



**HUMANE SOCIETY
INTERNATIONAL**
EUROPE

President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan
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Dear President Erdoğan,

Advancing the welfare of animals in more than 50 countries, Humane Society International works around the globe to promote the human-animal bond, rescue and protect dogs and cats, and confront cruelty in all its forms. HSI is the global arm of the Humane Society of the United States, and together with our affiliates, constitute one of the world's largest animal protection organizations. For more than 25 years, HSI has been developing and operating programmes that humanely manage dog populations throughout the world. Our evidence-based programmes have proven effective while also being humane.

HSI recognizes that managing community dog populations is a complex issue that concerns many municipal leaders and agencies mandated to serve and protect the public. The government of Türkiye was celebrated for its institution of a progressive catch-neuter-return programme as stipulated in the Animal Protection Law No. 5199 to manage street animal populations. However, we are dismayed at the recent passage of a bill to catch stray dogs and cats, put them in shelters and, if they are not adopted after a short period of time, euthanize them. This will undoubtedly involve the mass killing of large numbers of animals, which is neither humane nor effective.

In our experience, removing animals either by relocation or lethal means is completely ineffective in reducing dog and cat population numbers long-term, and in reducing zoonotic diseases and bite cases in humans. The World Health Organization explains that "There is no evidence that removal of dogs alone has ever had significant impact on dog population densities or the spread of rabies." Removing vaccinated and neutered cats and dogs from an area only creates a vacuum in the environment, into which new animals move to take advantage of available resources.

There are many successful examples of humane dog population management from countries around the world who have faced similar issues, such as Türkiye. The Kingdom of Bhutan, for instance, a landlocked country in Asia, initially chose mass sheltering of dogs as their approach to dog management. This approach was extremely resource intensive and had no impact on the street dog population. Dog sheltering was ultimately abandoned for a more humane, cost-effective option. With HSI's support, a nationwide programme was launched under the leadership of the King of Bhutan's support. The programme involved mass dog sterilization, vaccination alongside microchipping, and responsible pet ownership campaigns. Since the programme's inception in 2009, more than 150,000 street dogs have been vaccinated and sterilized, and today, the country boasts of one of the highest dog sterilization rates in the world, at nearly 100%. Dog bites were also greatly reduced as a result of the programme.

HSI also supports successful dog population management programmes across India, a country home to an estimated 70 million street dogs. In Dehradun, for instance, a city of more than one million people, there has been a 60% decline in dog density since HSI launched a programme in collaboration with the local government in 2016. Over a period of 8 years, the programme humanely sterilized and vaccinated 88% of the city's street dogs, leading to a tenfold reduction in the numbers of puppies born.



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Mass dog sterilization, vaccination and community engagement are established components of effective street dog management programmes. This approach is outlined in the [guidances](#) published by the International Companion Animal Management coalition (ICAM), of which HSI is a member. A well-managed catch-neuter-vaccinate-return programme allows for a natural reduction in animal population numbers over time, reduced costs for the municipality, a decrease in public health and safety concerns, a decrease in nuisance complaints, and a reduction in predation on wildlife.

The current legislation in Türkiye already provides a sound foundation for effective and sustainable dog population management. This legislation should be strengthened and supported, rather than changed for an approach far less effective, and one that undermines public trust. As a leader in dog and cat population management, HSI stands ready to provide robust evidence and expert advice to support a more humane approach in Türkiye.

Yours faithfully,

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