

Bulgarian Animal Programs Foundation

Established 2003

18 Janko Sofijski Vojvoda Str., 1164 Sofia, Bulgaria.

Tel: +359(0)28655623

Website: <http://www.animalprograms.org>

Email: pet@animalprograms.org animalprograms@abv.bg

Executive Director: Emil D. Kuzmanov

Registered Charity (Registered under Corp. File No. 12496/2003 of the Sofia City Court)

Press Statement

From the

Bulgarian Animal Programs Foundation (BAPF)

10th April 2012

For Immediate Release:

BAPF calls for a legislative intervention to dog overpopulation crisis

BAPF criticism related to plans for solving dog overpopulation problem by single measures (such as CNR, dog removal, or microchipping) remains unchanged. The comprehensive approach using a set of substantial measures provided by law is a reliable way to deal with dog overpopulation.

Sofia, 10 April 2012 — BAPF has made an urgent assessment of the authorities' plans to deal with dog overpopulation forced by most recent fatal dog attack occurring in Sofia. After careful review of previous and most recent intentions stated by officials, BAPF found that planned and already existing stray dog control practices are not intended to address the pet over-reproduction, so then they are extremely ineffective to change current dog population dynamics.

In light of this review, BAPF today announced that its current recommendation — the Government to consider a legislative intervention in order to avoid further repopulation of unwanted dogs — remains unchanged. The foundation also recommends that Government shall bring together more stakeholders for consultation. Besides government departments, legislators and animal sheltering community, this communication must involve at least representatives of the veterinary community; local, national and international NGOs working in animal welfare; international bodies with relevant responsibilities; community leaders, etc.

BAPF highlights the urgency of providing legal measures that address the source of the unwanted dogs in controlling dog population. Most of the unwanted dogs repopulating the places shall be considered as offspring of the "latch-key dog" subpopulation. "Latch key" dogs are owned animals allowed out to roam and reproduce that present the most problematic minority of the Bulgaria's dog population.

While a range of measures may be employed in a comprehensive dog control strategy, means ensuring responsible dog ownership and transparent animal control services are crucial to reduce the roaming and shelter dog populations.

The BAPF recommendations include strategic and operational activities to reduce dog overpopulation burden. However, the same measures may be taken voluntarily by municipalities. The main elements of the new proposed policy include:

- Tagging and registering in municipal databases all unowned tame dogs currently settled outside as neighborhood dogs, as soon as possible (already enacted, but not done yet);
- Provision for standards in animal shelter reporting on intake and disposition of animals, regardless of individual shelter policies accepted;
- Revision of the euthanasia policies (also for humane reasons, i.e. to reduce abusive treatment and “farming” of dogs);
- Provision for routine identification for owned dogs by ID tags (currently, tattooing and microchipping are allowed);
- Provision for appointing animal control officers charged with duties to reduce dog roam and promote responsible pet keeping;
- Evidence-based legal provisions to reduce deliberate dog breeding.

-ENDS-

Media contact:

Emil D. Kuzmanov, Executive Director, BAPF. Tel: +359(0)28655623, Email: pet@animalprograms.org

Note to Editors:

The Bulgarian Animal Programs Foundation (BAPF) is an independent legislative and educational animal welfare charity. It works to improve knowledge and understanding of companion animals’ needs in order to achieve high standards of welfare for our pets with which we interact every day.

BAPF aims to improve the status of dogs and cats nationwide through its efforts to enhance professional capability in companion animal management; by proposing adequate solutions to national and local authorities, including legislative and “best practice” advices; by improving community awareness on key issues through releasing public comments and providing international coverage; and by educating pet keepers, pet businesses and all those who care about animals.

This work relies primarily on the access to information and the freedom of speech.

KNOWLEDGE IN THE SERVICE OF COMPANION ANIMAL MANAGEMENT