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## Newsletter: September 2014

### Dear Friend / Supporter

It's been a busy year; please forgive the delay in writing to you.

### Over 1,000 items of specialist equipment donated!

SNIP International was founded nearly 20 years ago and we've given away or organised with our partners, Dogs Trust, Cats Protection and MDC Exports Ltd 1,125 items of specialist equipment to overseas animal welfare groups working with stray and feral cats and dogs especially on trap/catch, neuter and return programmes. The equipment ranges from quite large items like cruisers to carry big dogs, to smaller ones like protective gloves.

We have three main avenues for donations:

- the International Companion Animal Welfare Conferences (ICAWC). Last year's conference in Barcelona was the largest yet with over 300 representatives. SNIP International organised the donation of 59 large items and many smaller items of equipment, mainly for use in trap/catch, neuter and return programmes, to 70 groups from 22 countries. This year we are looking forward to being represented in Istanbul



Melvyn Driver from MDC Exports, Kate Horne, Linda Brookes, Lisette Cartier Van Dissel and Annika Lähdeniemi from SNIP International and ICAWC participants happy to receive their equipment in Barcelona in October 2013

- via the training courses organised by Dogs Trust for representatives from overseas groups
- independent grants, often to groups which do not have ready access to ICAWC or the training courses.

We're careful to allocate equipment according to need and training, especially when it comes to potentially dangerous equipment like cat nets and dog poles. We also ask groups for reports on their use of the equipment and have built up a detailed database of their operations.

## Thanks from Zaragoza, Spain

Sticking with the Iberian Peninsula, here's a report from our Database Adviser, John Clarke, who delivered a donation from SNIP International to Proyecto CES in Zaragoza over the summer:

*Linda Brookes had asked me if I could drop off a cat trap and a couple of squeeze boxes in Zaragoza on my way south and I was happy to oblige. As a result I met with Isabel Garcia, founder and main driving force behind a most impressive effort to control and manage the estimated 4.000 free living cats in Zaragoza city. Isabel has tracked 114 colonies within city limits, so assuming 15 cats per colony, the total would be 1710 but she believes she has identified less than half of the colonies. The total for the province of Zaragoza is estimated to be around 100,000 cats and what is most encouraging is that the city councils elsewhere in the province are asking for advice so over the longer term, this is a huge project.*

*Zaragoza in common with most other large towns in Spain has traditionally tried to ignore the free-living cat problem by enforcing a law that forbids the feeding of stray cats and, should enough people in a neighbourhood complain, sending in a team to "capture and remove" the stray cats. Any cats not claimed after a week or so were euthanised. As is becoming well understood, by removing the resident cat population, the council was creating a vacuum and so the area was rapidly re-occupied by a new crop of felines. In Zaragoza, the police also enforced the no feeding law strongly and those caught feeding cats could be fined up to 1,000€. This led to the cat feeders walking around in fear of being denounced and so they tended to feed the cats surreptitiously after dark.*



Transferring a cat from a cat trap to a "squeeze box"

*Isabel felt that this was the wrong approach and in 2012, she persuaded Zaragoza Council to undertake "Proyecto CES" (C-apturar, E-sterilizar y S-oltar [return]) producing a well argued document explaining the different approaches to feral cat control and drawing on the experiences of Barcelona and Cambrils as well as elsewhere in Europe and including the proposals put forward by the EU regarding Animal Welfare. Her suggestions were approved by the Council and with the help of Manuela García Villamayor, an employee of the Animal Protection Office, Proyecto CES was started at the end of 2012. Since then, the Council has passed a new municipal ordinance on the protection, responsible ownership and sale of animals.*

*Because it is under the aegis of Zaragoza Council who pay for the sterilisation of seven cats per week, but provide little additional funding, there is considerable bureaucracy involved, but Isabel now has 100 registered volunteers who carry an official card issued by the City Council, which means that they are no longer in fear of being denounced to the police. The volunteers are mainly feeders, but she also has cat trapping specialists and all volunteers are expected to help with keeping the feeding areas clear of rubbish.*

*I believe there are around 30 established sites set up so far (some are multiple feeding points). Each site is approved by the Council and a notice is posted, explaining that the colony is under the protection of the Council as part of its capture, neuter, return policy. The public are asked to respect the cats and not disturb them. They are asked not to feed the cats as they are looked after by authorised carers who are responsible for the health and feeding of the colony. In addition the notice invites members of the public to join the volunteers and also explains how they can adopt a kitten via the Animal Protection Office.*

*Volunteers wear a yellow official jacket and carry an identity card. They each receive a day's training (carried out in small groups of about a dozen or so). The training explains what the council is doing and advises the volunteers how to act within the law. The cats are sterilised in the veterinary hospital linked to the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine of the University of Zaragoza. Normally sterilisation is carried out one day and the cats are returned the following day with one ear tipped (left for males and right for females). The cost to the volunteers for any additional cats (over the seven per week) is around 60€ which is considerably less than the commercial rate of around 200€ for a female cat.*



Cat recovering from a neutering operation prior to return to site

*We met up with a volunteer, Maricarmen Montori, and I was given a guided tour of their activities, visiting a couple of cat colonies, the veterinary hospital and the offices of the Animal Protection Department (which clearly demonstrates that there is little additional money to put into the programme as the staff work in a modern office, but with few creature comforts).*

*My overall impression is that Isabel, who is a legal assistant by profession, is one of the most impressive people I have met in the cat world. She clearly understands what is required and seems to have the energy and drive to see this project through. For example for funding, she has been round the various dance schools in Zaragoza, rented a hall and put on an evening of dance with the proceeds going to the cat charity. This seems to work well as people want to see their youngsters showing off their accomplishments.*

*All in all, I was very glad to have the opportunity to see what can be achieved in a large city like Zaragoza.*

Cambrils was mentioned in this article as being an example of a city which had demonstrated a positive approach towards humane feral cat population control. One of SNIP International's trustees, Karen Heath of Mama Cat Trust, was involved in the original implementation of the successful model of Trap Neuter Return in Cambrils several years ago. This meant trying to persuade the local authorities that they had a duty to take responsibility for the street cats which at first fell on deaf ears! With much perseverance, it eventually resulted in the Town Hall allocating limited funds for neutering programmes as well as approving feeding posts and registering colonies but equally importantly, by adopting a more tolerant attitude towards the cats of the city whereas they had previously been thought of as pests.

It is so heartwarming to see the amazing difference that Isabel Garcia and Proyecto CES have made to ensure that Zaragoza is now one of the best places for a street cat to live!

## A cutting edge project in Portugal supported by SNIP International

Harry Eckman is the co-founder and Programmes Director of Change for Animals Foundation (CFAF) and Animals Welfare Consultant for SNIPI. Here's his account of a project supported by SNIPI:

*Together with partner organisation Animais de Rua (AdR) CFAF is undertaking a major dog and cat welfare project in Praia de Faro, Portugal that will help advance the way stray and feral cat and dog populations are understood and managed.*

*Praia de Faro is a small peninsula with an isolated community of several hundred dogs and cats. Despite the beautiful surroundings, life for these animals is difficult. Most have been abandoned by summer visitors and have had to survive and make new lives for themselves within the local community.*



Communal feeding point in Praia de Faro, Portugal

*The project will run for three years and has several stages. The initial assessment stage took place in November 2013 when a team of volunteers completed a full population count accurately to record how many dogs and cats there actually are on the Praia. Using the latest population surveying technology adapted specifically for this project, it used a specially designed mobile phone application to record the population and GPS tag each animal for mapping purposes. It also recorded the welfare condition and ownership status of each animal as well as capturing a photographic image of the animal to allow better monitoring of each dog and cat. Results of the November 2013 survey indicate that there is a roaming dog population of approximately 130 – 150 dogs and 160 – 200 feral cats resident on the peninsula.*

*The volunteer team also conducted community surveys across 25% of the local population. It incorporated the community's behaviour, attitudes and practices related to the ownership of pets as well as their attitudes and perceptions of the unowned/roaming animals.*

*The next stage of the project will take place in October 2014 when a large scale Trap Neuter Release (TNR) programme will be undertaken to vaccinate, treat and sterilise the animal population using a team of skilled UK and Portuguese vets. SNIPI has donated some of the trapping equipment which will be used to catch and hold cats, using part of a grant from Animals Worldwide.*

*Working with Losofona University in Lisbon, the project will also be genetically profiling the animals to see whether the restrictive geography of the peninsular has affected the diversity and breeding of the population. Researchers will also be blood testing the animals to assess issues such as disease prevalence to gain a better understanding of the health issues that affect the population and ensure that over the course of the project they can receive appropriate treatments and that their needs are provided for.*

*Over the next two years CFAF and AdR will continue to monitor and survey both the animals and local community of the Praia to assess the impact of the project and continue to work to make sure the people of the Praia have the support they need to care for the animals and improve their lives for years to come.*

## As Harry makes clear, people matter too!

Clarissa Baldwin CBE is standing down as Chief Executive of Dogs Trust later this year after forty years of service and we'd like to take the opportunity to thank her for her major contribution as a SNIP International Director and Trustee for many years. Also for facilitating our liaison with the Dogs Trust international team which organises the training programmes and not least for letting us use the facilities at the office for our meetings. We look forward to working with her successor, Adrian Burder.

On the home front we thank Bob Bacon, our Treasurer, for assuming the role of Company Secretary from Penny Dye FCA, who has given careful and wise advice over a period of five years.

## So does money!

We'd like to take the opportunity to thank all our sponsors over the years: the Alice Noakes Memorial Charitable Trust, the Ann Daubeny Charitable Trust, the Ian Keith and Sylvia Keith Charitable Trust, MDC Exports Ltd, the Petplan Charitable Trust and the SNIP International Friends, and to acknowledge a recent grant from Animals Worldwide which helped with our donation to the Portuguese project.

Regular donations really help with planning our work. Even small amounts make a big difference. If you feel you could commit to a regular sum, do please contact us on [Treasurer.SNIPI@gmail.com](mailto:Treasurer.SNIPI@gmail.com) and request a standing order form. Or you can set up a yearly standing order through PayPal by visiting our website [www.snip-international.org](http://www.snip-international.org) and clicking on "To Donate" box on the homepage.

One-off donations can be made by cheque (instructions and address below), through PayPal (as above via the website or directly from your PayPal account to [Treasurer.SNIPI@gmail.com](mailto:Treasurer.SNIPI@gmail.com)) or by Bank Transfer (see our bank details below).

## A final word from a faraway place



Some of Big Fix's many activities in fairly basic conditions. Not forgetting the two motorbikes!

The Big Fix was established in 2012 and is now a NGO registered in Uganda. Its purposes are:

- to alleviate the suffering of animals
- to improve the health and welfare of animals and people
- to promote good human-animal bonds.

The services are provided in village clinics, with a special effort being made on World Animals Day: vaccinations against rabies and parvo virus, de-worming, flea and tick treatment, spay/neuter and other surgeries, combined with animal care/ welfare education.

The two veterinary staff travel to their often remote destinations on motor bikes!

The Big Fix has to date treated 4,428 animals and surgically sterilised 555 dogs and cats, and set up the first TNR project for feral cats in Gulu, a magnificent achievement. SNIP International is proud to have been able to lend support to such a professional and ambitious venture with a donation of a folding trap and top/end opening carrier.

If you would like to contact us about any aspect of our work, we'd be really pleased to hear from you.

With all best wishes

Kate Horne  
Chairman, SNIP International



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