

## Module 26

# Companion Animal Welfare



This lecture was first developed for **World Animal Protection** by Dr Siobhan Mullan (University of Bristol) in 2003. It was revised by **World Animal Protection** scientific advisors in 2012 using updates provided by Dr Caroline Hewson.

### Free online resources

To get free updates and additional materials, please go to [www.animalmosaic.org/education/tertiary-education/](http://www.animalmosaic.org/education/tertiary-education/)

# Review: Module 14

## Companion animals have many welfare problems

- ⌘ Vets have a big role in promoting responsible ownership

## Overpopulation of pets creates strays

- ⌘ Control programmes require a coordinated and humane approach
- ⌘ Vets can provide scientific and clinical input

# This module will teach you

## What animal shelters do

- ✦ 'No kill' shelters vs. selective culling
- ✦ Importance of policy
- ✦ Roles in identification, re-homing and neutering

## The welfare problem of aggressive dogs

## Welfare problems in the pet trade

## Welfare problems caused by breeding and showing pets

## Welfare problems caused by veterinary treatments

## Welfare problems with the human consumption of dogs

# What animal shelters do

# Background

**Limited resources**

**Many are overwhelmed by incoming strays**

**Cannot plan longer-term solutions**

- ❖ **Often run by volunteers, motivated by a genuine desire to save animals**
- ❖ **Veterinary input varies**



## Re-homing

- ❖ **Local economy may restrict the feasibility**
- ❖ **Type of animal may also affect this (feral vs. abandoned vs. community)**



# Shelter policy

**What is the realistic capacity of the shelter?**

**What happens if this capacity is exceeded?**

**If selective culling is performed, what are the criteria for choice?**

**What is the role of the shelter?**



# The role of animal shelters

To keep lost pets for collection by owners

To re-home strays

To neuter

- ▣ All animals
- ▣ Neuter and release of some strays





# 'No kill' policy

The 'moral ideal', given limitless resources of space, manpower and money

Unrealistic in many practical situations

May lead to further suffering as a direct result

Does not address the real problems



# The realities of 'no kill' and limited finance

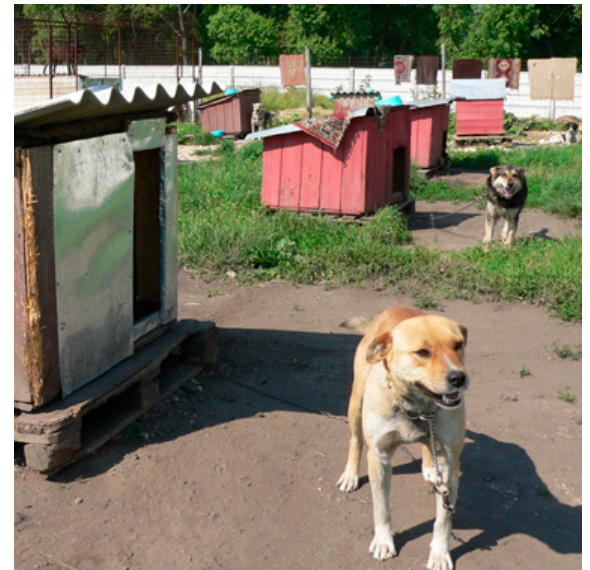
Relative overcrowding in poorly constructed and maintained facilities

Poor hygiene and sanitation

Reduced and unbalanced nutrition

Lack of prophylactic and therapeutic medications

Inability to quarantine or isolate



# Factors predisposing shelters to outbreaks of infectious disease

**Overcrowding**

**Poor hygiene and sanitation**

**Continued contact with and exposure to infected animals**

**Poor nutrition**

**Intercurrent disease**



# 'No kill': is this practical in all countries?



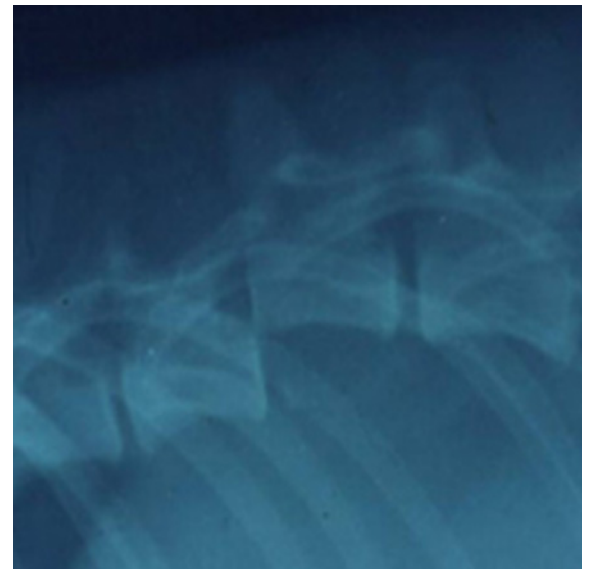
# Selective culling

**Euthanasia – performed for the sake of the individual animal, as an act of mercy**

**Selective culling – killing in a humane way for the sake of the whole population or human society**



Credit: Ray Butcher



Credit: Ray Butcher

# Deciding whether to kill, euthanise or keep newly rescued animals

## Hypothetical example

- ✦ **Shelter has the capacity for 30 dogs**
- ✦ **It is almost at the limit of its capacity**
- ✦ **As veterinary advisor you must**
- ✦ Provide guidelines
- ✦ Devise a protocol that minimises harm to all stakeholders

# **Risk analysis – ‘euthanise’ an animal if he or she**

- 1. Is dangerous to human health**
- 2. Is dangerous to the health of other dogs in the shelter**
- 3. Has a severe injury or disease that cannot be treated**

# Risk analysis – if resources permit, keep an animal if he or she

1. Has a severe injury or disease that can be treated, but at high cost
2. Has a minor injury or disease
3. Has behavioural problems (Diesel et al., 2008)
4. Is healthy with no apparent problems



# The role of animal shelters

To keep lost pets for collection by owners

To re-home strays

To neuter

- ▣ All animals
- ▣ Neuter and release of some strays



# The role of shelters: identification and re-homing

## Identification can

- ❖ Distinguish owned and non-owned dogs and cats
- ❖ Identify repeat offenders
- ❖ Monitor success of re-homing



# The role of shelters: neutering

## Risks

- ❖ Prevents animal exhibiting natural behaviour
- ❖ Surgical intervention inflicts pain and stress
- ❖ Use good anaesthesia, analgesia and surgical technique
- ❖ Predisposes animals to weight gain (female dogs, male cats) (German, 2010)
- ❖ Manage with diet and exercise



# Basic requirements for 'welfare-friendly' neutering

Humane methods of catching

Monitoring for a period after release

Hygienic and comfortable kennelling

Asepsis

Proper handling

Adequate anaesthesia and analgesia

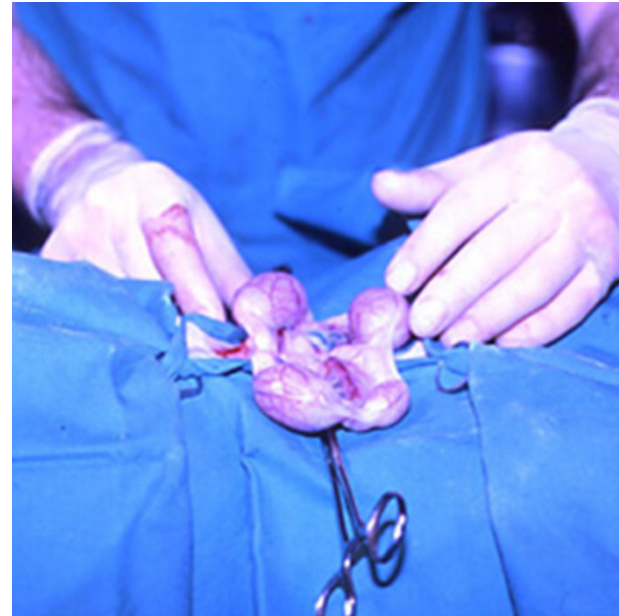
Adequate post-operative nursing care

An adequate standard of surgical facility and technique

# Minimum surgical standards



Credit: Ray Butcher



Credit: Ray Butcher

# Summary

## Animal shelters – issues to consider

- ❖ **‘No kill’ shelters vs. selective culling**
- ❖ **Importance of policy**
- ❖ **Roles in identification, re-homing and neutering**
- ❖ **Next: aggressive dogs**

# Aggressive dogs

## Major problem in many countries

(e.g. Ostanello et al., 2005; Cornellison & Hopster, 2010; Villalbi et al., 2010; Lunney et al., 2011)

## Intense media interest

Governments pressurised to introduce inappropriate 'breed-specific' legislation

Linked to 'dog fighting' – but most bites are by owned dogs on their own property



# The UK Dangerous Dogs Act (1991)

**Breed-specific**

**Strict provisions**

**Automatic destruction order**

**Difficult to interpret**

**Court given no discretionary powers**

**Reversal of burden of proof**



Credit: iStock.



# Aggressive dogs: the problem of breed-specific legislation

## Breeds targeted wrongly

- ✦ There are aggressive and non-aggressive dogs in all breeds
- ✦ Most bites are in the home and by non-aggressive breeds (Cornelissen & Hopster, 2010)
- ✦ E.g. research on re-homing pit bull terriers (MacNeil-Allcock et al., 2011)

## Difficult to identify breeds

## Penalties aimed at dog rather than owner



Credit: Ray Butcher

# Aggressive dogs: the real issue

The problem is that many dogs are owned  
by irresponsible people

Reflects a need for improved public  
awareness and education

Reflects a need for improved socialisation  
and training of dogs (Lindsay, 2000)

Importance of research



Credit: Ray Butcher



Credit: Ray Butcher

# Aggressive dogs: research and legislation

## The Netherlands (Cornelissen & Hopster, 2010)

- ✦ Research on dog bites in the home
- ✦ Importance of owner being trained in dog behaviour

## Spain (Villalbi et al., 2010)

- ✦ Research on bite wounds in people taken to hospital
- ✦ 38 per cent reduction: from 1.8 per 100,000 to 1.1 per 100,000
- ✦ The reduction came after legislation including:
  - ✦ Licensing
  - ✦ Breed-specific rules (muzzling, castration etc.), and
  - ✦ A mandatory psychological aptitude certificate for owners, and absence of criminal records
- ✦ **Not proof that legislation worked, but a strong correlation**

# Summary

**What animal shelters do**

**Aggressive dogs**

**Welfare problems in the pet trade**

**Welfare problems caused by breeding and showing pets**

**Welfare problems caused by veterinary treatments**

**Welfare problems caused by eating dogs**

# The pet trade: pet shops and markets

## Variation in standards and regulation worldwide

### Should take into account the welfare of the animal

- ❖ In the supply chain prior to the shop / market
- ❖ During the stay in the market / shop
- ❖ After being sold



# Pet shops: regulation and legislation

**May involve licensing and inspection**

**Requires a structured method of policing and enforcement**

**Sets a minimum standard of husbandry and care of the pets**

**May restrict particular species that can be sold**

**May require evidence of staff training or qualification**

# Possible welfare problems in the supply chain

**Breeding farms ( 'puppy mills' ) in poor and stressful conditions may predispose animals to disease**

**In-breeding may result in congenital defects**

**Transportation in inappropriate conditions**

**Failure to provide appropriate prophylactic medication**

**Animal may have been captured inhumanely from the wild**

# Breeding and showing dogs: welfare implications

**Involvement for financial gain, as hobby or status**

**Selective breeding resulted in significant hereditary defects and disease** (McGreevy & Nicholas, 1999; Asher et al., 2009; Summers et al., 2010)

**Fashion and breed standards may encourage mutilations for cosmetic purposes**

**May be problems of transport over long distances, and with housing during shows**



# Breed standards: hereditary defects



Credit: iStock.

[www.ufaw.org.uk/geneticwelfareproblems.php](http://www.ufaw.org.uk/geneticwelfareproblems.php)

# Breed standards: mutilations

**Breed standards require removal of certain body parts**

✦ **E.g. tail docking, ear cropping**

**Arguments for the docking of tails have been disproven**

**No scientific evidence to support tail docking or ear cropping**

# 'Unnecessary' mutilations

**A mutilation is any surgical removal or modification of a body part**

- ✦ Sometimes necessary in an individual for therapeutic purposes
- ✦ If performed, should be by a veterinarian with adequate anaesthesia and analgesia

**'Cosmetic mutilations' are unnecessary and should be banned**

- ✦ Includes tail docking, ear cropping, declawing, defanging, debarking
- ✦ Tail docking may not cause suffering in pups (Mellor et al., 2009) but probably predisposes them to hypersensitivity to pain (Hewson, 2008)

# Welfare problems with advanced veterinary therapy

Advances in veterinary science may follow some years behind those in human medicine

In affluent societies, pet owners demand similar therapies for their pets as for themselves

Is there a danger of sometimes providing a service to the owner for financial gain rather than considering the welfare of the pet?

✦ E.g. cancer therapy

# The consumption of dog meat

**Some Asian cultures, e.g. Korea**

**The meat is said to impart special health-giving and aphrodisiac properties**

- ▣ **Said to be enhanced by increased suffering before death**

**Brutal killing methods**

**Poor welfare conditions in markets**



# Consumption of dog meat: what are the dangers?

**Illegal or often unregulated trade**

**Welfare problems in farming / transport / slaughter**

**Long-distance transport of unvaccinated dogs:  
increased risk of disease spread (food safety)**



# Summary and conclusions

## Animal shelters - issues to consider:

- ❖ 'No kill' shelters vs. selective culling: importance of policy to ensure animals' welfare is maintained
- ❖ Roles in identification, re-homing and neutering
- ❖ Aggressive dogs and animal shelters; weaknesses of legislation

## Welfare problems in the pet trade

- ❖ Need for legislation

**Welfare problems caused by breeding and showing pets**

**Need for public education and regulation**

**Welfare problems caused by veterinary treatments**

**Welfare problems with eating dogs**

# Feedback:

## Please let us know what you think

- ❖ How have you used this module?
- ❖ What did you like about it?
- ❖ What did you not like?
- ❖ Do you have any tips to share?

Please take part in our 10 minute survey here:

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Your feedback will help other teachers like you



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