

The Role of Veterinarians with Regard to Solutions to Canine Overpopulation

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Promotion and protection of animal welfare is one of the core competencies of veterinarians.

Veterinarians occasionally experience conflicting responsibilities in the sense that they 'serve their human clients, their animal clients and society'. Veterinarians have to bridge these different responsibilities on a daily basis. The veterinarian's responsibilities have moved beyond the individual clients and the healing of individuals' animals to dealing with public health, animal welfare, prevention and education as well as many other areas in which the knowledge and experience of veterinarians can be applied. Veterinarians strive to deal with these inherent dilemmas by using their knowledge, expertise and veterinary ethics. However, this cannot be done without good co-operation, and co-operation with the public, governmental administration and relevant NGOs such as those of farmers and animal welfare.

Through their daily work with animals and their owners, veterinarians are important communicators and promoters of responsible ownership of pets and of respecting the animal and its needs including veterinary care.

Mandatory identification and an effective and reliable system of dog registration are crucial for successful animal health and welfare management, not only to reunite stray dogs with their owners, but also to help prevent illegal puppy trading and to promote responsible ownership.

Health monitoring, checks and vaccination programs are not only essential for animals but equally important for public health (zoonoses!).

Notification of relevant diseases and health reports are not only important for preventive health of people and animals but also enormously helpful for making the public and politicians aware of public responsibility for animals!

The start of every birth control program is the basic information that breeding dogs is not just a sign of love for animals or pure nature. Everybody breeding animals takes on a new responsibility! Even feeding stray dogs to alleviate their suffering must be seen as support for breeding them! Such information and education concern private dog holders, animal-lovers and even dog breeders.

Veterinarians, with all their knowledge and skills, need to be part of all birth control programs. Stray dog problems cannot be solved by medical measures alone, but need to include capture, identification, registration, health checks, vaccination or even euthanasia, birth control and controlled release.

Veterinary science is called on to develop appropriate vaccination and health programs!

Good co-operation between veterinarians, AW organisations and governmental administration is essential for success.