

Kyrenia Animal Rescue have a policy to run a Neuter and Return programme in the Girne area since 2004. The cats and dogs running loose in the community have always been a part of the TRNC and some people think as part of its charm other believe the opposite. Over the years nothing has been done to help control the inevitable growth in the numbers of these animals. After years of experience gained in working and caring for these animals and following research carried by professional animal welfare organisations worldwide KAR decided that the Neuter and Return programme was the only way forward that would make a lasting difference and will eventually benefit the animals and the whole of the community.

What is a 'Neuter and Return' programme?

It is a unique project that is being run in many different countries around the world in a bid to show that the only way to humanely reduce the population of street dogs is through a Neuter and Return programme.

'Dogs Trust UK.' Is one of the worlds leading organisations in the field of animal welfare recommends and gives guidance under this programme (www.dogstrust.org.uk.) *'In the long term, control of reproduction is by far the most effective strategy of dog population management'* (World Health Organisation Geneva Guidelines for Dog Population Management).

Dogs are collected, neutered, treated for zoonotic diseases, a numbered red ID tag is put into their ear and they are released back into the community. (During a recent visit to Istanbul many of these tagged dogs could be seen in the city and surrounding areas happily living in the community.)

Why do we need a 'Neuter and Return programme'?

Every year millions of dogs from around the world are poisoned, or shot in an effort by members of the public or municipalities to rid their streets of the 'menace' of stray dogs. These dogs are treated as nothing more than vermin to be exterminated.

Dogs and humans have enjoyed a bond, a dependency even, since almost time began. No decent human being would want to see the unnecessary suffering of dogs.

Dogs follow their basic instincts and breed to propagate their species. Humans have been given the gift of taking responsibility for dogs. Sadly some people see that responsibility as a power to kill unwanted dogs sometimes in the most inhumane of ways. This has been proved ineffective as a method of population control because the vacuum left is

soon filled by other dogs from surrounding areas who, move in to utilise the resources available, or by the existing dogs using these resources to raise more puppies.

One street dog bitch in her lifetime can produce up to eight puppies a year and so if she is lucky enough to live for five years she could have produced around 40 more street dogs.

DEFINITION. There is a difference between street dogs and stray dogs. Street dogs are the canine equivalent to feral cats. They are born, live and will probably die on the streets. Stray dogs are dogs which have been born on the streets or are owned and allowed to wander the streets, or else they are previously owned dogs which have been dumped on the streets.

What options are there?

1. Kill the street dogs
 2. Capture all the street dogs and put them into shelters
 3. Control or eliminate the street dog's ability to breed and so gradually reduce their numbers.
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1. **Kill the street dogs:** In North Cyprus this is not an option as the vets will not put a healthy animal to sleep.
 2. **Capture all the street dogs and put them in shelters:** The problem is that all that shelters do is help the dogs that are in their care – and very soon they will be full. Dogs that haven't been captured will continue to breed and others will come in from outside. More and more shelters will have to be built – while more and more dogs will be out there breeding. It is endless, expensive and overcrowded shelters lead to high risk of disease and a lot more problems!
 3. **Control or eliminate the street dogs ability to breed and so gradually reduce their numbers:** While this may seem like a slow way to control the population numbers and the least likely to show immediate effects. This is the only method of street dog control that solves the problem permanently. This coupled with an effective Dog Registration policy and Education programme is the only method of population control that will work to benefit the dogs and the local community.

The story so far!

KAR begun the Neuter & Return programme in 2004 and neuter and treat on average between, 200 to 300 dogs per year. The dogs wear red numbered tags in their ears and are released back into the community. Happily many of these dogs have been given new homes by members of

the public and it is known that a number of these lucky dogs have been given new homes in the UK and Europe. An education programme is under way and leaflets and posters have been prepared in both Turkish and English to inform the public about the importance of Neutering and caring for animals.

We all recognise that there is no easy solution, however from the progress we have made so far we feel that we are heading in the right direction. Our aim is that by reducing the population of street dogs it also reduces the nuisance to the public that is caused by the street dogs.

What to do if you are visited by a tagged dog?

If you do not want the dog on your property then please do not encourage it. The ideal thing to do is to set up a 'feeding station' on a piece of land or in an empty property in your area and ask your neighbours to contribute with regular food and water. Remember these dogs are used to living on the streets and finding their own food from bins etc so make sure that your neighbourhood is supplied with proper rubbish bins and if you are feeding cats that the food for the cats is put up high (cats can climb easily to be fed) making it not so easy for the dogs. Treatment for ticks, fleas and worms could be achieved by collecting amongst your neighbours for spot on and tablets. If there are any injuries or any life threatening problems then please contact KAR.

KAR do not return any dogs that show aggression, young puppies or small breed dogs that may not be able to fend for themselves.

The future.

We hope that the visitors and the people that live in the Girne area will continue to support us in this project and that other municipalities in the TRNC will also begin a Neuter and Return programme in their own area. This programme is also to run in conjunction with a complete dog Registration system.

The aim for the future is that any dog found on the street will either be wearing a numbered tag in its ear and be registered as a 'Community Dog' or will have a Belediye numbered disc on its collar and be a registered 'Owned Dog'.