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ZERO Strays in The Netherlands

With around 200 million stray animals around the world (according to the WHO), The Netherlands has all but conquered this problem and boasts being the first country in the world with **ZERO** stray dogs.... all due to an extensive sterilisation programme, the implementation of some progressive animal welfare laws and the promotion of adoption.

This near perfect, multi-faceted approach is an excellent example of what a government is able to do to prevent the abandonment of pets.

Stray animals around the world continue to have babies and taking the compounding effect into account, the problem has quickly become unmanageable in many countries. For those who are not aware, the image below describes the multiplication factor of unsterilised parents and their progeny.



SPAY/NEUTER - Fact -vs- Fiction

My dog will get fat

FALSE! With proper diet and exercise, your dog will not gain weight.

The surgery is expensive

FALSE! Litters of puppies cost much more. There are many low-cost options... just contact StreetLife or us!

Females should have at least one "on heat" cycle

FALSE! Litters of puppies cost much more. There are many low-cost options... just ask us!

Reduces risk of cancer

TRUE! Spaying can prevent mammary cancer and uterine infections in females and testicular cancer in males.

Should be sterilised by four months

TRUE! Even for small breeds..... they can go on heat as early as 16 weeks.

Can prevent territorial marking and aggression

TRUE! Male dogs not neutered are more likely to spray strong smelling urine in your home.

One unspayed female, her mate and all of their puppies, if none are sterilised, add up to:

1 year = 16

2 years = 128

3 years = 512

4 years = 2'048

5 years = 12'288

6 years = 67'000

Unwanted PUPPIES = Cruelty and Suffering



The problem with abandonment started in Holland in the 19th century with a rabies epidemic. In 1864, the first Dutch animal protection agency was formed and 13 years later the first canine shelter was opened. In 1962, the government introduced the Animal Protection Act.

A country-wide sterilisation programme was implemented declaring spaying and neutering services to be free for Dutch people.... and mandatory. The **PSVIR** method (pick, sterilise, vaccinate, identify and return) was introduced and slowly, but surely, their objectives were realised. Not just concerned about the problems associated with stray dogs, the Dutch were deeply affected by the suffering of stray animals.

Stronger laws, similar to those currently in the UK, were introduced and any act of neglect or cruelty is punishable by a **3-year prison sentence** and/or a **€16'000 fine**..... sometimes, more. A **special division of Police Officers** was formed with their main objective being the prevention of cruelty or abandonment including rescuing pets from dangerous situations. The public was charged with the task of reporting the presence of a stray dog to animal control, immediately.

It did help that Dutch people are insanely crazy about their pets. They take their puppies with them while cycling and almost all restaurants and cafes are dog-friendly. Pets can travel on public transport at a reduced price and adopting a dog literally pays off because the process is connected to the payment of personal tax. There is a **huge tax** on the purchase of pure-bred dogs and puppies acquired from a store. There are over 200 dog shelters in the country and they all abide by a **"no kill"** code. Each year, approximately 70'000 dogs and cats are lost and found and between 20-50% of them are rehomed when owners can't be traced, via the internet.

AWARENESS IS KEY..... there were many, many campaigns raising awareness of the stray dog situation and the opportunity was afforded to foster homeless puppies. This of course, increased the chances for adoption. This campaign awakened the reality that animals are innocent creatures that are able to feel. This is taught to children both at home and in the schools.... and it became the norm.

During this campaign, more than a million stray dogs were rehomed.

Dog owners are encouraged to take their duties seriously. Dogs must be walked on a leash in most areas and on the beaches, they can enjoy running around from the end of September until April and in the summer months, after 7pm. Most cities have fenced, park areas, cleaned by the government for dogs to enjoy but owners are always obliged to clean up after their dogs. Micro-chipping and the associated registration is mandatory.

This is a most impressive achievement and hopefully, we can look forward to other European countries following this example. Those who love animals call this Utopia!

We should all bombard the Portuguese government with petitions to adopt what has proved to be a successful strategy for managing the cruelty and suffering caused by unwanted litters of puppies. No research costs..... the work has already been done. In a country where tourism income is critical to its economy, the sight of suffering animals is abhorrent to most foreign visitors.

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

Mahatma Gandhi

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