Third OIE Regional Workshop on Stray Dog population management for Balkan countries (SDB3), Belgrade, Serbia, 13-15 June 2018

CREATING EVIDENCE-BASED DOG POPULATION MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME AT LOCAL LEVEL

Results of the first comprehensive baseline research in one municipality in Serbia

ABOUT ORCA

- ✓ Mission: ORCA supports people to care for nature and animal welfare, in order to achieve personal, economic and social development.
- ✓ We fulfil our mission through advocacy, research, education and monitoring of policies and regulation.
- ✓ Founded in 2000, today we work in Serbia but also in the Western Balkan region.
- ✓ Recognised by the European Commission: member of the EU Platform on Animal Welfare (only CSO from the Western Balkans)

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ABOUT ORCA

Our regional initiatives:

- ✓ Strengthening capacities of the civil society: cca 220,000 euros invested to support CSOs through Grant & Training programme
- ✓ Strengthening capacities of experts in animal welfare and nature conservation in the WB region: ORCA Academy
- ✓ Development of the regional Western Balkans policy framework for biodiversity conservation and animal welfare in agriculture.
- ✓ ORCA dog population management model “FOR PEOPLE AND DOGS”

STRENGTHENING EXPERT CAPACITIES

- ✓ Underdeveloped expert capacities - a major obstacle to the development of animal welfare and nature conservation in Serbia
- ✓ Home for students - prepared to dedicate a part of their time and their expertise to ORCA's activities (funded by the first legacy).
- ✓ ORCA Academy - a concept envisioned to educate and promote excellence among professionals dedicated to improve and develop animal welfare and nature conservation in the Western Balkans (funded by USAID).
- ✓ Financing scientific research of young professionals in the frame of ORCA's projects.

THE SITUATION

WHY EVIDENCE-BASED?

✓Vicious circle – some cities and municipalities invest in dog population management, but experience lack of results

✓Law on Animal Welfare: LSGs are obliged to "develop and implement stray dog and cat population control programmes, in accordance with the specific characteristics of the environment" (Article 54)

✓Practice: programmes based on general reccomendations, community specifics not taken into consideration, lacking action plans and without monitoring of effects of implemented measures

✓**Lack of evidence-based approach is why, in our opinion, most efforts fail**

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THE SOLUTION

WHY USE ORCA MODEL?

✓First step toward solution: looking at our local community

✓ORCA model "FOR PEOPLE AND DOGS" is designed to provide information through research and to use this information to develop dog population management programmes adapted to the specific characteristics of the environment and in line with the OIE standards (TAHC, Chapter 7.7)

✓**Measures are good, issue is HOW to use them: answer on how to prioritize and use measures is given by research**

WHAT IS ORCA MODEL?

✓Aimed to offer evidence-based approach to local dog population management = a long-term solution which is both humane & effective

✓Unique methodology, developed on the basis of ORCA's experience and in cooperation with experts from Great Britain and Switzerland and implemented by the expert multidisciplinary team

✓Three components to ORCA model "FOR PEOPLE AND DOGS" :

1. Comprehensive research of the situation in local community
2. Participatory development of the tailored DPM programme,
3. Creation of the functional mechanism for implementation

RESULTS OF THE FIRST COMPREHENSIVE BASELINE RESEARCH IN BOGATIC

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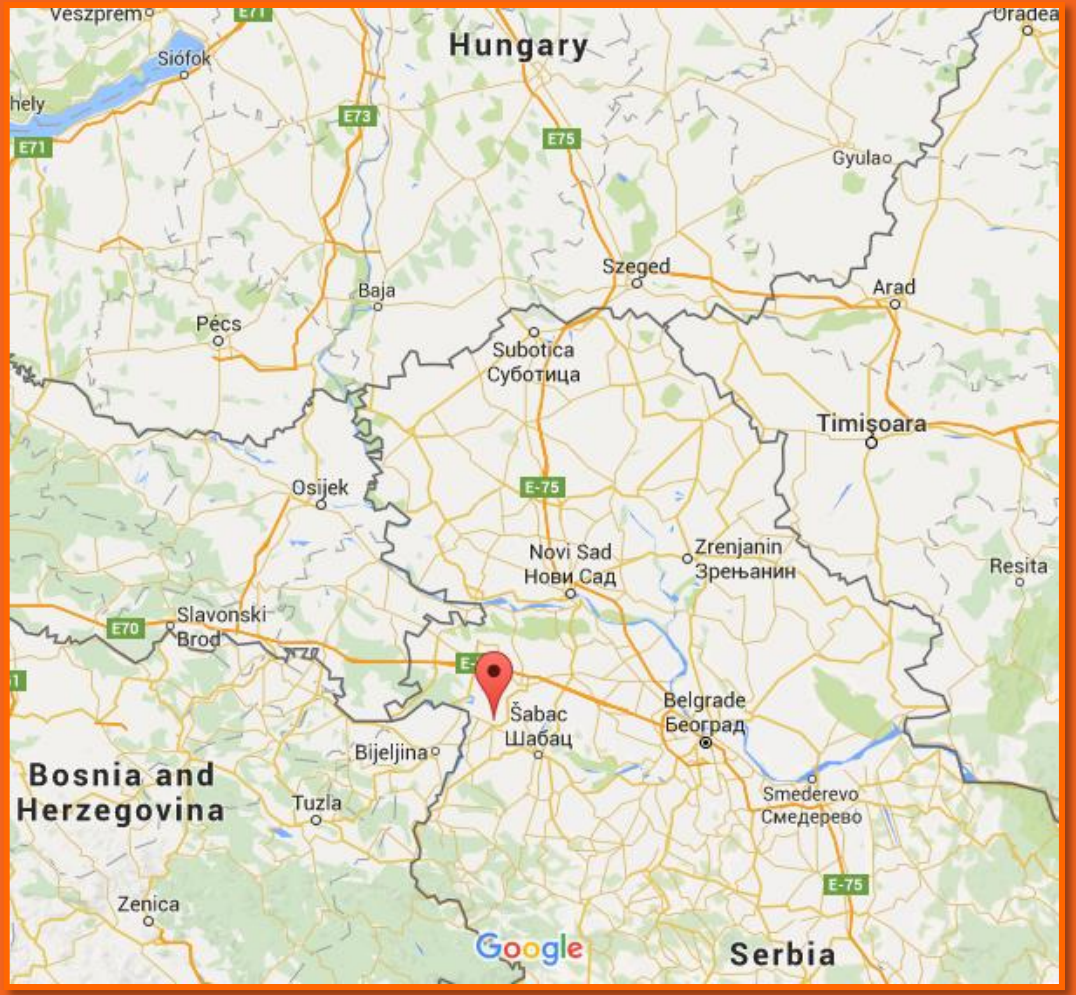
BOGATIC MUNICIPALITY

- ✓Western Serbia, Mačva District
- ✓Rural municipality
- ✓14 settlements, 384 km2
- ✓Population 30,430 (2011 census)
- ✓Border crossing to Bosnia and Herzegovina
- ✓OIE questionnaire: problem very pronounced, no initial assessment, no programme , some measures Implemented
- ✓Paid 111,455 EUR in compensations (2011-2014)



✓ First step: setting the indicators

Impact	Indicators	Methods of measurement
Reduce dog abundance	Dog density along surveyed streets, Litters per female, Mortality and age structure	Street survey, Distance sampling, Mark-resight
Improve care provided and responsible ownership (resource-based measures)	Dog care-giving behaviours in dog owners, Resources available to the dog	Questionnaire survey
Improve dog welfare (animal-based measures)	Body condition score, Skin condition, Injuries, Lameness Cleanliness, Female:male ratio, Thermal comfort, Human/dog interactions, Abnormal behaviour, Diarrhoea, Coughing, Ear cropping, tail docking	Questionnaire survey, Street survey, Behavioural observations
Reduce risks to public health	Dog bites, Zoonosis	Secondary sources of information, Questionnaire survey
Improve public perception	Attitude toward dogs, Spaying and neutering, Adoption of dogs	Attitude assessment
Reduce negative impacts of dogs on wildlife	Presence of dogs in wildlife areas Predation events and impacts	Survey in wildlife areas, Camera traps, Secondary sources of information
Reduce negative impacts of dogs on livestock	Livestock predation by dogs	Secondary sources of information

✓ **Five main researches conducted:**

1. Stray dog population survey
2. Research of the ‘culture of keeping dogs’
3. Citizens’ attitudes toward dogs
4. Research of environmental factors influencing the roaming dog population (carrying capacity of the environment)
5. Research of key DPM actors/ stakeholders

✓ Second step: Methodology

- Goal was to measure the set indicators in order to design intervention and establish baseline for later monitoring
- Team of 12 people was involved in the research
- Dr Elly Hiby, ICAM Coalition Scientific Coordinator and independent consultant and Prof. Dr Arpat Ozgul, population ecology, University of Zurich
- Pilot conducted in October 2015.
- Instruction course for researchers organised prior to going out to the field
- Five villages selected for research, 600 households visited in total.
- Households were visited by researchers along the routes selected and drawn in advance. Same routes used for street survey.
- Stakeholders were visited and interviewed.

‘CULTURE’ OF KEEPING DOGS, OWNERS’ BEHAVIOURS

- ✓ **What we learned:**
  - 8.719 owned dogs in Bogatic (1 dog per 3 people)
  - 1.290 (15%) owned dogs allowed to roam freely
  - 54,3% households do not have yards or has a low quality fence
  - only 6,1% adult females spayed
  - 48.2% intact adult females had pups in the previous year (5,2 pups per litter) – indicating high reproductive activity
  - 69,4% dogs not microchipped and not registered
  - only 11,2% dogs vaccinated against rabies
  - average age of owned dogs is only 3,4 years

Culture of keeping dogs not very good: high reproductive activity, high mortality rate and short life, low sterilisation rate, owned dogs allowed to roam freely, poor quality fence - presence of irresponsible ownership.

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STRAY DOG POPULATION SURVEY

- ✓ **What we learned:**
  - ➢ max 1.620 of roaming dogs in Bogatic urban area
  - ➢ 66 dogs found outside urban area (in routes through hunting grounds).
  - ➢ Presence of dogs in forested areas recorded by camera traps (15 dogs), indicating the need to protect wildlife

Having in mind that for 1.290 owned dogs (out of 8.719), owners said they allow them to roam freely without supervision, the probable no. of unowned dogs is estimated to be 330.

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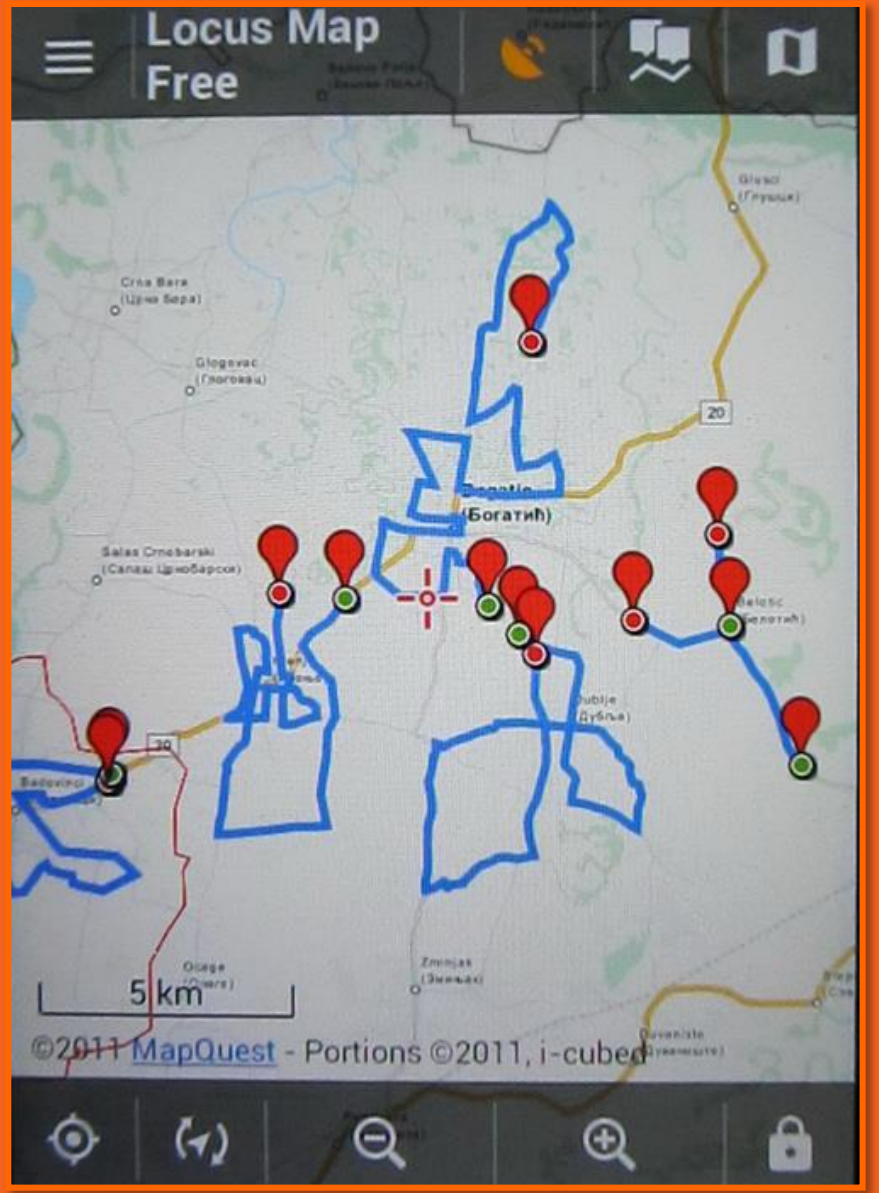
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CITIZENS' ATTITUDES

- ✓ **What we learned**:
  - 77% of citizes think that problem is pronounced and 88% believes that stray dogs are dangerous to them.
  - When asked to state a specific problem with stray dogs, 62% state there were no specific problem – indicating fear
  - 69% of citizens recognises abandonment as main source of stray dogs
  - for 60,2% of unspayed females, owners stated they don't want to spay them in the future
  - almost half of the citizens (42%) believes that dogs should be removed from streets in any manner possible

These results were not very favorable suggesting presence of fear of dogs and reluctance to spay and neuter which was identified as a key measure.

CARRYING CAPACITY OF THE ENVIRONMENT

- ✓ **What we learned**:
  - Official data: 1 central landfill, 13 open unfenced landfills that are controlled; 14 landfills that are uncontrolled
  - Research: 37 landfills in Bogatic, all except one are open and unfenced, so the dogs are free to use them as feeding ground
  - farm animals that died, slaughterhouse waste – all being dumped on these uncontrolled landfills
  - Drina river bank is most endangered by waste. 55 dogs found in a single visit to landfills and gravel separation sites along the Drina river bank.
  - Other hot spots: abandoned properties, overgrown yards, schools, rubbish bins, local coffee shops, open markets, graveyards

Waste management identified as a big problem. Free sources of food and shelter available to dogs.

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RESEARCH OF STAKEHOLDER CAPACITIES

- ✓ **What we learned**:
  - Poor response from veterinarians when asked by the municipality officials to support the research.
  - Schools: presence of dog welfare and responsible ownership content is modest. Preschool has planned activities in their annual school programmes but does not implement them. Only 2 out of 6 elementary schools has planned activities in their programmes and the only highschool does not any activities related to animals.
  - No teacher is trained on presenting animal welfare content.

Weak points – veterinarians and schools. Veterinarians were found to be uninterested in DPM. Insufficient content on responsible ownership in schools.

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WHAT WE PROPOSED

✓**Sterilisation of owned dogs** is key measure: at least 40% of owned females spayed with municipality support (80% of costs) in each of the next 3 years
✓**Microchipping and rabies vaccination:** 50% of costs paid by municipality
✓**Public campaign** aimed to inform citizens of the rights and obligations concerning dog ownership (key element is the consistent message from all relevant stakeholders – veterinarians particularly important)
✓**Catch-neuter-release** for at least 90% of the population of free roaming dogs as a transitional measure.
✓**Restricting access to landfills** (raising fences) and clearing illegal landfills in the next three years
✓With regards to stakeholders - **focus on schools and vets**. Inclusion of dog welfare content in public schools curriculum with teachers trained to present this content. In addition, raising capacities of vets should be another priority (because they are instrumental in changing owners' behaviour).

DOG POPULATION CONTROL PROGRAMME IN MUNICIPALITY OF BOGATIC

- ✓research results
- ✓action plan framework
- ✓financial plan framework
- ✓implementation timeline

NEXT STEPS

✓Support Bogatic to implement measures proposed in the Programme

✓Share experiences and create more examples of good practice in different towns and municipalities in Serbia and the Western Balkans

✓Initiate creation of a National Strategy for dog population management in Serbia.

Goal to contribute to achieving shared OIE vision to ensure full compliance with the OIE standards related to stray dog population control by 2025

CONTACT

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ORCA WEB PAGES

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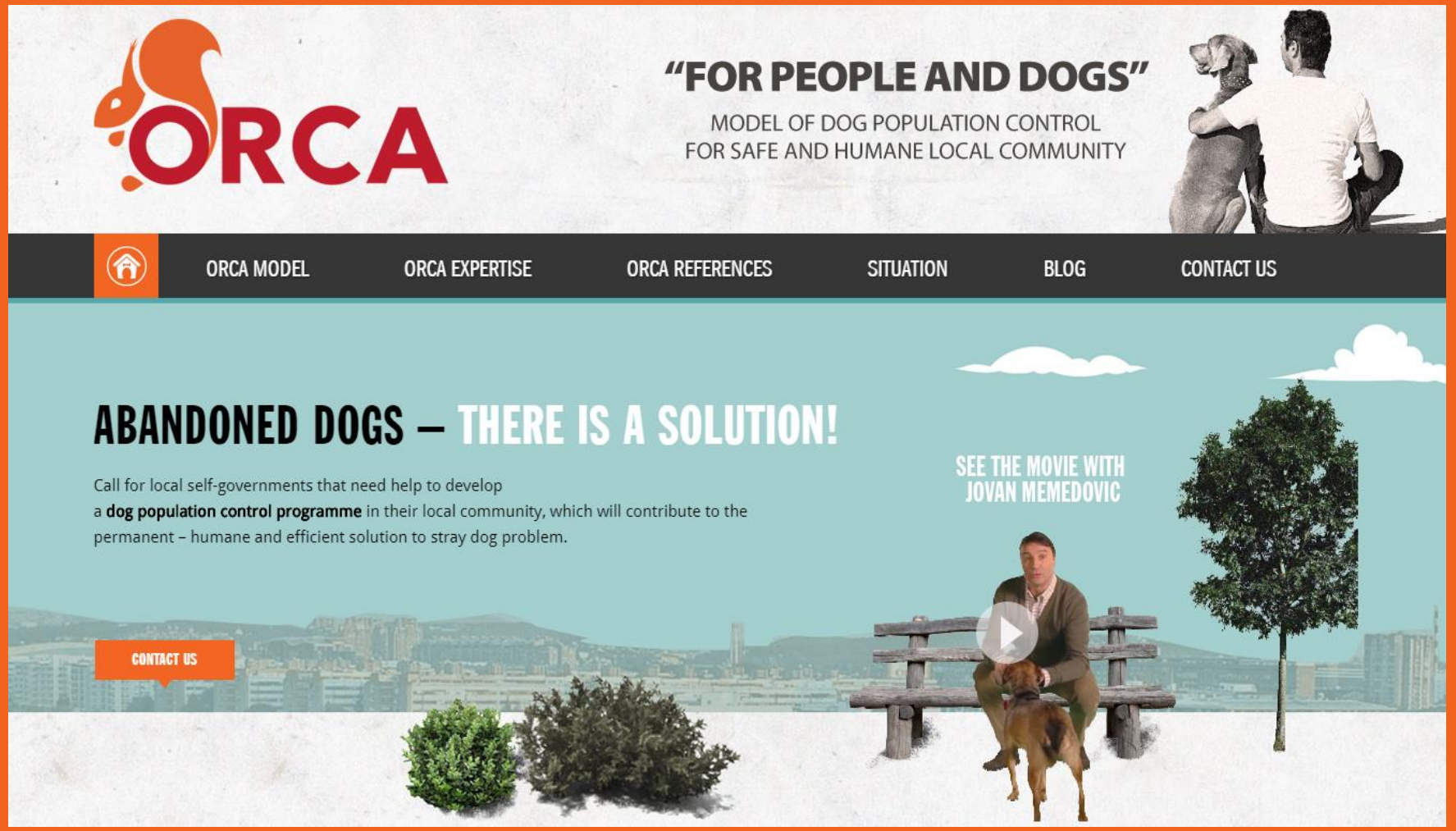

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