

October 15, 2024

Wildlife & Welfare
The Old Fire Station
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Dear Mogens and everyone at Vets Without Borders Denmark,

I want to thank you again for the invaluable grants you provided to Wildlife & Welfare for the animals of Ukraine. This includes contributions of 6700 EUR in March 2024 and 50,000 DKK in June 2024. Vets Without Borders Denmark is truly changing lives of animals who desperately need it by preventing the births of countless puppies and kittens on the streets. This is a report on how you have transformed lives of Ukrainian animals through your support to Wildlife & Welfare.

The plight of animals in Ukraine

As the war continues without an end in sight, the lives of people and animals in Ukraine remain bleak. People live under constant fear of when the next missile or drone strike will shake the buildings. They always think about how far they are from the nearest safe place in case the air raid sirens announce an impending attack.



Millions of Ukrainian people who fled their homes at the beginning of the crisis, hoping to return home after a few weeks or months, have not done so. Instead, they started new lives in other countries, found homes and jobs, and planted other seeds of new lives. As a result, many of these people will never live in

Ukraine again, regardless of the war, and more continue to leave due to ongoing Russian attacks on their homes and businesses. This is brutal for the people who remain in the country because it leaves cities and villages feeling almost like ghost towns.

“More and more people are leaving the country, abandoning animals, other people are trying to feed these animals, although they themselves have no money...Closer to the combat zone, the situation is generally catastrophic. Despite all the horror in which they survive, they ask for animal food.”

– Olena, one of our partners in Izmail

The economic impact of the war is often overlooked by international media coverage. Many of the people who left because of the war were business owners or workers, and businesses throughout Ukraine shut down because the owners left or they could not find enough employees to continue. Millions of people were left jobless and faced nationwide shortages of supplies. This is still a severe problem – many of our partners in Ukraine are unemployed due to the war and depend entirely on donations so they can feed and rescue animals in need.



More specifically, the economic impact of the war has been devastating to animal protection organizations and individual rescuers in Ukraine. Some of the largest Ukrainian animal charities have been able to leverage the crisis into a fundraising opportunity, but the many shelters, rescue groups, and compassionate volunteers across the country are struggling. Ukrainian people who used to donate to local charities largely stopped, either because they left the country, they lost their jobs, or they need to save their money for family members in need. Without the local support that organizations used to depend on, they turned to donors and organizations around the world, trying to overcome language barriers, a lack of connections, and a lack of experience in international fundraising and communications.

“There are more and more homeless animals because of the war. They are taken out of frontline areas, they are abandoned by people who leave. And if we do not sterilize them, then there will be so many puppies and kittens. We can't feed them all.”

– Yuliya, one of our partners in Odessa

You and Vets Without Borders Denmark are making it possible to fill this gap by providing the vital help that these organizations, veterinary clinics, and volunteers need so they can continue to take care of animals that are in desperate need.

From an international perspective, the lack of major changes in the war in Ukraine has resulted in diminished news coverage, and the world's attention has turned to the war in Gaza and more recently, typhoons and hurricanes. Grants, donations, and boots on the ground have left as well. Large international organizations that contributed millions of dollars for Ukrainian animals in the first year or two of the war stopped or dramatically reduced their involvement.



Many of the 14 million Ukrainian people who left their homes due to the war had pet cats and dogs, and many did not bring those pets with them. This has caused an unprecedented crisis of pet homelessness in Ukraine. Former house pets with no survival skills have been left with no one to take care of them, scrounging for food and struggling to survive the Ukrainian winters. No one has even attempted to estimate the scale of this crisis by counting the animals roaming the streets or the animals who didn't survive.

Puppies from the frontline

Yesterday, our partner Inessa in Odessa sent us this story and the photos below:

The military is bringing us puppies again. There's no space at the shelter, but the military called. The situation is typical – the mother dog was killed by wild dogs while protecting her puppies, and five puppies are left. They are only a month old and they are just adorable.

We gave them their first vaccinations, and we've already found a new family for one girl. We urgently need to find them new homes. I'm really worried they might get sick. They've been without their mother for over a week.

Thank you for not forgetting us.



Our projects for the victims of the crisis

Since the first days of the crisis in Ukraine, we have been helping the animal victims of the war. **We formed a broad network of animal shelters, volunteers, veterinary clinics, and pet food manufacturers across southern and northeast Ukraine that efficiently provide support where it is needed most**, and this network continues to be at the heart of the work we do today. Rather than paying staff in Ukraine and overhead expenses, we enable hundreds of Ukrainian volunteers to feed, rescue, and sterilize thousands of homeless dogs and cats.

With Wildlife & Welfare, we are running five ongoing projects:

- Feeding abandoned pets
- Sterilizations to prevent a population explosion
- Repairing and rebuilding animal shelters
- Emergency veterinary treatment
- Dog houses to help animals survive the winters

Based on our own observations from five trips to Ukraine since the war began as well as input from our partners in Ukraine, we developed the strategy of focusing largely on food to address the most immediate need of abandoned pets starving in the streets, combined with sterilization which is the most effective long-term solution.

We dedicate smaller amounts of funding to urgent veterinary treatment, priority repairs for animal shelters, and providing dog houses.

We recently conducted an informal poll of our most reliable partners in Ukraine who are volunteers or staff of Ukrainian animal charities, the results of which reinforced this strategy. They listed the following as their current priority needs (with the percentages of respondents who mentioned the action as a priority):

Sterilization (87.5%)

Food (87.5%)

Treatment for sick and injured animals (37.5%)

Vaccinations (37.5%)

Parasite treatment (25%)

Finding homes for animals (25%)

Building kennels and enclosures (12.5%)

Temporary shelter (12.5%)

Sterilizations to prevent a population explosion



The overwhelming number of abandoned pets on the streets, many of whom are not sterilized, can result in exponential population growth and countless puppies and kittens born on the streets into short lives filled with suffering.

While food donations address the urgent need of thousands of animals starving, Wildlife & Welfare complements this with a widespread sterilization program. Thanks to you and Vets without Borders Denmark, we collaborate with veterinary clinics in Mykolaiv, Odessa, and Izmail, as well as volunteers who coordinate with the clinics to bring homeless dogs and cats to them. In addition to sterilization, every animal in this program is vaccinated to protect it from rabies, which is important because a large, roaming, unvaccinated population is vulnerable to rabies outbreaks. We also require every animal to be microchipped so it can be identified in the future. While microchipping pets is not yet a common practice in Ukraine, we agree with other organization that animals should be microchipped to help normalize this practice. It is heartbreaking to think that thousands of Ukrainian pets could be reunited with their people if they had been microchipped before the war.



We personally visited every vet clinic that we collaborate with to assess their standards and facilities. We also require them to record details of every animal they sterilize as part of the program and send us photos of each animal on the surgery table with its microchip number and with the volunteer who brought it.

In recent months, we started to conduct focused sterilization projects in villages and neighborhoods where we can sterilize the majority of unsterilized roaming animals in a short time. For example, we collaborated with Worldwide Vets and our partner Zhanna Slavenko to sterilize 200 dogs and cats in a village where Zhanna feeds strays every week. We also provided funding for Anya Polyanskaya Veterinary Clinic, a partner of ours in Mykolaiv, to travel to two rural villages and catch and sterilize dogs and cats that no one else could collect.

Because of Vets Without Borders Denmark, 470 cats and 150 dogs have already been sterilized in 2024 in Ukraine, for a total of 620 animals who will never produce homeless puppies and kittens.

Since the war began, **you and our other partners have enabled 3,453 cats and 1,061 dogs to be sterilized, for a total of 4,514 animals.** You and Vets Without Borders Denmark have prevented unimaginable numbers of homeless kittens and puppies from being born into lives of suffering and deprivation, most of whom would not survive.



Another sterilization project for 200 animals in collaboration with Zhanna and Worldwide Vets will start later this week. Next month, we are planning the sterilizations of dogs at Love and Laska Shelter who were rescued from the frontline by the Ukrainian military.

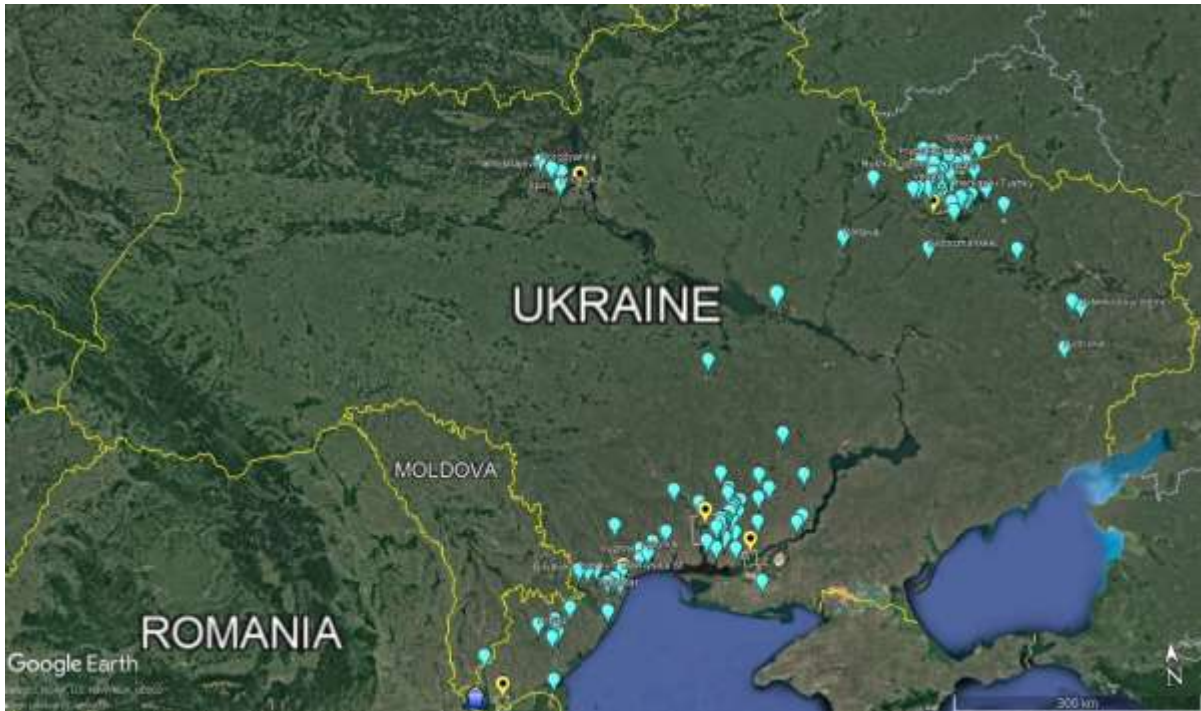
Feeding abandoned pets

More animals are living on the streets of Ukraine than ever in history, and at the same time, many of the people who fed roaming dogs and cats left the country. The most urgent large-scale threat to animals in Ukraine is starvation. We work closely with our network of animal shelters and volunteers to distribute food to hundreds of street feeders and thousands of animals.

Some of the pet food is sent to members of the Ukrainian military who take care of dogs and cats in villages and neighborhoods that have been decimated by the war.



Through this network, **we provide food to more than 9,000 dogs and cats in over 100 cities and villages** in southern and northeastern Ukraine. Rather than sending food to different organizations and volunteers each time, we donate food to the same partners repeatedly, empowering them to keep animals alive for the long term by feeding them regularly. This approach makes a more meaningful impact for the animals than if the food was distributed more widely to large numbers of volunteers.



Locations where the food that we donate is distributed to cats and dogs

In the early days of the war, because many Ukrainian businesses were closed, making it difficult to find reliable low-cost pet food manufacturers in Ukraine, we imported pet food from Romania. We now buy pet food from Ukrainian manufacturers in Odessa and Kharkiv, which reduces costs and lets us avoid the logistical complications of transporting food from a different country and the burdensome documentation required to import humanitarian supplies without paying import tax. It also lets us support Ukrainian businesses at a time when they need it most. They provide substantial discounts for us, charging only 0.77 EUR per kilogram of dog food and 1.10 for cat food in Odessa and 0.92 EUR per kilogram of dog food and 0.99 for cat food in Kharkiv.



Thanks to our partners around the world, since March 2024, we donated 18,050 kg of dog food and 9,950 kg of cat food in the greater Odessa area and 14,500 kg of dog food and 9,500 kg of cat food in the Kharkiv region. **We gave a total of 52 tons of food since March which is keeping homeless animals alive.**

Sadly, only days after each pet food donation, our partners reach out to us to say they have distributed all of the food and ask when we will send more. In the coming days, we will plan our next donation.

Repairing and rebuilding animal shelters

Some of the animal shelters that we partner with have been directly damaged by Russian attacks. Others fell into disrepair during the war because of a lack of funds for maintenance. We step in and help shelters make repairs and improvements when we know that it will directly benefit the animals in addition to making a sustained impact for the shelters. We visit all shelters personally before offering to provide aid.

Through a special relationship with the Ukrainian military, Love and Laska Shelter receives dogs that the military rescues from the frontline of the war. The shelter is mostly outdoors, with large sheds to protect dogs from wind, rain, and snow, and dog houses in the sheds which dogs sleep in. The organization rescued so many dogs from the war that the sheds were becoming crowded. We funded the construction of new sheds, as well as flooring so the dogs can stay dry during the winter when the ground is wet.



My Living Dogs Shelter is surrounded by land that became a Ukrainian military base when the war started. The base was a target for Russian attacks, some of which damaged the shelter. Furthermore, the military made it very complicated for people with sick and injured animals, potential adopters, and people delivering supplies to get permission to drive to the shelter. We funded repairs to a fence that burned down and provided a grant so the shelter can move to a safer location. This relocation is now underway.



Loving Hearts Shelter rescued some high-energy dogs who were constantly damaging their enclosures while trying to escape. We empowered the shelter to build larger, stronger kennels that give the dogs enough space to live together in small groups and run around, providing much better quality of life.

Emergency veterinary treatment

Although we do not have enough resources to provide veterinary care to every animal in need that we know about, when our partners rescue dogs and cats and a reasonable amount of veterinary care will substantially improve the animals' welfare, we cover the costs of treatment when we can. This has truly changed the lives of Ukrainian animals.

The following is one of many stories of the dogs and cats that supporters like you have saved from suffering due to the war:

Natasha, survivor of a Russian military attack

An elderly man who lives near Kherson, across the river from Russian-occupied territory, kept seeing abandoned cats wandering in his neighborhood, hungry and unable to find protection from the rain and cold, especially in winter. Since there was no animal shelter in the area that had the capacity to accept more cats, he started to bring these animals into his house and feed them. As the conflict worsened and more people fled their homes, he rescued more cats from starvation and eventually took care of more than 60. While the conditions in his house were far from ideal, it was far better than leaving cats to starve in a conflict zone.

Until tragedy struck. A Russian attack hit the upper floor of his house where the cats were, setting it on fire. Most of the cats died.

One orange cat escaped with severe burns, and was very lucky to be rescued by Anna Kurkurina, one of our long-term partners in Ukraine who we support with veterinary treatment, dog and cat food, and spay/neuter surgeries. The cat, now named Natasha, needed extensive veterinary treatment for her burns, and no one knew if she would survive. Anna fostered her during her treatment and recovery.



Natasha after the fire, and after treatment

Natasha has now been adopted to a loving home. After the unthinkable trauma and suffering she endured, including losing two homes because of the war, she now gets to cuddle on the couch and play with toys.



Natasha is now in a loving home

Dog houses to help animals survive the winters

Lastly, we have provided dog houses which keep cats and dogs warm and dry, especially during the brutal, snowy winter months. We work with people in different parts of Ukraine who build the houses according to different designs, including some “cat condos” that house several cats in the same structure, and dog houses in the colors of the Ukrainian flag. Our partners who feed homeless animals then place the houses in locations where the animals can safely reach them, and they feed the animals in front of the houses.



Conclusion

Because of your generosity, **Vets Without Borders Denmark is making a sustained, life-changing impact on thousands of Ukrainian animals.** Hundreds of Ukrainian volunteers, shelter managers, and veterinarians are deeply grateful for your contributions.

We continue to stay in contact with our partners in Ukraine almost every day, to understand the current situation and emerging needs as well as to identify how we can respond. Sadly, the needs always exceed our resources, and when people ask for help, we usually need to tell them that we are unable to. We continue to seek support from compassionate people and organizations around the world in order to save more abandoned pets from starving, prevent the births of more homeless kittens and puppies, and transform the lives of some of the most vulnerable animals.

Liliana, Gregg and your whole team! I want to thank you once again for helping our animals. Russian troops shell populated areas of the Kharkiv region every day. In such conditions, not only people suffer, but also animals that are left without owners. We try to help many animals!

Thank you for always being there, always helping.

– Vika, one of our partners in Kharkiv

It is impossible to overstate the importance of our partnership with Vets Without Borders Denmark for desperate animals in this terrible, prolonged situation. We cannot thank you enough for making our work possible.

All my best,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gregg Tully".

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