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Attitudes of Local Community toward Dogs

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INTRODUCTION

By tradition, Veterinary medicine had a great importance in Bosnia and Herzegovina. During wars on its territory epidemics, natural disasters and accidents occurred throughout the deep past. Protecting livestock had importance for the performance of everyday activities (carrying load, farming, production of food etc)^[1]. Also, apart from that, individual animals have been used to hunt other animals for food, for house security purposes, for recreation, rescue operations etc. Dogs are still being used as guards, lifeguards, detection of lost or stolen items, as detectors of people buried during avalanches, drug and mines detection purposes, the discoverer of criminal activities, guides of handicapped or disabled persons, rescuers etc^[2]. Animals are great friends and companions of humans. They understand, behave and listen to a human order, and they are very clever to be trained for different purposes.

Occurrence of stray dogs in sarajevo after the war 1992-1995

Numerous animals (especially domestic varieties) were killed during the war from 1992 to 1995 in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Lack of food, firewood and water has forced many residents of Sarajevo to change their place of residence due to the existential and security reasons etc. They had to leave their animals outside of their homes. Some animals were very dependent of their owners and practically they were not able at that time to live alone without care. Some of these animals has died of hunger, cold and sorrow for their owners (because they left the country). Films such as "The Perfect Circle" and "We are all neighbors" of the (author Tone Briga) depict of the suffering wounded livestock, hunger, mooing, bleating, barking dogs soughing for help. Some of animals were ill due to infectious disease that occurred because they ate contaminated food, some run amok, and cannibalism appeared (cat ate hungry dogs)^[3,4].

Many parents, who were parted from their children, helped abandoned animals by collecting waste from food and feeding them. Being graceful to those animals, made it easier for parents to overcome the absence of their children (they have been deployed on the battlefields or sent abroad to the safe territory away from the war).

Dog bites–dog attacks on humans in sarajevo

In the period from 2012 to 2013 numerous stray dogs have appeared in Sarajevo, which cold and hungry began to attack adults and children. Those bites were very dangerous, and the victims of these attacks often had to be hospitalized. The population of Sarajevo was very worried because some of the stray dogs were very aggressive. Special concerns were raised for school children, especially ones that go to school in isolated areas of the city, where dogs gather in groups.

The community began to make the animal shelters in large cities where the number of stray dogs has constantly increased.

Animal shelters were built in Gorazde, Bihac, Brcko, Hadzici, Hresa etc. Community has also made an effort to resolve the issue by creation and proclamation of the new Law for animal protection^[5].

This Law caused disagreement in the B&H Parliament. Some parliamentarians thought that all stray dogs should be euthanized, while others supported the idea of sterilization and building shelters with the assistance of the European Union.

The most common attitude was that community should strengthen the construction of shelters for dogs, via electronic media and with various dog show promoting programs motivate people to increase adoption of stray dogs in our country and abroad.

The Construction of shelters doesn't go in the desired direction, so the dogs are still on the streets in larger numbers than ever. Euthanizing dogs is prohibited, but the issue is questionable!!!

After careful observation of these shelters, the conclusion was made that the hygiene standards are not met, and not only for accommodation and feeding. This is all related to the decisions of the local community in which emerges revolts, social unrest, and discontent of the population. In the meantime, stray dogs truly suffer.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is heavily contaminated country with mines and unexploded devices (the highest rate in europe)

Bosnia and Herzegovina has the highest rate of soil contamination with mines and unexploded devices as the consequence of the last war^[6]. In Bosnia and Herzegovina are placed large and successful centers for the training of dogs for mine detection, especially in the city of Konjic and the place Hadzici near Sarajevo (Barracks Žunovnica). Furthermore, B&H has abundant natural resources, such as for example domestic and cross-breed dogs, which are being trained for very important and difficult tasks of mine detection. This problem is addressed with special attention, not only for health and safety reasons, which are surely a priority, but also for economic reasons, because huge amounts of fertile soil in B&H is contaminated by mines and other unexploded devices. It is urgently needed to clean the soil for agricultural purposes.

Animals in Islam (the holy qur'an strongly enjoins muslims to treat animals with compassion and not to abuse them)

God created the seven different species of animals in order to satisfy people's various needs. Animals are living beings and creatures of God. It is forbidden to hunt or go hunting during the pilgrimage of Hajj^[7]. Both state and religious laws protect animals from any form of torture no matter for what purposes.

The legislation on the welfare and protection of animals in Bosnia and Herzegovina was adopted in February 2009^[5], but very little work was done in its implementation. The number of stray dogs has increased, especially in the period 2012-2013. Some estimations indicate existence between 11000-13000 of dogs which have been published in the Bosnian media^[8]. The Emergency Medical Assistance Service registered over 2000 dog bites^[9]. The Controversial animal protection Law from 2009 needed amendments^[10]. The Association for the Protection of Animals "TRUST" has emerged in Sarajevo^[11], similar association named "NERINA" in Tuzla and some other organizations and they organized the protests, petitions, warning with slogans "Do not change the law, just implement it"; "The well-being of people in front of the animal welfare, should be harmonized for both welfare". The Law of the welfare and protection of animals from 2009 implies the jurisdiction of the State Veterinary Office in B&H with veterinary inspections supervised by local communities whose task is to build shelters for stray dogs, establishment of hygienic services for stray dogs, and finding finances for the implementation of the Law provisions^[5]. Six years after the Law was proclaimed, practically nothing was done to solve the problem, the number of stray dogs increased, especially in the winter days the dogs have become hungrier and more aggressive and safety problems increased. Parliament in B&H prepared amendments to existing Law in order to approve the dog euthanasia. This meant that abandoned animals-dogs should suffer twice (after starvation, infection and cold, they would be killed)^[10]. Mentioned supplementing amendments to this Law were not accepted by the majority in Parliament, although some irresponsible citizens started killing stray dogs themselves. One could encounter dead bodies of dogs with bullets wounds on their bodies. Dead dogs bodies have now become a problem, because Sarajevo doesn't have animal cemetery, pet crematories, nor Veterinary inspection did do their job adequately. The fate of stray dogs in Sarajevo was determined by this Law from 2009.

The Animal protection Law amendment determined to open asylum shelter for dogs, and if stray dog is not adopted within 15 days will be euthanized^[10]. The fact is that Law provisions from 2009 determinate euthanasia for aggressive, sick and infected animals. If the Law from 2009 was properly implemented, the situation with dogs would not be such complicating in 2012 and 2013. A new Law on the welfare and protection of animals (practically supplement the previous Law) was rigorous and was adopted by the authorities, due since 2009 authorities done practically nothing for the protection and accommodation of these animals^[10]. Neither of the mayors of the municipalities did anything for accommodation and protection of stray dogs in compliance with the Law from 2009. Bosnian media has published information that construction and maintenance of asylum shelter for stray dogs requires millions of Euro for which there was a possibility of obtaining funds from the European Union. Generally the prevalent public opinion was against killing of stray dogs, because of compassion on one side and cost-effectiveness on the other, because sterilization costs 45 Euro and euthanasia costs 100 Euro. Although the B&H public opinion was divided on this issue, pointing that euthanasia should be abolished, and necessity to give up that idea and begin the implementation of the Law from 2009.

Arguments to vote against the proposed amendments to the Law on the Protection and Welfare of Animals are following:

1. Abandoning animals is with impunity and then uncontrolled reproduction takes place;
2. It is not known which institution was responsible for implementation of this Law in the last four years and who is guilty for the escalation of the situation (the number of dogs has increased);
3. The focus is on the consequences not on the cause (stray dogs still on the street);
4. There is no systematic approach to problem solving; there are only false promises, with no explanation of how it is and what procedures should be done to solve this problem;
5. The main sources of the population of stray dogs on the street are abandoned dogs by their owners and their descendants, and then come non-sterile stray dogs who contribute to the uncontrolled reproduction of the existing dogs on the street;
6. There is no register of dogs in B&H, it is unknown who and when leaves the dog, and those irresponsible citizens are not being sanctioned;
7. Illegal commercial dog breeding is not controlled;
8. Veterinary care is still at a very low level of development and implementation;
9. Police and inspection do not do properly their job in order to prevent those illegal activities.

Regulations of the European Union

Since Bosnia and Herzegovina tends to eventually join the EU, it needs to conform to its regulations and suggestions in many contexts and consequently in the animal protection and welfare. The EU regulations in most member countries are being implemented very successfully in the field of the protection and welfare of animals. It has to be emphasized the application of The Directive 2010/63 EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 from September 2010 on the protection of animals used for scientific purposes^[12]. During the test, the animals must not be tortured in any case, i.e., the animals must be treated humanely in all circumstances.

CONCLUSION

Dogs represent resource in the welfare of people. People use dogs for many different purposes, so people are obliged to take care of them and treat them humanely. Dogs are more social than humans and need to be part of human families. Bosnia and Herzegovina needs to implement applicable regulations on the protection and welfare of animals and also should conduct activities by governmental and non-governmental organizations to strengthen human values of B&H society.

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