

MANAGEMENT OF THE DOG POPULATION IN AND AROUND PUTTAPARTHI

The link between hunting of wildlife and the constant arrival of new dogs in the area

History

Karuna Society has taken care of dogs since 1998. We take care of accident cases; we give medical treatment and perform birth control operations - ABC/AR (Animal Birth Control and Anti Rabies Vaccinations). This has greatly improved the lives of dogs and humans.

Since 2000, over 10,000 ABC surgeries (mostly females) have been performed reducing the numbers of puppies being born. Without the dogs reproducing there is less suffering and less disease. It is important to understand that the ABC program is for the sake of the human population (not for the dogs) so that the dog population can be controlled and the spread of rabies minimise.



The Karuna outpatient department is visited daily by many local people, bringing their local dogs for free treatment. This helps us have better control on rabies and other diseases. Every healthy dog leaving our clinic will be vaccinated against rabies. After 16 years of service the dog population has been reduced significantly as Karuna continues to perform the surgeries on a weekly basis. All around Puttaparthi, dogs are being picked up for surgeries and are returned to their owners/territories after they have been sterilised. Karuna's activities have created a small pocket of dog population control and animal care for Puttaparthi and surrounding villages.

We were asked by the Sai Baba Ashram authorities if we could extend our activities even more as there are still many dogs.

The problem is that there is a constant influx of dogs in the area.

WHY?

Puttaparthi is surrounded by approximately 15 tribal villages. Every village has a number of hunters. Every hunter has several dogs. In the villages, dogs are part of village life and are used for hunting, watching sheep/goats and the guarding the house. They are not pets. Traveling beggar families have large batches of dogs which are not sterilised or vaccinated. They are used for hunting or sale. As they travel large distances their dogs do not stay within their territory and as such can spread and pick up rabies and diseases.

Whenever local people visit towns or family they bring new dogs, mostly by stealing them and the Bangalore area is popular for this. These dogs are trained for hunting but when they do not perform as expected they are abandoned. Although Karuna has sterilised most dogs in the villages, the new arrivals reproduce again and again and spread rabies as the new dogs are not vaccinated.

We estimate that approximately 50 new dogs arrive in the Puttaparthi area every month!

Is the ABC program working?

Dogs are scavengers and they go where they will find food. They can smell food from a long distance. Their main source of food is garbage and human excrement where people don't use the toilets. In Puttaparthi they are attracted by the smell of the Ashram canteens and the foreigners who are feeding dogs on the road. All these new dogs will hang around and settle in the area. Karuna will eventually sterilise and vaccinate them and give them medical care. Karuna does not receive ANY Government funding for the ABC program. A few years ago the rules changed and it became impossible for us to get a MoU with the municipalities in our area. Karuna's ABC program is ONLY funded by donations. We can not stop the surgeries as it would result in an increase in the population.



Example: The ABC program in Dharmavaram.

About six years ago Karuna carried out the ABC program in the town on request of the municipality. Not once, but twice. All the dogs that we could find were sterilised and vaccinated. As there is no Animal Welfare Organisation in the town to maintain the situation, the influx of dogs caused the situation to deteriorate and finally several hundreds of dogs were killed again (by the local municipality) including the sterilised dogs. This meant opening up new space for new dogs to come in and to reproduce again. Now the situation has returned to how it was before the sterilisations, all efforts and money is lost.



We believe that the ABC program can only work for humans and dogs if there is a constant effort by the municipalities and animal welfare organisations together. **In every village, town and city there needs to be a high quality veterinary service available for this purpose.**

WHAT IS A DOGS LIFE?

-Hunting dogs are kept hungry for hunting. Many of them die as they will be ripped apart by the wild boars being hunted. Some of them arrive at Karuna to have their wounds stitched up.

Old dogs and non-performing dogs are abandoned, they don't get food and eventually they drift to places where food/garbage is available.

-Many dogs are poisoned by the shepherds. Whenever a goat kid is killed by a dog they lace the body with pesticide and throw the pieces to as many dogs as they can find.



Wild boars are hunted to be sold for food



Having a breed dog is becoming a fashion. **Breeding of dogs is illegal!** The breeding female dogs have a terrible life of misuse and abuse. The pups are sold after three weeks, too small and weak and prone to diseases. They are sold in pet shops and even at bus and train stations. Eventually they end up on the road, unable to look after themselves. Although it is a proven fact that killing dogs will not reduce their numbers, in small towns and cities where there is no proper functioning ABC program the dogs are still killed by the municipalities on a regular basis.

Public opinion about dogs

As dogs are scavengers they are in contact with garbage/waste and are seen as unclean. Who is unclean? The human population is producing all this garbage in an open garbage system. An ever growing population combined with corruption seems to make it impossible to clean up. Cattle on the road are dying from plastic ingestion. The dog population provides at least a service by keeping the rat population in check.

Once we were accused by devotees of interfering with the dogs lives through performing the surgeries; "That was not Gods wish, and unnatural. It would have karmic consequences". We also heard from the Anantapur people that they believe that dogs are the incarnations of murderers. This provides a good excuse for retribution, neglect and cruelty?

Who is suffering? Man or beast?

The forest is now almost empty from any wildlife. What is left over will come close to humans in times of drought or disaster and is an easy prey. Farmers extend their fields too close to the reserve forest and they protect their crop with live electrical wires which causes elephants, leopards and sloth bears to die!



Electrocuted Bear Cub, unconscious



Recovering

Last week our staff was called by the forest department to help to locate an electrocuted Sloth Bear. It could not be found. Even Sloth Bears are eaten! When a leopard, jackal or other predator has attacked a young calf or goat the farmer has learned to inject pesticide into the carcass (no smell) and leave it for any wild animal to eat and to die as revenge. Who is a threat to whom?

Who is responsible? Man or beast?

The municipality is by law responsible for controlling the dog population through the implementation of the ABC/AR program (Dog Rules 2001) in contact with existing AWO's. Over the last decades huge efforts have been made by genuine Animal Welfare societies in big cities like Chennai, Delhi, Vishakapatnam and more to control the dog population. In cities where the municipalities themselves take up the ABC, the implementation is very problematic due to corruption and incompetent and uncaring veterinary service. Many dogs die during or after surgery or are not released in their own territory. (Karuna Society appr. 10000 surgeries, 27 deaths, over 12 years)

In Vishakapatnam the Municipality claimed to do 10,000 ABC dogs per year through their own veterinary service. Why is there no improvement? An NGO (VSPCA) got the information through the RTI act that only 1000 dogs, mainly males, were operated. This has no effect on the dog population! Where is the money?

The municipality is also responsible for garbage removal and management! Composting of garbage has become impossible because of the plastic bags and other unnatural material. Although there is a ban on plastic bags below 40 micron the sale and use of them goes unchecked, especially on the markets and in small shops. The Animal Husbandry department which is available in every village is not meant for the service to animals. Their service is meant for the reproduction of "food animals" like milking cows, buffaloes, sheep, goats and chickens - all for the sake of income for the farmer and making India the largest meat exporter in the world.

The State Forest Department is responsible to keep wild animals safe in their forest, control the hunting and rescue and treat injured wildlife. Karuna Society's Wildlife Rescue Centre is the only place for hundreds of kilometers to where the Forest Department can bring injured wildlife. We do not receive any compensation or support from the government.

Conclusions

As long as the human population does not accept responsibility for the situation described above, the suffering of domestic animals and wildlife and humans will not cease to exist.

Mismanagement of animals and nature will come back at our own doorstep.

Solutions

- 1 Veterinary hospital with ABC facilities and high quality care for all animals in every village, town and city.**
- 2 Promotion of animal shelters for inpatient care, care of disabled animals and rescue centres for injured wildlife.**
- 3 Ban on dog trafficking!**
- 4 Garbage maintenance and sanitation. Ban on plastic bags.**
- 5 Make villagers protectors of Forests. (Change of livelihood)**
- 6 Strict legal action against hunting and poaching**

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