.166.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

12 https://www.oie.int/fileadmin/Home/eng/Health_standards/tahc/current/chapitre_aw_stray_dog.pdf

13 <https://rm.coe.int/168007a67d>

14 <https://vscahospitals.com/know-your-pet/spaying-in-dogs>

15 *ibid.*

If the community feeds the dogs, they will never see humans as rivals, but as friends who provide food and as another trustworthy animal to them. Humans are not a “natural rival” to dogs (like a lion to a zebra or a wolf to a sheep). Any aggression or potential attack of dogs towards humans happens only because of their fear and the traumas they have previously experienced from humans themselves or out of starvation – then hunger dominates their behavior.

We can conclude that CNVR and other state programs are successful only if the citizens also contribute with their kindness and patience and provide at least water for stray dogs near their houses, if they can't provide food.

During the implementation of projects aimed to control the reproduction of stray dogs using CNVR method, euthanasia¹⁶ will be necessary for dogs suffering from an incurable disease or injury (diseases listed on the Law on Veterinary¹⁷) or have irreversible aggressive behavior (Law on Animal Welfare¹⁸) or other problems preventing them from being adopted or getting back on the street. A successful dog population management program should create a situation in which euthanasia is rarely applied, and all healthy animals, if they are not adopted, are returned on the street (after castration/sterilization and vaccination) to become a part of the community and under the care of the community.

Euthanasia deals only with the symptoms and not with the sources of the problem. The stray dog population cannot be managed through euthanasia, so euthanasia should never be used as a sole and constant measure.

Whenever there is a need for euthanasia (very aggressive and untrainable dogs, or very sick dogs), it should be ensured that the decision is ascertained by a professional veterinarian and is done by humane methods, as well as ensuring that the animal loses consciousness and dies without being caused any suffering.

4. ESTABLISHMENT OF THE INTER-INSTITUTIONAL WORKING GROUP

Dog population management is a multifactorial issue and requires cooperation between different public institutions, but also needs an institutional entity to coordinate the entire process of managing the stray dog population.

Stray Dog Population Management Measures (SDPMMs) are state programs within the CNP to manage the number of stray dogs and prevent the continuous increase of their numbers on the street.

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16 <https://www.vet.cornell.edu/about-us/outreach/pet-loss-support-hotline/resources-grieving/facts-about-euthanasia/facts-about-euthanasia-small-animals>
17 <https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=2476>
18 <https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDocumentDetail.aspx?ActID=2411>

SDPMMs include clear guidance for public institutions regarding the stray dog population management, and also encourage and support positive human behaviors towards animals and provide a safer environment for stray dogs in the community and for humans themselves, against the dangers that they may encounter because of stray dogs. These measures have an impact on the dynamics of the dog population within the community and which are explained above (point 2.1).

The measures in question must be implemented with some unbreakable principles to implement humane and sustainable programs. Humane approach and sustainable planning are the two basic principles for making long-term and effective solutions for the community as well as for the stray dogs themselves as a part of the community.

For the implementation of the SDPMMs and their sustainability, the Government of Kosovo must support all local level actors and must also engage some central level institutions as implementers and observers of the process.

The establishment of **'Municipal Inter-Institutional Groups (MIIG)'** for each municipality would serve as a powerful mechanism, so that the measures proposed in this strategy are implemented seriously and effectively, by all mandated parties. MIIGs report to the inter-institutional group led by the Government of Kosovo.

MIIGs are formed by local-level public or even private entities which interact to meet the legal and contractual obligations of all parties involved with **a timeline, action plan** and while respecting **CNP indicators**.

The following entities are considered stakeholders:

- *Local government/municipalities – directorate of agriculture, education, health, security, public safety and information, inspectors and police officers*
- *Veterinary community – veterinary inspectors, professional veterinary associations, unofficial veterinary groups*
- *Academic community with relevant experience – i.e., animal behavior experts, veterinary PhDs, sociology, ecology, and epidemiology experts*
- *NGO community – local, national and international NGOs in animal welfare, animal rights and public health*
- *Local and national media – for education and awareness-raising of society and promotion of local and central measures for managing the stray dog population*
- *Local community – neighborhood residents, including dog owners*

The Government of Kosovo is one of the most important actors in the whole process, however, the local level is very crucial for the proper and efficient implementation of the whole strategy. Moreover, as a broader link of actors, apart from the entities mentioned above, the following entities are important as well:

- *Legislators – relevant departments of the ministries, to write, approve and implement the legislation in force regarding the protection of animal welfare and any field related to this aspect*
- *Executors/enforcers of the legislation (inspectors, police, prosecutors) – immediate implementation of policies, laws and regulations on animal welfare, control of dogs with owners and implementation of dog population management measures is of great importance*
- *Educators: in schools and universities – the community must be informed and aware of the human-animal relations, understand its role in helping the situation of stray dogs and never take criminal and unethical actions, such as the poisoning or killing of stray animals*

Inter-institutional groups must be formed by all actors listed above, or other additional actors, such as the private economic sector. Meetings of the said groups are foreseen to be held every three months, to report on the situation of stray dogs.

It is also worth mentioning that MIIGs will not achieve the desired effect if they do not consist primarily of public institutions and then other important actors are added or invited.

Chapter III, point 10, will explain in detail the legal responsibilities of public institutions in Kosovo, regarding the management of the stray dog population.



02

A black and white photograph of two puppies sitting on a paved surface. The puppy in the foreground is dark-colored and is looking directly at the camera. The puppy in the background is light-colored and is looking to the left. The text '02' is in the top left corner, and the title 'KOSOVAR CONTEXT AND THE IDENTIFICATION OF THE PROBLEM' is at the bottom in orange.

*KOSOVAR CONTEXT AND
THE IDENTIFICATION
OF THE PROBLEM*

Not so different from the other political, economic, and social problems faced by the state of Kosovo, does the situation of animal welfare stand.

The large number of stray dogs in Kosovo shows that the homeless animals are also endangered by many factors that violate their well-being. Stray dogs are victims of abandonment by humans and are constantly endangered by human abuse, extreme weather, lack of food and water, lack of treatment of diseases, road accidents and many other problems.

So far, dozens of CNVR (municipal and central) projects have been funded to manage the stray dog population. From the results of these projects and the current situation, we can conclude that the CNVR projects (undertaken measures so far) have not been fully and professionally implemented and other measures for long-term solution of this problem have not been considered at all – community awareness, education in schools, registration of dogs with owners and control of dog breeders.

As stated above, finding the most efficient and sustainable solution to reduce the number of stray dogs and prevent their increase and proliferation can be done only if the key sources of the problem of stray dogs are identified and analyzed by responsible institutions.

5. ORIGIN OF THE PROBLEM

The institutions mandated to address the problems of stray dogs, unfortunately do not have recorded data regarding any specific national analysis, study or research done about stray animals in Kosovo, which could contribute to an accurate number or empirical facts on the main sources of the growing number of dogs on the street.

The main irregularities and problems can be noticed from the poor engagement of all political actors involved so far, but also from the great lack of legal provisions and bylaws to regulate the responsible keeping of dogs as companion animals and the lack of sanctions for abandoning animals on the street and other violations against companion animals, including stray animals.



Picture 2: Bad keeping conditions on a TCC for the treatment of dogs

Despite not having empirical data, the main sources of stray dogs in Kosovo are easily identified and are described as following:

1. *Abandonment of dogs and unwanted puppies by many owners¹⁹,*
2. *Uncontrolled breeding and sale of dogs, by unregistered and unlicensed dog breeders,*
3. *Illegal import of companion animals, and*
4. *Constant reproduction of unsterilized dogs on the street.*

The problem of so many animal abandonments in Kosovo so far is due to the lack of a state registration structure for companion animals. This is also confirmed by the annual report of the European Commission (Kosovo Report 2020)²⁰, which states that the Food and Veterinary Agency does not undertake or approve all necessary measures for the identification and registration of all animals in the territory of Kosovo.

By registering all companion animals in Kosovo, the road will open to control the situation of abandonment of dogs as companion animals by sanctioning individuals who abandon their dogs on the street, monitoring breeders and controlling imports from other countries. In addition, by identifying and registering companion animals, they will be better protected by state institutions, as important members of our society.

On the other hand, it is important to note that there is a lack of a state housing infrastructure for companion animals that would potentially end up abandoned on the street. Housing the unwanted dogs would only work if the number of stray dogs was reduced because of numerous abandonments and irregular and irresponsible purchase of companion animals by many people.

Considering the easy possibility of buying companion animals (even those smuggled from other countries), and the lack of control/inspection of these illegal activities, the abandonment of companion animals then becomes inevitable.

Moreover, another obvious problem is the fact that in the school curriculum of all levels in Kosovo, there is a lack of lessons/programs for the welfare of animals and their responsible keeping. In addition, the state has never regulated by sub-legal acts, the provision of training for potential owners of companion animals, nor has it ever organized any information campaign, even though there was a budget allocated for this purpose and in fact an incompetent company as contracted to perform this service.²¹ Consequently, as a result of the latter, most companion animal owners have little or no information on how to care for an animal that fully respects their welfare.

19 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YTA9v9L61os&t=172s>

20 https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/kosovo_report_2020.pdf

21 MALA FARM - Unique Identifier Number: 811295197

6. LACK OF SUFFICIENT LEGAL BASIS

Although Law no. 02 / L-10 on Animal Welfare²² regulates the “*maintenance, care, housing, breeding, transportation and other issues related to animal welfare*”, the implementation of this law has not yet been put into practice. On the other hand, it is important to add that current animal welfare legislation is very superficial and does not fully regulate animal welfare conditions to be respected by people who keep animals. The regulation of animal keeping directly contributes to animal welfare, human health, as well as the reduction of the large number of stray dogs in the country.

Given the four identified sources of growth of the stray dog population (point 5), it is more than necessary and urgent to start amending and supplementing the laws and bylaws to address the issue of stray dogs, followed by sustainable, effective, and humane measures.

Regarding the amendment of bylaws, a major achievement is the amendment and supplementation of the Administrative Instruction (MAFRD) 02/2018 - on the identification and registration of companion animals.²³

After several months of work of the FVA, ARF and MAFRD, the Administrative Instruction was signed by the former Minister of MAFRD, Mr. Besian Mustafa, on March 1, 2021, and entered into force on March 10, 2021. The old administrative instruction created in 2018 by FVA, was focused on the technical aspects of registration and did not regulate the obligations of dog keepers to register dogs as companion animals in a state register.

In addition to registering dogs as companion animals, an administrative instruction that regulates the breeding of companion animals and their sale in Kosovo must also be approved. To date, FVA does not have a register of pet shops or veterinarians selling companion animals bred in Kosovo or abroad.

7. LACK OF EDUCATION AND INFORMATION

So far, no information campaign has been organized by any institution of the country regarding informing the citizens about the welfare of animals, keeping animals responsibly and preventing their abandonment, and information campaigns about the problems of stray dogs and the behavior of citizens regarding this problem have not been organized either.

In 2018, FVA contracted an incompetent company with a public tender in the amount of 111,000 Euros, to create an awareness campaign to inform citizens about state projects aimed to reduce the number of stray dogs.

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²² <https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDocumentDetail.aspx?ActID=2411>
²³ <https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=37624>

The contracted company (Mala Farm), has not conducted any survey and did not create any awareness-raising campaign for the citizens of Kosovo during the duration of the project (2018–2020).

CNVR and awareness raising projects have always existed on paper, but the work and results are nowhere to be seen. If public contracts continue to be awarded in a superficial way, without requiring concrete, feasible and measurable work, there will be no improvement of the situation of stray dogs in Kosovo any time soon.

Society awareness-raising was not considered as something important for the institutions. According to a study by the Kosovo Center for Security Studies (KCSS)²⁴, it was found that during the three-year period (2016–2018), more than half of citizens perceived stray dogs as a threat to public safety. In 2016, 55% of citizens perceived stray dogs as a threat to their personal safety, while in 2017 the number increased to 63%. However, in 2018, the percentage dropped to 59%.

As stated above, in 2018 the state CNVR project was implemented, therefore, KCSS in its report, assumes that due to this there has been a decrease in citizens' perception of the danger of stray dogs. KCSS clearly states that projects like CNVR combined with awareness-raising, are important to control the number of stray dogs and improve public perceptions of them.

ARF has carried out several monitoring activities and observed the work of veterinarians in the state CNVR project managed by FVA, for the sterilization and vaccination of stray dogs in 2018 and 2020. For the same issue and other issues, the organization has sought to establish institutional cooperation, to implement active projects at the time, and to promote sustainable work related to the management of stray dogs.

Monitoring the work in CNVR projects has provided a clear picture of the progress of the veterinary work, the treatment of dogs throughout the projects and the irregularities and shortcomings that state projects had and still have today.

8. WHAT HAS BEEN DONE SO FAR

The CNVR method was used during state projects in Kosovo, in 2018²⁵ and 2020²⁶, and at the municipal level since 2019. However, the Municipality of Prishtina has had active CNVR projects since 2014, although with many shortcomings and irregularities in all project processes.

It can be considered a great advantage that Kosovo applies this method and not the institutional organized killing of stray dogs, as it has happened before 2017. This means, the AI (MAFRD) 04/2017²⁷ includes the CNVR method as the most humane and effective method to reduce the number of stray dogs in Kosovo.

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24 http://www.qkss.org/repository/docs/BKS_Sfidat_e_sigurise_publike_ne_Kosove_15030.pdf

25 Procurement number: 40800-18-1064-2-1-5

26 Procurement number: 40800-19-6574-2-1-5

27 <https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=15166>

It is worth noting that this method has no effect if on the other hand other accompanying and sustainable measures are not implemented, such as: registration of dogs with owners, prevention of abandonment and control of breeding. Even if thousands of dogs are sterilized each year but abandonment of unsterilized dogs by owners does not stop, CNVR state programs will never end and stray dogs will be forever present. Reducing their number on the street is achieved only with a strategic and sustainable institutional approach.

In addition to the above aspects, for the CNVR to be successful, such projects should be active throughout the year and work should be done in all municipalities simultaneously in order to castrate and sterilize as soon as possible the dogs that were abandoned on the street, and to castrate and sterilize dogs that were puppies before a certain period of time.

In the past, in state projects, most veterinarians have not released dogs in the same places where they were taken/caught for sterilization. This negative practice has created panic for many people when new dogs were introduced to their neighborhoods. This practice also poses risks of dog attacks on people, out of fear of the new territory for dogs. Dogs get attached to a territory and changing the latter can bring a lot of trauma for the dogs and incidents between humans and dogs.

Another shortcoming of the state programs during 2018 and 2020, has to do with the contracting of veterinarians to implement the CNVR method (Pic. 1, 2, 3). Most contracted veterinarians were not specialized in surgery for small animals, such as dogs or cats. From the lack of experience in the treatment of dogs, many problems arose during the work of some veterinarians during the state CNVR projects.



Pictures 3, 4, 5: Bad work of some veterinarians in CNVR project

03



*DESIGNING
THE STRATEGY*

9. MEASURES OF A SUCCESSFUL PROGRAM

A range of measures need to be considered to implement a successful and effective stray dog population management program in Kosovo. These important measures are:

1. *Identification and registration of dogs as companion animals in the Republic of Kosovo*
2. *Education in schools and awareness-raising of the society*
3. *Strict control of breeding and sale of dogs*
4. *Subsidy of castration and sterilization of dogs with owners*
5. *Constant reproduction control of stray dogs using CNVR method*
6. *Temporary Care Centers and rescue centers*
7. *Introducing the 'neighborhood caretakers for stray dogs'*
8. *Control of access to resources*

The involved stakeholders must commit to the concept of **'inter-institutional groups'** and must engage, coordinate and consult with each other at all times to implement the CNP of the strategy. These groups will be responsible for the progress of work (see point 4). They must also be involved in making recommendations to improve the program if needed. Problems and failures should be seen as opportunities to improve the program.

THE FOUNDATIONS OF A SUCCESSFUL STRAY DOG POPULATION MANAGEMENT PROGRAM



Picture 6: The foundations of a successful dog management program

9.1 IDENTIFICATION AND REGISTRATION OF DOGS THROUGH MICROCHIPPING

The most effective way to clearly link an owner to his/her dog is through the identification and registration of animals in a state animal register and by constant control of the registration by inspectors or police. This will encourage a sense of responsibility on the part of owners as the animal becomes identifiable as his/hers and makes it possible for the law enforcement institutions to track down irresponsible dog owners.

Identification and registration are an important tool for reuniting lost animals with their owners and provide a strong foundation for enforcing applicable legislation, including legislation against animal abandonment and mandatory rabies vaccinations.

In Kosovo's case, where many dogs need to be identified and registered, the microchip currently offers the best option as the combination of numbers in the code is sufficient to identify all dogs, while human errors (misplacement and reading of numbers) are less likely to occur since a digital scanner is used to read the microchip.

Microchipping also has the advantage of being a global system, so even if animals move from one country to another, they can be easily identified.

It is very important that the identification and registration information is stored in a central state register, which is accessible to all relevant parties (e.g., veterinarians, inspectors, police, animal welfare directorates, etc.). The registration through microchipping will only work effectively if continuous controls and inspections are done. **For the latter, government support and commitment is required, to ensure the use of a single unified system.**

In addition to what has been said above, with the owner of the animal and the companion animal itself being identified in a state database, abandonments can also be sanctioned to discourage unbridled and ill-considered purchases of companion animals.

According to AI (MAFRD) 02/2021²⁸ On the identification and registration of companion animals, all dog owners must identify and register their dogs through microchipping. Along with microchipping, the regulation foresees that a national unified companion animal passport must be issued by FVA. Up to now, veterinary subjects used their own format of companion animal passports, which is no longer allowed. Since August 2021, FVA has released a state companion animal passport thanks to "StrayCoCo", that supported FVA to design and print the first 5000 copies of the unified companion animal passport. As stated above, this passport is the official companion animal passport of the Republic of Kosovo and must be used by all veterinary subjects.

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28 <https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=37624>

FVA has also updated the current animal registration database to include the registration of dogs. The old database did not include the registration of dogs and their owners. This phase has been funded by ARF through the main donor, "StrayCoCo", and the "Smart Bits" company, which was committed to programming the addition of the dog registration component to the current animal registration database in Kosovo.

Since the database update has been completed, FVA must contract or authorize veterinary entities so they can start the process of identification and registration of dogs as companion animals.

9.2 EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS AND SOCIETY

Education is one of the most important elements of a comprehensive approach to managing the stray dog population, as human behavior is an extremely influential factor in the dynamics of the dog population. In general, education should encourage greater responsibility among dog owners, and greater care and welfare for individual companion animals.

At different stages of education and awareness-raising, it is important to highlight different topics, which include selection and care of dogs, realistic expectations of keeping dogs, promoting the importance of veterinary treatments for disease prevention, promoting general knowledge about normal and abnormal dog behaviors, bite prevention and the legal responsibilities that the owners have for their animals.

However, the following aspects need to be considered when implementing educational/training programs:

- a.** Education initiatives must be developed in coordination with education authorities and implemented by professionals or trained personnel. All stakeholders can advise on content and provide support for educational programs, but the distribution of this component should be done by education experts including CSOs.
- b.** It is important to include all available resources for raising awareness about responsible dog keeping and dog behavior to ensure that the messages are consistent with each other. Ideally these resources include central and local authorities, animal welfare groups, veterinarians, schools, law enforcement agencies, media.

c. Veterinarians must also be educated in the field of dog population management, including:

- *The importance of managing the dog population*
- *Their role in issues concerning public health*
- *Surgical methods of reproduction control*
- *Promoting the message for responsible keeping of dogs*
- *Their engagement with ethical and professional work in active stray dog population management programs.*

d. Educational messages can be communicated in many ways, including:

- *General public awareness through awareness-raising campaigns can be done via press, billboards, radio, TV, and social media*
- *Official seminars and structured lectures in schools*
- *Brochures and informational activities for the community*
- *Community engagement in the discussions about dog population management programs*

Education in schools and society is a sustainable measure that will bear fruit in the future, making the Kosovo society more aware about the welfare of animals and how good care for animals will also directly affect the health and well-being of people themselves.

Responsible planning of dog keeping is key to preventing possible abandonments, whereas adopting a stray dog from the street or any shelter, would contribute to the reduction of the number of stray dogs.

9.3 STRICT CONTROL OF BREEDING AND SALE OF DOGS AS COMPANION ANIMALS

Poor and uncontrolled standards of breeding and sale of dogs as companion animals can cause major problems for the welfare, health, and behavior of dogs, resulting in abandonment of many dogs with health problems. Up to now, the state didn't have any regulation on this topic and didn't work on inspecting the welfare of animals at the actual breeding facilities.

Control of breeders and the sale of dogs or other companion animals must be done through laws and bylaws, which also need to be properly implemented.

Breeding and sale can also be influenced through the education and information campaigns of future dog owners, to make sure that people know what to look for and what to expect when buying a dog, and what to do if problems arise with their new dog. New dog owners must be informed by the state of all the responsibilities towards their companion animals and all the potential penalties that may come if animal welfare or other applicable laws are violated.

The Law on Animal Welfare specifies in Article 6 that the breeding of animals must be done according to the rules set for the breeding of animals, including breeding methods according to their type and category, so that they can be used to prevent uncontrolled breeding. Point 6.4 of the law in question, states that the person involved in animal breeding is responsible for the full preservation of the health or well-being of puppies and the animal that has been bred. However, the law in question does not regulate other more detailed specifications and authorizes the relevant Ministry (MAFRD) to issue bylaws to regulate the breeding of companion animals.

Therefore, a new administrative instruction must be introduced, to set the strictest criteria and conditions for breeders and sellers of companion animals, especially dogs. **Due to the lack of registration of dogs and breeding centers, and the lack of proper control and inspection of breeding and sale of dogs in Kosovo, it is not possible to plan an effective program with positive results regarding the management of the stray dog population.**

The sources of the growing number of stray dogs in Kosovo must be tackled urgently and with priority, and the uncontrolled breeding and sale of dogs is one of those sources.

9.4 SUBSIDY OF STERILIZATION AND VACCINATION OF DOGS WITH OWNERS

As explained in point 5, one of the main sources of the increasing number of stray dogs is also the uncontrolled reproduction of dogs on the street. This includes unsterilized dogs with owners, who are left free to roam the streets, significantly increasing the likelihood of reproducing with stray dogs. In Kosovo, most dog owners do not sterilize their dogs.

The reason for this is a combination of a weak mindset regarding castration and sterilization, and the lack of financial means to cover the costs of the surgery, by many dog owners.

Many dog owners have very little information on the health benefits²⁹ of castration and sterilization, so, awareness campaigns must be organized at the same time for dog owners about the health benefits of castration and sterilization.

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29 <https://www.aspc.org/pet-care/general-pet-care/spayneuter-your-pet>

Considering the financial difficulties of dog owners to sterilize their dogs but also the reluctance of many of them, based on their personal beliefs, it is important that sterilization and vaccination of dogs with owners is provided free of charge, at least for a certain period of time, especially for those who cannot afford to cover these costs.

Providing this service for free and providing accurate information on the benefits of sterilization and vaccination would motivate many dog owners to sterilize their dogs and this would automatically prevent an increase of the number of stray dogs in the country.

9.5 REPRODUCTION CONTROL THROUGH CNVR METHOD

Reproduction control has long been considered a way of reducing the dog population. There are various methods for controlling reproduction, but surgical sterilization of female and male dogs is currently the most reliable option. Surgical sterilizations should always be performed by a qualified veterinarian.

When implementing reproduction control projects, it is important to consider their sustainability - managing a stray dog population is a permanent challenge, so it is essential to consider the continuity of such projects throughout the design of the state program.

Removal of the reproductive organs under general anesthesia provides permanent sterilization and can significantly reduce sexual behavior (especially if performed in the early stages of the development of an animal, but not earlier than 7 months from their birth). During and after the surgical intervention, a high standard of asepsis³⁰ and pain management should be maintained at all times. This can only be achieved through adequate postoperative monitoring throughout the recovery period.

Surgery may seem costly at first, but it is a permanent solution and thus has the most cost effectiveness in the long run. This type of intervention requires a trained veterinarian, a proper infrastructure and professional equipment as required in the AI (MAFRD) 04/2017 on the technical conditions to be met by the temporary care centers for stray animals.

Since it is crucial to control the reproduction of stray dogs in Kosovo, it is important that this is done through the CNVR method.³¹

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³⁰ Asepsis - the practice of reducing or eliminating the risk of bacterial contamination.

³¹ This method is explained in more detail in point 3

CNVR projects for stray dogs should be implemented continuously and must not be stopped for many months, as it has happened so far in Kosovo. If these projects are not continuous, it will be very difficult to properly manage the stray dog population in Kosovo, so the municipalities must allocate a budget every year to implement such projects throughout the year. CNVR projects alone are not enough to manage the stray dog population, but they are nevertheless a very important component for the effective and humane management of the stray dog population, so they must be implemented together with other necessary measures.

9.6 TEMPORARY CARE CENTERS AND RESCUE CENTERS

Building traditional shelters to provide permanent shelter for stray dogs is not a fundamental measure of a comprehensive and sustainable stray dog population program. The welfare of dogs in such environments can be very poor and keeping dogs in these places can have extreme costs even for rich and developed countries, not to mention countries with slow economic and social development such as Kosovo.

In the current situation with stray dogs in Kosovo, building shelters as an urgent and sole measure would have an enormous cost, and would have no effect in reducing the number of dogs on the street, since shelters would fill up quickly to their full capacities, and dogs on the street would be replaced by continuous reproduction and abandonments. Therefore, shelters, without financial support, systematic work, without implementing other measures for dog population management, and without the readiness of citizens to adopt dogs out of the shelters instead of buying them, will get overcrowded and will invite irresponsible dog owners to abandon their dogs in front of shelters and on the street.

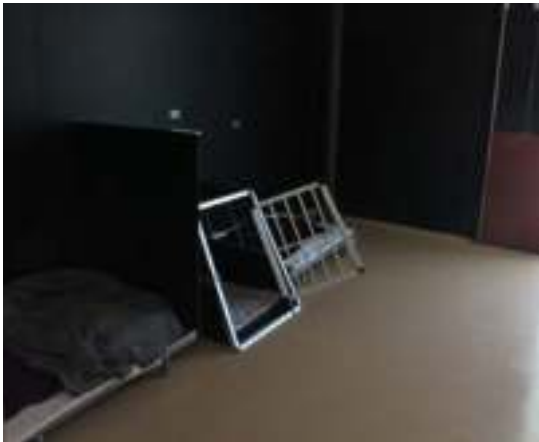
In the past, there have been two attempts to manage the number of stray dogs through the functioning of municipal public shelters in the municipalities of Gracanica³² and Peja³³. In both cases, the functioning of these shelters had failed, due to institutional negligence, lack of effective planning of shelter management, lack of transparency and accountability by the municipalities, as well as exceeding the capacity of shelters through the continuous collection of stray dogs, without sustainable approach to stop the source of the growing number of stray dogs. This whole situation has significantly endangered the welfare of animals in these shelters, which in many cases has had a tragic outcome for dogs, and on the other hand, the situation with dogs on the street has not improved at all. **Therefore, shelters should not be considered a main priority for dog population management in countries like Kosovo where there is a large number of stray dogs and minimal adoptions.**

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32 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CVkcgxLGtN0>

33 <https://telegrafi.com/strehimore-apo-thertore-masaker-e-qenve-ne-peje-fotovideo18/>

If building shelters is taken into consideration, the management of such shelters and the keeping of dogs there should be regulated by law, and all shelters must be licenced by FVA. Otherwise, shelters, without transparent work and accountability, can often become profit centers for their owners, who use donations for themselves and make money through the suffering of the dogs they keep.

However, the establishment of rescue centers (sanctuaries), spaces/structures with dog re-settlement systems, which provide temporary shelter for dogs until their adoption, can play an important role in the successful implementation of this strategy and its program. Establishment of temporary shelters or otherwise known as 'rescue centers' can be a great help for the treated street dogs to be adopted.



Pictures 7, 8: Example of a dog and cat shelter in Switzerland

Up to now, in Kosovo, these temporary shelters have played an important role in rescuing many stray dogs that have had major health problems, injured dogs, puppies endangered by various factors and dogs with behavioral problems who have not been able to adapt to life on the street. Also, these centers, through informal organization of individuals or through non-governmental organizations (local and foreign) facilitate and organize numerous adoptions of stray dogs, although so far, no organization operating in Kosovo, whether local or foreign, has published any report or data on how many dogs have been adopted, except the Swiss organization, "StrayCoCo". This organization has established two temporary treatment centers, as provided by AI (MAFRD) 04/2017. These centers are the only ones that function according to every condition and standard that is required by this AI, helping a vast number of stray dogs in Kosovo.

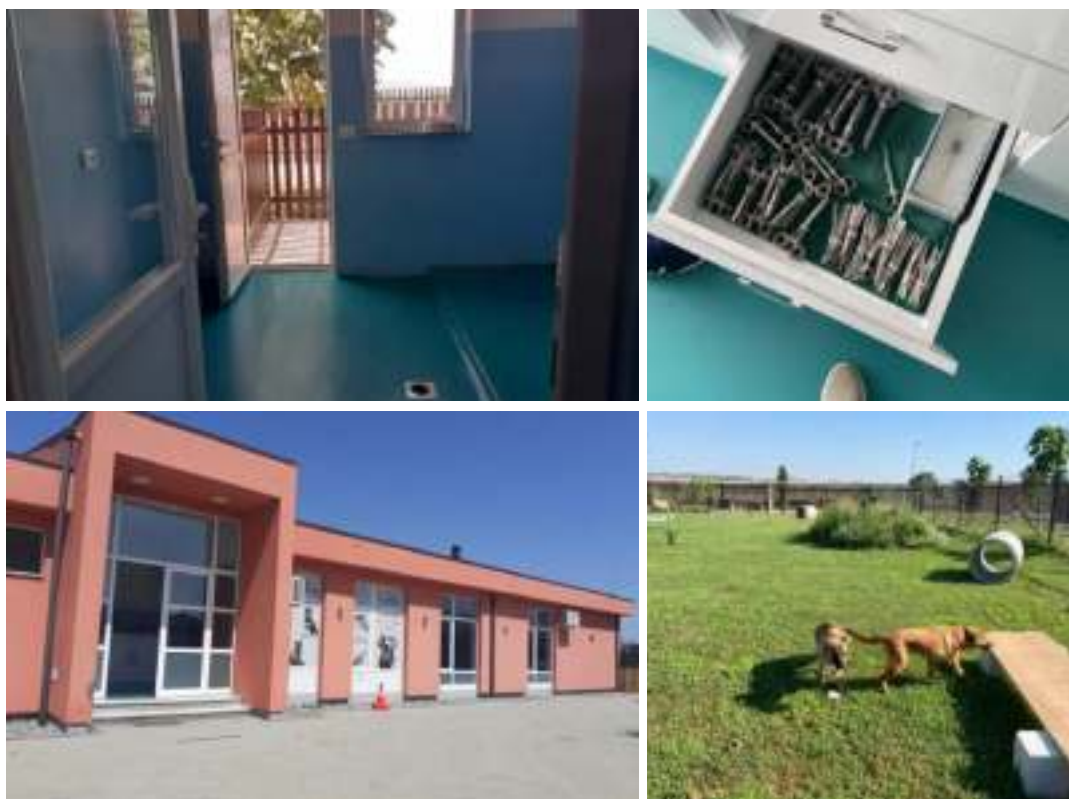
During the tendering of the FVA project for the treatment of stray dogs, the latter had asked the veterinarians that their stray dog treatment centers meet the conditions required in AI (MAFRD) 04/2017. Not all centers have met the conditions to work in the treatment of stray dogs.

In 2020, 29³⁴ temporary care centers were active throughout Kosovo to perform the service of treatment of stray dogs using the CNVR method. According to FVA, these centers have not yet been licensed, as many of them still have many conditions to improve before being licensed. FVA should not license the centers that do not meet the standards required by applicable law.

The assessment of the conditions of the improvised centers of veterinary subjects was made by ARF, from more than 150 monitoring visits of the state CNVR project, in 2020 alone.

Out of 29 improvised centers of veterinary subjects, only seven (7) centers had good space conditions for housing dogs for 5-7 days after the operation. These centers also had good working conditions, trained staff (but not professionally) to catch dogs on the street and qualified veterinarians to treat small animals, such as dogs (Pic. 13, 14, 15, 16).

Only one center has been evaluated by ARF as a center that meets and exceeds the conditions required by AI (MAFRD) 04/2017 (Pic. 9, 10, 11, 12).



Pictures 9, 10, 11, 12: An example of a successful TCC in Kosovo

34 https://auvk.rks.gov.net/repository/docs/Lista_e_subjekteve_te_kontraktuara_per_projektin_Menxhimi_dhe_kontrolli_i_qenve_endacak_08052020_1.pdf



Pictures 13, 14, 15, 16: Examples of TCCs in good condition in Kosovo

Eight (8) out of twenty-nine (29) centers were assessed in very poor condition, and three (3) of them were reported through criminal reports to the Prosecutor’s Office, filed by ARF. Also, nine (9) centers were evaluated as in good condition while the other (5) had somewhat acceptable conditions, but provided that these centers are further improved to guarantee serious work and full respect for the stray dogs treated in them.

As stated above, although there are foreign and local organizations that deal with the rescue and shelter of stray dogs and facilitate adoptions³⁵, it is not enough and the shelter of the whole stray dog population cannot be done only by a few individuals or organizations, without state assistance, through more sustainable funding and actions which gradually reduce the number of stray dogs.

The Government of Kosovo should invest in the establishment and improvement of Temporary Care Centers as required by the legislation in force, and at the same time open rescue centers, in case a dog must be handed over by the previous owner for various reasons, solely to avoid dog abandonments.

To combine the concept of the rescue centers with adoptions (only in this case housing makes sense and is sustainable), the Government of Kosovo can cooperate and finance/subsidize individuals, businesses or organizations in Kosovo that already deal with rescuing stray dogs and their adoption.

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 35 *It has been proven many times by the work experience of animal protection activists that very few citizens of Kosovo adopt dogs from shelters or directly from the street. Most cases of stray dog adoptions are made by non-Kosovar people and families.*

The concept of a municipal tax on keeping dogs or companion animals should also be considered, so that the local government has available funds that would serve to improve the lives of stray dogs and contribute to raising awareness of the population in terms of responsible keeping of animals.

It should be noted, however, that the Rescue Centers will not be 'shelters' in the classical sense, where animals are housed and kept there for the rest of their lives if they are not adopted. Keeping dogs in cages and shelters of any kind for a long period of time can cause depression, stress and aggression in dogs. Negative traits then make the dogs unadoptable and risk leaving dogs in isolated spaces for their entire lives, without any family or individuals to care for them. Therefore, rescue centers only work if the approach of 'community dogs' (dogs that are free but are cared for by the community) under the care of '**Neighborhood Caretakers**' for stray dogs.

9.7 INTRODUCING THE 'NEIGHBOURHOOD CARETAKERS FOR STRAY DOGS'

One of the sustainable methods or measures for managing stray dogs is by continuously monitoring them on the street, while the state does not yet have proper housing structures for them.

Monitoring the condition of stray dogs is related to their count, their health status, their behavior and the dynamics of births and deaths of puppies and dogs, in specific neighborhoods of all cities and villages of the Republic of Kosovo. It is also very important to identify dogs without ear tags on the street; that means dogs who are still untreated (sterilized). Neighborhood caretakers will also notice new dog abandonments and keep records so that everything is structured by evidence and facts, and is taken care of by responsible institutions to also decide which measure needs to be implemented faster and which ones later. Prioritizing measures for managing the number of stray dogs is important for the financial planning of central and local level institutions.

Neighborhood caretakers will also have the responsibility to respond to citizens' calls in case a dog is suspected of being injured, aggressive towards people or causing other problems for citizens. They also have a duty to inform citizens about the nature of dogs and their behavior.

As stated above, the state of Kosovo has done nothing so far about raising public awareness, so engaging neighborhood caretakers to raise public awareness as well is quite effective and would help tremendously in the humane and sustainable reduction of the stray dogs in Kosovo.

Through this measure, municipalities will be more responsible to citizens who complain and fear stray dogs.

Vaccination of stray dogs against rabies will be much more evident and serious, as well as towards the international community who pay special attention to the eradication of rabies.

An example of the 'neighborhood caretakers' measure can be taken from Italy, where municipalities, with the support of animal welfare associations, promote the concept of the 'free roaming and cared dogs', and is a concept foreseen in different parts of southern Italy, as a present and permanent entity within the community. Stray animals must be identified with a microchip and registered in the database of companion animals on behalf of the municipality to which they belong; they must be vaccinated, sterilized and the municipality assumes full responsibility in case of any damage to third parties by dogs with such status. Free but under care, means dogs placed under the care of citizens, thus, people must register to the municipality as a caretaker of stray dogs in southern Italy.³⁶

In Southern Italy, this is a solution provided by some regional laws implementing Framework Law n.281 / 91 and by Regulation n. 5 of 14 May 2001 of the Ministry of Health, which may be determined by the mayor, who is primarily responsible for the welfare of all animals present in the municipal area (Article 3, 31 March '79).³⁷

9.8 CONTROL OF ACCESS TO RESOURCES

Owned dogs usually have access to resources (including food, water, and shelter), which are available directly from an owner within the confines of a home, whereas, in the case of stray dogs, these resources are provided on public property, either from garbage, or by citizens who care for stray animals in their community.

Some owned dogs are left free to roam the streets (which is considered irresponsible keeping) due to the possibility of access to resources in public spaces, but do not rely on these resources for survival, whereas stray dogs are completely dependent on their survival in the resources found during their roaming on the street.

Lack of sufficient resources for survival on the street, in residential areas, can pose public safety concerns, as stray dogs try to protect at all costs from people and other dogs, the few sources of food and water they encounter while living on the street.

Control of access to resources in public spaces will affect the stray dog population, as it discourages opportunistic roaming.

However, it can also reduce the likelihood of survival for dogs who depend on these resources.

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³⁶ <https://www.lav.it/news/prevenire-abbandonato>
³⁷ <https://www.normattiva.it/atto/caricaDettaglioAtto>

Some issues need to be considered when implementing this component:

1. **Resource reduction intervention should not be used as a single measure.** Changes in access to resources, for the animals identified as resource-dependent for survival in public spaces (through measures such as improved waste collection), should be done only in step with the reduction of the stray dog population, or by taking alternative measures for the stray animals that depend on these resources. This can be done by **setting up food and water points for stray dogs**, away from residential areas, to avoid possible human-animal conflicts because of resource protection.
2. Improving garbage collection and disposal can reduce the interaction between humans, especially children, and stray dogs, who can be potentially aggressive when defending food resources.
3. In some situations, the main source of food for stray dogs will be the food provided directly by humans through intentional feeding. The motivation to feed stray dogs varies between geographical areas and between individuals and this should be understood and taken into account if trying to influence the behavior of people who feed stray dogs, (e.g. see point 4), below. Education and awareness play an important role in influencing this behavior.
4. Controlling access to resources in specific areas can be used to change the spread of the dog population. For example, a public park in which people do not want dogs to be present, can be maintained by removing access to food and water sources, through measures such as placing waste bins that are inaccessible to animals and educating people to not feed dogs in these areas. In some countries there are regulations restricting spaces where dogs can exercise or walk freely.

10. LEGAL RESPONSIBILITIES OF PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

Through the legal analysis within the 'National Strategy for the Management of the Stray Dog Population in Kosovo' it is intended to clearly present the competencies of the relevant institutions of the Republic of Kosovo, in relation to the control and management of stray dogs. Based on the legal analysis made by ARF, it was found that the most competent institutions in relation to the control and management of stray dogs are:

1. *The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development*
2. *The Kosovo Food and Veterinary Agency and*
3. *The Local authorities (Municipalities)*

All possible legal bases from which the competencies of the respective institutions derive have been analyzed, and in this regard all relevant public institutions have been listed one by one, starting from the highest institutions in the state hierarchy to the lowest ones, respectively starting from the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development, the Food and Veterinary Agency, to the Municipal Authorities (Municipalities).

10.1 CONSULTED LEGAL BASIS

Law no. 02/L-10 on Animal Welfare (hereinafter referred to as "Law on Animal Welfare").

Law no. 2004/21 on Veterinary (hereinafter referred to as "Veterinary Law").

Law no. 03/L-016 on Food (hereinafter referred to as "Law on Food").

Law no. 03/L-040 on Local Self-Governance (hereinafter referred to as "Law on Self-Governance").

Law no. 06/L-113 on Organization and Functioning of State Administration and Independent Agencies

Administrative Instruction (MAFRD) - no. 04/2017 on Technical Conditions to be met by Temporary Care Centers for Stray Animals (hereinafter referred to as the "Administrative Instruction on Technical Conditions to be met by Temporary Care Centers of Stray Animals").

Administrative Instruction (MAFRD) - no. 02/2018 on the Identification and Registration of Companion Animals (hereinafter referred to as the "Administrative Instruction on the Identification and Registration of Companion Animals")

Administrative Instruction (MAFRD) - no. 02/2021 on the Amendment and Supplement of the Administrative Instruction (MAFRD) 02/2018 on the Identification and Registration of Companion Animals

Administrative Instruction no. 07/2006 on the Establishment of the Standing Committee on Animal Breeding (hereinafter referred to as the "Administrative Instruction on the Establishment of the Standing Committee on Animal Breeding")

Regulation no. 03/2010 on the Organization of the Food and Veterinary Agency (hereinafter referred to as the "Regulation on the Organization of the Food and Veterinary Agency").

Regulation GRK - no. 29/2013 on supplementing and amending the regulation No. 03/2010 on the Organization of the Food and Veterinary Agency, was approved at the 151st meeting of the Government of the Republic of Kosovo (hereinafter referred to as "Regulation on supplementing and amending the regulation on the Organization of Food and Veterinary Agency")

Regulation (M.VU) 01. no. 87/15 on the Conditions of Keeping dogs and cats as well as the manner of action in case of their abandonment or loss (hereinafter referred to as "Regulation on the Conditions of keeping dogs and cats as well as the manner of action in case of abandonment or loss")

Regulation (M.DE) 01. no. III.2 on the Conditions of Keeping Dogs and the manner of action in case of abandonment or loss of them and the shelter for stray dogs (hereinafter referred to as "Regulation on Conditions of Keeping dogs and the manner of action in case of abandonment or loss and shelter for stray dogs")

10.2 AUTHORIZATIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE MAFRD IN RELATION TO CONTROL AND MANAGEMENT OF THE STRAY DOG POPULATION

One of the public institutions that is obliged to ensure the implementation of the Law on Animal Welfare is the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development.³⁸

Articles 4, 5 and 6 of the Law on Animal Welfare, define some of the authorizations and responsibilities of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development, which are directly related to the protection of animals, their welfare, as well as the control of the increase of their number.

Article 4 of the Law on Animal Welfare stipulates that the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development is responsible for regulating by sub-legal act: 1. *The manner in which animals are kept/tied*; 2. *The manner in which the animals will be separated according to age, sex or species*; 3. *Permitted space for animals*; 4. *Issues related to the hygiene and comfort of the animal, their housing and other measures to ensure the health of the animal*; 5. *Data for compiling the list of categories and types of animals*; 6. *Housing conditions of animals according to their type*; and 7. *Any other issues that may arise*. According to this article, it is within the competence of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development to determine the conditions under which an animal should be kept. Therefore, Article 4 of the Law on Animal Welfare explicitly stipulates that animal keepers (regardless of who the animal keeper is) are obliged to keep the animal according to the conditions set by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development.

Also, in accordance with Article 5, paragraph 2, of the Law on Animal Welfare, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development is competent to determine through sub-legal acts the manner of care, nutrition, training, and the determination of qualified persons responsible for caring for animals according to their categories and species. According to these provisions, every person who takes care of animals, regardless of their qualities, must ensure the welfare of the animal that he/she keeps and must respect this law and bylaws issued by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development, through which the provisions of the Law on Animal Welfare are implemented. It should be noted that the legal and sub-legal provisions, which derive from the Law on Animal Welfare, must be applied by any person who is an animal keeper.³⁹ So, these provisions must be applied by both natural and legal persons, regardless of who they are. There are no sub-legal acts issued by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development so far in regard to the conditions of keeping and caring for companion animals, such as dogs or cats.

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³⁸ It should be noted that according to Article 3, point 2, of the Law on Animal Welfare, the word "Ministry" that is used in the text of this law has the meaning "Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development".

³⁹ According to the definition given in Article 3, point 6, of the Law on Animal Welfare, "Animal keeper" means the person who keeps or cares for an animal.

It is important to note that pursuant to Article 6, paragraph 5, of the Law on Animal Welfare, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development is competent to regulate the issue of animal breeding in all its aspects, as it has been explained above. According to this article, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development must issue a sub-legal act, which would specify the rules to be followed for breeding animals by animal breeders. Regarding animal breeding, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development has issued the Administrative Instruction for the Establishment of the Standing Commission for Animal Breeding. According to this administrative instruction, this commission is competent to propose measures in regard to animal breeding to the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development, but the ministry in question has not issued a sub-legal act by which the issue of animal breeding is regulated.

As stated above, in accordance with the Law on Animal Welfare, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development, is obligated to issue bylaws and implement the Law on Animal Welfare through them, determining the manner of keeping animals and their proper care, protection of animal welfare.

What is most important in relation to controlling the increase of the stray dog population, the MAFRD is responsible for issuing bylaws to establish rules and conditions for animal breeding.

In order to ensure the implementation of the Law on Animal Welfare and the implementation of administrative instructions issued in accordance with Article 15 of the Law on Animal Welfare, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development has at its

disposal the Inspectorate for Welfare, and the same is obliged through the Inspectors for Animal Welfare, to ensure that animal keepers are implementing the Law on Animal Welfare, as well as bylaws issued by MAFRD. Article 15, paragraph 1, of the Law on Animal Welfare, explicitly stipulates that the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development, through the Inspectorate for Animal Welfare, must ensure the implementation of the Law on Animal Welfare.

Pursuant to Article 16 of the Law on Animal Welfare, the Animal Welfare Inspector has the right to access any place that is used in whole or in part as an animal habitat, to ascertain possible violations of the Law on Animal Welfare. The Inspectorate, therefore, is authorized to inspect whether the keepers of the animals are following the rules of animal breeding.

The Animal Welfare Inspectorate has the right, in accordance with Article 17, point (b) of the Law on Animal Welfare, to impose a fine from 100 up to 5000 euros, to each person who does not respect the legal and sub-legal provisions, which regulate the issue of animal breeding.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development, based on Article 13 of the Veterinary Law, must issue bylaws to determine the procedures according to which Municipal Authorities (municipalities) must do: a) Registration of dogs; b) Annual rabies vaccination and treatment against echinococcosis; c) Catching of stray dogs and cats and, if necessary, their euthanasia; d) Safe removal and disposal of the bodies referred to in point (c); e) Establishment of care centers for dogs and cats, as needed.

10.3 AUTHORIZATIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE FVA IN RELATION TO CONTROL AND MANAGEMENT OF THE STRAY DOG POPULATION

FVA is an Executive Agency of the Government, respectively the Office of the Prime Minister, and which is mandated to protect the life and health of people by providing a high level of safe food, including food for animals, animal health, animal care and quality and safety of food of plant and animal origin. FVA was established by the Law on Food and is organized based on the Regulation on the Organization of the Food and Veterinary Agency and the Regulation on supplementing and amending the regulation no. 03/2010 on the Organization of the Food and Veterinary Agency.⁴⁰

According to the legislation of the Republic of Kosovo, some of the tasks of the FVA as a public institution are related to the treatment of stray dogs and the prevention of their increase as well as providing the care for their well-being.

It should be noted that regarding the control and prevention of the increase of the number of stray dogs, the competencies of the FVA derive from several legal bases. According to these legal bases, FVA directly or indirectly has a role in controlling and preventing the increase of the number of stray dogs.

Pursuant to Article 14, paragraph 1, of the Law on Animal Welfare, FVA is competent for licensing shelters for stray and owned animals.

Article 14, paragraph 1, of the Law on Animal Welfare states that "Reservoirs, shelters for animals without owners and shelters for animals with owners can be established only after obtaining a license from the KVFS." So, according to this article, the FVA is responsible for licensing entities that shelter stray animals.

Whereas in article 14, paragraph 2, of the Law on Animal Welfare, it is explicitly stated that the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development is competent to determine the conditions of licensing and regulation of shelters. Thus, according to Article 14, paragraph 2, of the Law on Animal Welfare, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development, has the responsibility to determine the procedure and criteria for licensing animal shelters without owners and with owners. Article 17, paragraph 1, point (o), of the Law on Animal Welfare, explicitly stipulates that entities that establish animal shelters and do not obtain a license from FVA as defined in Article 14, paragraph 1 of this law, will be fined for violations with a fine from 100 to 5,000 Euros.

FVA is also responsible for the identification and registration of animals. This competence of the FVA derives from the Regulation on the Organization of the Food and Veterinary Agency and from the Regulation on Supplementing and Amending the Regulation on the Organization of the Food and Veterinary Agency. Pursuant to Article 7, paragraph 1, subparagraph 1.3 of the Regulation on Supplementing and Amending the Regulation on the Organization of the Food and Veterinary Agency, the Directorate for Animal Health and Welfare, within the FVA, is responsible for the identification and registration of animals, as well as monitoring their movement.

⁴⁰ The Food and Veterinary Agency was established under Article 36 of the Law on Food. Prior to the establishment of the Food and Veterinary Agency, the responsibilities that this institution now has were distributed in several institutions. One of them was the Kosovo Veterinary and Food Service or KVFS, where according to the Law on Veterinary, this institution has been an executive agency within the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development. With the entry into force of Law no. 03/L-016 on Food, KVFS has been replaced by the Food and Veterinary Agency. Consequently, in all laws that say KVFS, we are dealing with the Food and Veterinary Agency, or FVA.

So, according to this regulation, FVA has the responsibility to take care of the identification, registration and monitoring of the movement of all animals in the Republic of Kosovo.

The obligation of the FVA for the identification and registration of animals derives from Article 12, paragraph 2, of the Veterinary Law, where according to this article, FVA must maintain a central register for the registration and identification of animals. Article 12, paragraph 1, of the Veterinary Law, specifies that the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development, has the authority to issue administrative instructions in accordance with this law to establish systems for identification and registration of animals.

It should be noted that in accordance with Article 12, paragraph 1, of the Veterinary Law and Article 4, paragraph 1, point (g) of the Law on Animal Welfare, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development, has issued the Administrative Instruction for Identification and Registration of Companion Animals. Article 1 of this administrative instruction states that "This administrative instruction defines the criteria, procedures for the identification and registration of companion animals, and their retention in a central register, in order to preserve public health and animal health." Therefore, the purpose of this administrative instruction is to establish a central register, which according to the definition given in Article 3, paragraph 1, subparagraph 1.4 of the Administrative Instruction on Identification and Registration of Companion Animals, refers to the register for registration of companion animals that FVA must maintain. It should be noted that according to the definition given in Article 3, paragraph 1, subparagraph 1.1 of the Administrative Instruction on the Identification and Registration of Companion Animals, the designation "Companion Animals" according to this instruction refers to dogs and cats with owners.

Thus, in conformity with Article 1, in conjunction with Article 3, paragraph 1, subparagraph 1.1, this administrative instruction and AI 02/2021 - On amending and supplementing AI 02/2018 (MAFRD) - On the Identification and Registration of Companion Animals, apply for dogs and cats with owners, and that the registration in the central register kept by FVA in accordance with this instruction should be done for dogs and cats with owners.

Pursuant to Article 5, paragraph 1, in conjunction with Article 4 of the Administrative Instruction on the Identification and Registration of Companion Animals, the identification and registration of dogs and cats with owners in the central register must be done each time under the supervision of FVA. Article 5, paragraph 1, of this administrative instruction, stipulates that the implementation of the identification, i.e. the placement of the microchip is done by the economic operators contracted by FVA and must be placed on dogs and cats with owners by veterinarians who are authorized and contracted by FVA.

Article 4 of the Administrative Instruction on Identification and Registration of Companion Animals foresees that companion animals are identified by microchip within 90 days from the date of birth, while Article 15, paragraph 1 of this AI provides that all companion animals which are not identified by microchip must be identified in accordance with this AI.

In the AI 02/2021, which supplemented the AI 02/2018 - for the Identification and Registration of Companion Animals, have been added the responsibilities of the owners and the obligation of the owners to register their companion animals and provide their data in the central FVA register. Article 4 of this instruction, and sub-points 1-6, define when, how and under what conditions the companion animals (dogs, cats) must be registered (microchipped) and what should be done in case of import of any companion animal from another country into Kosovo.

10.4 AUTHORIZATIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE MUNICIPALITIES IN RELATION TO THE CONTROL AND MANAGEMENT OF THE STRAY DOG POPULATION

Article 13 of the Veterinary Law defines the authorizations and responsibilities that the municipal authorities have in relation to the control and management of stray dogs, which must be exercised in accordance with the procedures established by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development.

According to Article 13, paragraph 1, point (a) of the Veterinary Law, the Municipal Authorities are responsible for the registration of dogs. So, in accordance with this provision, the Municipal Authorities have the duty to register the dogs, regardless of whether they are with or without an owner.

Whereas, according to article 13, paragraph 1, point (b), of the Veterinary Law, the Municipal Authorities have the duty to vaccinate dogs against rabies and dehelmetize against echinococcosis. Article 13, paragraph 1, point (c), of the Veterinary Law, provides that the Municipal Authorities are obligated to catch stray dogs and if needed, use euthanasia, while according to point (d) of this paragraph, the municipal authorities, in case they use euthanasia, then they have the duty to dispose of the bodies in a safe place. Another obligation of the Municipal Authorities in relation to the control and management of stray dogs is the obligation to establish places for the care of dogs. According to Article 13, paragraph 1, point (e), the Municipal Authorities have the duty to establish dog care centers.

As mentioned above, the authorizations and responsibilities set forth in Article 13 of the Veterinary Law, must be exercised by Municipal Authorities in accordance with procedures set by the MAFRD. It should be noted that in addition to the Administrative Instruction on Technical Conditions to be met by Temporary Care Centers for Stray Animals, issued by the MAFRD, which has mandated municipalities to establish temporary care centers for stray animals, the MAFRD, has not issued any other administrative instruction in accordance with Article 13 of the Veterinary Law.⁴¹

It is important to emphasize that in 2015, the Municipality of Vushtri, based on the Law on Local Self-Governance⁴² issued the municipal Regulation on the Conditions of Keeping Dogs and Cats and the Manner of Action in Case of Their Abandonment or Loss. Articles 16 and 17 of

41 Article 2, paragraph 3, of the Administrative Instruction on Technical Conditions that must be completed by the Temporary Treatment Centers for Stray Animals, provides that "Municipalities are obliged to have a center for temporary treatment of animals and to provide a special place for the safe disposal of the bodies of dead animals."

42 The Law on Local Self-Governance, respectively Article 17 of this law, specifies the authorizations of the municipalities. Article 17, paragraph 1, point (e), provides that the municipality has the competence to take care of the protection of the local environment, while in point (j) of this paragraph, it is provided that municipalities have the authority to ensure primary public health, whereas point (s) of this paragraph provides that the municipality is competent for any other matter that is not expressly excluded from their competence, or that is not assigned to another authority. Based on the fact that the issue of control and management of stray dogs is an issue that first concerns the public health, then the same topic is a matter of local environment, then municipalities in accordance with these provisions have a duty to control and manage the stray dog population.

this regulation foresee the establishment and operation of shelters. Article 16 of this regulation stipulates that the establishment of a shelter must go through the FVA, respectively the entities that establish shelters must be licensed by FVA. Article 17 of the Regulation on the Conditions of Keeping Dogs and Cats and the Manner of Action in Case of Their Abandonment or Loss, regulates the treatment of dogs without owners. According to this article, shelters that operate within the Municipality of Vushtri, established in accordance with applicable law, must take care of every animal without owner, and after treatment (castration, sterilization, vaccination, and placement of the microchip) offer it for adoption to interested persons. Article 18 of the Regulation on the Conditions of Keeping Dogs and Cats and the Manner of Action in Case of Their Abandonment or Loss, provides that the established shelters will house the following dogs and cats as follows: 1). Lost dogs and cats until they are returned to their owner; 2). Abandoned dogs and cats, for which the identity of the owner cannot be verified; 3). Dogs and cats for which the owner cannot ensure the conditions required for their keeping.

It should be noted that Article 19 of the Regulation on the Conditions of Keeping Dogs and Cats and the Manner of Action in Case of Their Abandonment or Loss, regulates the issue of registration of dogs and cats. According to this provision, all keepers of dogs or cats are obliged to register their animals at the municipal center for animal registration.

In 2015, the Municipality of Decan issued a municipal Regulation on the Conditions of Keeping Dogs and the Manner of Action in case of their abandonment or loss and the Shelter for Stray Dogs, which regulates the treatment of abandoned, lost, and stray dogs. Article 15 of this regulation provides that "collection, transport and accommodation of abandoned and lost dogs is done by the company authorized/contracted by the Municipality." Articles 17, 18 and 19 regulate the establishment of shelters for stray dogs. According to these provisions, the shelter, which is established after receiving the license from the FVA, must make a public announcement for each found dog, and call for the dog owner to come forth. If the dog owner is not found, then the shelter makes a public announcement that the dog is ready for adoption. After finding the dog, the shelter is obligated to treat the dog (castration/sterilization, vaccination and microchipping).

After a detailed analysis of the legislation of the Republic of Kosovo, we can conclude that the most competent public institutions for controlling and managing the stray dog population are the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development, the Food and Veterinary Agency, and the Municipal Authorities (municipalities). These institutions, based on the legislation in force in the Republic of Kosovo, directly or indirectly have a role in controlling and managing the stray dog population.

Based on the legal analysis, it can be concluded that even though there is a sufficient legal infrastructure for the relevant institutions to control and manage the stray dog population, it is still necessary to issue additional bylaws for this issue, for which the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development is responsible.

04



*IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
STRAY DOG POPULATION
MANAGEMENT PROGRAM*

This strategy, through its program, will be presented in three different proposed time periods for the implementation of the CNP: short, medium and long term.

To implement the measures proposed in this strategy, the measures will be presented in the CNP action plan specifying the responsibilities of all parties involved, the timelines and the expected results from the implementation of the measures.

11. ACTION PLAN

Effective management of the dog population is a continuous commitment, with the measures described above in point 9, but also new measures that evolve over time based on current situations and by always identifying the sources of the problem. This requires a combination of actions of a stable system of governance by having political and social support. To implement this strategy with the CNP and the SDPMMs, four important implementation components need to be envisaged, which are:

1) Legislation and its implementation

Legislation related to the SDPMMs is at two levels: central and municipal legislation. It is more than necessary to propose new laws and bylaws and to improve the current provisions, to provide a solid basis for solving the problem of the large number of stray dogs in Kosovo. However, without proper implementation, proposed or improved legislation will be ineffective.

In order to implement this strategy and also to fully implement the legal provisions in force, veterinary and other inspectors, along with police, must be engaged, to inspect any case of bad animal keeping, to impose as many fines as possible so that animal owners become aware of the responsible keeping of companion animals.

2) Inter-institutional group and municipal working groups

For this strategy to be effective and sustainable, serious leadership from an inter-institutional group is required, to steer long-term measures towards agreed projects and through adaptive management cycles. This central level group must monitor the whole process of the implementation of this strategy and its proposed measures. Apart from the inter-institutional group, each municipality should have its own task-force (MIIG) to oversee the implementation of the measures in their territory. The MIIGs will report to the inter-institutional group for the progress of the program. The groups in question should monitor the entire process of implementing the proposed strategy and measures.

3) Financial sustainability and partnerships

In the context of inter-state cooperation, the Government of Kosovo can and should seek financial support and expertise from other interested countries to assist in managing the stray dog population in Kosovo. This assistance can be provided directly by foreign governments or by various authorities, whether they are specialized in international assistance or in the management of the stray dog population, always considering the practices implemented in their home countries.

4) Community engagement

Community engagement is an important process for building relationships between people who have a role or interest in improving the situation of dogs in their community and state institutions that are mandated to protect animal and human health.

Citizens must work together with municipalities as a community to assess the dog population and to design and implement an appropriate and sustainable system at the local level.

11.1 ACTION PLAN AND MONITORING OF THE PROGRAM

Nr.	Proposed measures	Responsible institutions	Dead-line	Expected results	Objectives/Field of intervention	Implementation measures	Key Performance indicators
A	LEGAL SUPPLEMENTS AND AMENDMENTS						
1	Compilation of the Administrative Instruction for the control and licensing of companion animal breeders						
1.1.	To be reviewed and approved by the responsible group of MAFRD	MAFRD, FVA, CSOs	2021 ST	Approval and entry into force of the AI on control and licensing of companion animal breeders	Control of companion animal breeders to prevent unrestrained and unlicensed breeding	Institutional commitment and appropriate resources (human and financial)	AI is signed by the Minister of MAFRD and posted in the Official Gazette
2	Supplementing and amending the Administrative Instruction (MAFRD) 04/2017 on Technical Conditions to be met by Temporary Care Centers for Stray Animals						
2.1	Establish a working group for supplementing and amending AI (MAFRD) 04/2017	MAFRD, FVA, CSOs	2021 ST	Supplement and amend some articles of the AI for more effective CNVR projects	Better welfare of stray animals in TCCs dedicated for CNVR projects	Institutional commitment and appropriate human resources (working group)	AI supplements and amendments are signed by the Minister of MAFRD and posted in the Official Gazette
3	Compilation of Administrative Instruction for responsible keeping of companion animals						
3.1.	Establish a working group to compile the administrative instruction	MAFRD, FVA, CSOs	2022 SHT	Approval and entry into force of AI on responsible keeping of companion animals	Defining the conditions and obligations of responsible keeping of animals, based on the principles of the five animal freedoms	Engagement of human resources in the responsible institutions	AI is signed by the Minister of MAFRD and posted in the Official Gazette ⁴³
4	Compilation of Administrative Instruction for Shelters and Rescue Centers						
4.1	Establish a working group to compile and approve the administrative instruction	MAFRD, FVA, CSOs	2022 SHT	Systematize the concept of shelters and rescue centers	Establish functional shelters that respect the rules for keeping animals	Institutional commitment and appropriate resources (human and financial)	AI is signed by the Minister of MAFRD and posted in the Official Gazette
B	IMPLEMENTATION OF LAWS AND OTHER SUB-LEGAL ACTS						
1	Identification and registration of companion animals according to AI (MAFRD) 02/2018 & 02/2021						
1.1.	Purchase of 10,000 microchips with the national code of Kosovo and start of registration of dogs with owners	MAFRD, FVA	2021 SHT	Commencement of registration of dogs with owners and dog owners themselves	Prevention of abandonment of dogs with owners, stricter control of the dynamics of dogs with owners and prevention of the spread of zoonotic diseases	Budget planning and allocation, and constant contracting of veterinarians	5,000 dogs registered and microchipped by 2023 and 20,000 dogs registered by 2026

⁴³ https://www.aspc.org/sites/default/files/upload/images/aspc_a_s_v_five_freedoms_final1.ashx_.pdf

Nr.	Proposed measures	Responsible institutions	Dead-line	Expected results	Objectives/Field of intervention	Implementation measures	Key Performance indicators
1.2.	Continuous contracting of veterinary entities for the registration of companion animals	FVA	2021 SHT	Start of registration of dogs with owners and owners themselves to the national register	Avoid partial projects and ensure continuous and complete implementation of AI 02/2018 and 02/2021	Budget planning and contracting of economic operators	Active veterinary entities for identification and registration of companion animals
1.3.	Engagement of veterinary inspectors and Kosovo Police	FVA, Kosovo Police (MIA), Municipalities	2021 SHT	Start of control and inspection for the registration of dogs as companion animals	To successfully register dogs as companion animals and to inspect dogs with owners in public spaces	Engagement of human resources in relevant institutions	Fines imposed for owners of non-registered dogs
1.4.	Provide microchip readers/scanners for companion animals	FVA, MAFRD	2021-2022 SHT	Budget planning for the purchase of microchip readers/scanners	Inspectors and police have all the necessary equipment to conduct inspections	Budget planning	Microchip readers/scanners are delivered to police and veterinary inspectors
2	Implementation of the Administrative Instruction for responsible keeping of companion animals						
2.1.	Engage and train inspectors for the protection of companion animals	MAFRD, FVA, CSOs	2022-2023 MT	Specialize inspectors for monitoring and inspecting the welfare of companion animals	Active and professional inspectors in inspecting the conditions of keeping companion animals	Engagement and training of human resources at the relevant institutions	At least 70% of inspectors trained in companion animal welfare protection
2.2.	Training of police staff	KAPS, FVA, CSO	2022-2023 MT	Inform and train police officers on animal protection and compliance with applicable legal provisions relating to the protection of animal welfare	Police officers trained and dedicated to solving problems with or towards companion animals	Engagement of human resources and budget planning	At least 30% of police officials trained in companion animal welfare protection
2.3.	Mandatory training for companion animal owners (20-30 hours of training)	MAFRD, FVA, CSOs, Economic Operators	2022-2023 MT	Legal obligation for companion animal owners to prevent abandonment and irresponsible keeping	More responsive owners and fewer abandoned or abused dogs	Budget planning and law revision	By the end of 2023, all dog owners have finished professional training course for companion animal keeping
3	Implementation of the new Administrative Instruction for Shelters and Animal Rescue Centers						
3.1.	Engagement of inspectors to inspect shelters and rescue centers	FVA, Municipalities	2022-2023 MT	Engage inspectors in enforcing the legal provisions	Improve shelter inspections for the wellbeing of animals and people	Law revision, engagement of human resources and budget planning	A thorough official report by FVA and MAFRD on the situation of shelters in Kosovo

Nr.	Proposed measures	Responsible institutions	Deadline	Expected results	Objectives/Field of intervention	Implementation measures	Key Performance indicators
3.2.	Subsidizing shelters that meet the standards and their transformation into rescue centers for emergency cases	MAFRD, FVA, Municipalities	2022-2023 MT	Functionalization and systematization of current and upcoming shelters to rescue and treat stray dogs, also to shelter aggressive and abandoned dogs	Avoid stray dogs in case of abandonment and active shelters for emergency cases and establish a sustainable adoption program	Budget planning and allocation	Active shelters and rescue centers that fully respect animal welfare, are sustainable and have adoption programs
4	Establishment of inter-institutional group						
4.1.	Decision to establish an inter-institutional group for the management of stray dogs	PMO, MAFRD, MLGA, FVA, Municipalities	2021-2022 ST	To have a working group with the relevant stakeholders, to better coordinate and monitor actions to manage the stray dog population	More serious and continuous commitment for the implementation of measures for the management of the stray dog population	Institutional commitment, human resources and budget planning	Official decision to create the inter-institutional group with all the relevant stakeholders
C	CONTROL OF BREEDING AND SALE OF DOGS						
1	Control of breeders						
1.1.	Strict control by FVA of breeders of companion animals and their breeding centers	FVA, Inspectors, Municipalities	2021 SHT	Effective control of dogs that are bred, sold or imported in Kosovo. Prevent uncontrolled breeding and numerous abandonments by the breeders themselves	Establish a serious state system for controlling the dynamics of dogs	Engagement of inspectors and budget planning	Closure of illegal breeding centers and sanctioning of illegal breeders
1.2.	Establish rescue centers for dogs that are confiscated from breeding centers	MAFRD, FVA, Municipalities	2022-2025 LT	To have an infrastructure to accommodate companion animals that are confiscated	Establish a sustainable housing system for confiscated animals	Budget planning and institutional engagement	Functional rescue centers throughout Kosovo for confiscated animals

Nr.	Proposed measures	Responsible institutions	Deadline	Expected results	Objectives/Field of intervention	Implementation measures	Key Performance indicators
D	EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS AND AWARENESS RAISING OF SOCIETY						
1	Awareness raising of society						
1.1.	Organizing information sessions through various communication channels (TV, Radio, social networks etc.)	MAFRD, FVA, Municipalities, CSOs	2022 onwards	Constantly have the necessary information for people who keep or plan to keep companion animals	Raise awareness of the community of people who keep companion animals to reduce the number of abandonments	Budget allocation and engagement of human resources	Survey of citizens on animal welfare and abandonments
1.1.1	Identification and registration of companion animals according to AI (MAFRD) 02/2018 and AI (MAFRD) 02/2021	MAFRD, FVA, Municipalities, CSOs	2022 onwards	Better informed dog owners about the legal obligation to register their dogs	Awareness raising on microchipping dogs and their registration in national register		Survey of dog owners on the obligations to identify and register their dogs
1.1.2	Responsible dog keeping	MAFRD, FVA, Municipalities, CSOs	2022 onwards	Better informed dog owners about proper keeping of dogs that fully respects their welfare	Continuous structured information campaigns for current and future dog owners		Survey of dog owners on the responsible keeping, inspections for responsible keeping
1.1.3	Sterilization benefits of stray and owned dogs	MAFRD, FVA, Municipalities, CSOs	2022 onwards	Better informed community (including dog owners) on the benefits of castration and sterilization	Debunk the negative myths about sterilization & castration and correctly inform people of their benefits		At least 1000 dogs with owners sterilized by Q3 2022
1.1.4	Dog behaviour and their nature	MAFRD, FVA, Municipalities, CSOs	2022 onwards	More informed community on dog nature and characteristics	Debunk the myths of dogs being filthy and dangerous		Survey of citizens on dog behavior, less cases of dog bites on people
2	Education in schools						
2.1.	Organizing activities/lectures in primary and secondary schools, on animal welfare and responsible keeping	MESTI, Municipalities, CSOs	2021-2023 MT	Educate new generations on proper animal keeping and welfare	Avoid unplanned purchases of companion animals and numerous abandonments because of improper information on dogs as companion animals	Budget planning and engagement of human resources	At least 1000 organized lectures in schools by the end of 2022/2023 school year, whereas at least 15000 lectures until 2026

Nr.	Proposed measures	Responsible institutions	Deadline	Expected results	Objectives/Field of intervention	Implementation measures	Key Performance indicators
2.2.	Incorporate animal welfare lessons into school curriculum	MESTI, Municipalities, CSOs	2023-2026 LT	Continuous learning about animal welfare	Formalizing school lessons and changing school curricula	Budget planning and institutional engagement	Animal welfare is included in school curriculum
E	SUBSIDY OF THE STERILIZATION OF DOGS WITH OWNERS						
1	Sterilization of dogs with owners						
1.1.	Contracting veterinarians for the treatment of small animals	FVA, MAFRD, Municipalities, CSOs	2022 SHT	Sterilization of dogs as companion animals to help reduce the uncontrolled reproduction of dogs	Prevent unwanted or accidental breeding of dogs	Budget planning	At least one veterinary subject continuously contracted for each municipality
1.2.	Organizing awareness campaigns for free sterilization of dogs with owners	MAFRD, FVA, Municipalities, CSO	2022-2023 SHT	Informing dog owners on sterilization benefits and free service of sterilization	Educate dog owners to sterilize their dogs	Budget planning and institutional engagement	Increased number of sterilized dogs with owners
F	CNVR PROJECTS FOR REPRODUCTION CONTROL OF STRAY DOGS						
1	Evaluation of veterinarians for CNVR processes						
1.1.	Periodic trainings for veterinarians in surgical practices in small animals	FVA, Veterinarian Associations, Veterinary Faculty, CSOs	2022-2023 SHT	Train veterinarians lacking practical and professional experience in castration and sterilization of small animals	To not include veterinarians who do not have professional capacity for surgical treatment of small animals	Budget planning and institutional commitment	At least 4 training seminars/workshops organized during the year
1.2.	Veterinary licensing division (specializing in small and large animals)	MAFRD, FVA, Veterinary Faculty	2022-2026 LT	To appoint and specialize veterinarians according to their field of study and experience, in order not to operate on small animals without being specialized for it	Avoiding the violation of the welfare of stray animals and building professional veterinary capacities through specializations	Human and institutional resource engagement	New specialization direction for small animals is approved and included in the Veterinary Faculty
2	Continuous tendering of CNVR projects simultaneously by all Municipalities						
2.1.	Contracting veterinarians, trained and experienced in the treatment of small animals in all municipalities	FVA, Municipalities	2022-2023 SHT	To have continuous and sustainable projects for the sterilization of stray dogs	Fewer unsterilized dogs on the street - less reproduction on the street	Budget allocation and contracting of economic operators	Active and continuous CNVR projects in all municipalities

Nr.	Proposed measures	Responsible institutions	Deadline	Expected results	Objectives/Field of intervention	Implementation measures	Key Performance indicators
3	Septic tanks for safe disposal of dead animals						
3.1	Allocation of space in all municipalities for the safe disposal of dead animals	Municipalities	2021 onwards	Ensure a better public health	No dead animals in public spaces by which public health is endangered	Budget planning, cooperation of central and local level	Septic tanks created in every municipality
G	CONTROL OF ACCESS TO RESOURCES						
1	Control of the movement of stray dogs through control of access to resources						
1.1.	Food and water points for stray dogs	Municipalities	2022 SHT	Establish feeding points for stray dogs in all municipalities, away from heavily populated areas	Establish a care structure for stray animals in the absence of adequate housing	Budget Planning	At least 25 feeding points for each municipality
1.2.	Regular waste collection	Municipalities	2021 SHT	Avoid large presence of dogs near restaurants, schools, nurseries, and litter bins	Establish a stray animal care structure in the absence of adequate housing, and consequently cleaner public areas	Budget planning and engagement of additional staff for waste collection	Cleaner public spaces
H	NEIGHBORHOOD CARETAKERS FOR STRAY DOGS						
1	Placement of neighborhood caretakers for stray dogs						
1.1.	Decision on the establishment of neighborhood caretakers for stray dogs and their competencies	MAFRD, MLGA, Municipalities	2022-2023 MT	Monitor the number of stray dogs and their overall condition in the community. To have more public safety and more care for stray dogs	Establish a serious institutional approach to monitoring and managing stray dogs in different neighborhoods of Kosovo	Human resource engagement and budget planning	The official decision has been signed by every municipality by end of 2023
1.2.	Subsidizing and hiring neighborhood caretakers	MAFRD, MLGA, Municipalities	2022-2024 MT	Engage individuals in the capacity of 'neighborhood caretakers' for stray dogs in all municipalities in to concretely manage the stray dogs	Establish a care structure for stray dogs in the absence of adequate housing	Budget planning and human resource engagement	Neighborhood caretakers are hired in every municipality

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*“The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can
be judged by the way its animals are treated.*

Mahatma Gandhi



Animal Rights Foundation Kosovo

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