

WOAH Guidelines for the Humane Catching of Free-Roaming Dogs



World Organisation
for Animal Health
Founded as OIE



7-year-old girls
Perception



Frequent Reality

A poorly trained dog catcher often takes an aggressive approach, carrying excessive equipment while working in public areas. The result is that dogs become fearful.





Recommendations to improve Handling Practices

- All staff involved in free-roaming dog management should receive proper training in humane handling techniques.
- Training should cover basic dog behaviour, body language and appropriate methods on approaching a free-roaming dog to minimise stress and fear.





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In 2009, WOAH issued guidelines to all member states to use only humane methods for catching free-roaming dogs.

The only piece of catching equipment that WOAH banned was uncovered wire loops.



Inhumane handling mostly occurs at

- Point of capture.
- Movement of dogs onto or from vehicles.
- Movement of dogs within the holding facility.





Main causes are

- Poor or lack of staff training.
- Inadequate or inappropriate equipment.
- Badly designed vehicles.
- No management accountability.
- No standard operating procedures (SOP's)



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Guidelines

- The *Competent Authority* should collect dogs that are not under direct supervision and verify their ownership.
- Capture, transport, and holding of the dogs should be done humanely.
- The *Competent Authority* should develop and implement appropriate legislation and training to regulate these activities.
- Capture should be achieved with the minimum force required and equipment should be used that supports humane handling.
- Uncovered wire loops should not be used for capture.



Competent Authority

Means the veterinary authority or other governmental authority of a member having the responsibility and competence for ensuring or supervising the implementation of animal health and welfare measures, international veterinary certification and other standards and recommendations in the WOAH Terrestrial Animal Health Code.

Catching should be achieved with the “**minimum force**” required and equipment should be used that supports humane handling. Uncovered wire loops should not be used.



Understanding Minimum Force

Definition of Minimum Force

Minimum force is the least amount of effort needed to achieve a desired outcome without excess.

Minimum Force in Dog Catching

Means using the least Amount of effort necessary to safely and effectively catch a dog without causing it unnecessary stress, fear or harm to the animal or the catcher.



Types of catching equipment



Dogs that are well socialised can typically be secured using a basic slip leash.

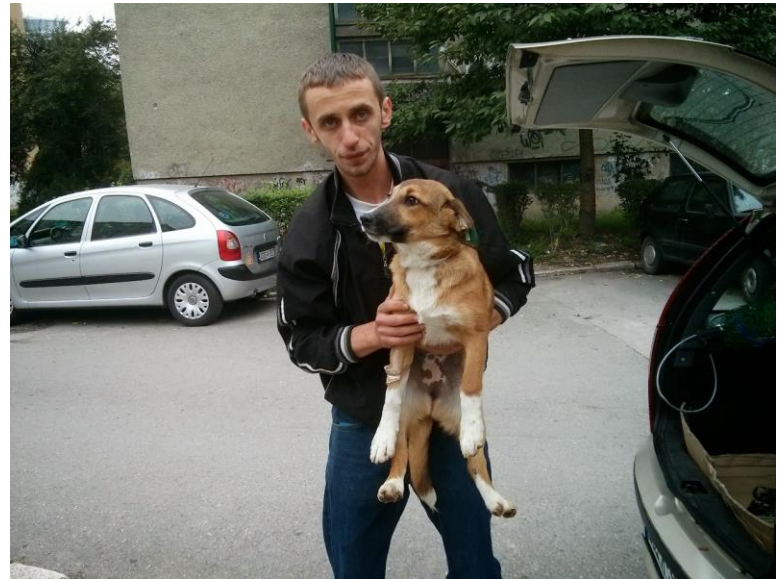
In contrast, unsocialised (feral) dogs might require specialised tools such as traps or chemical immobilisation.

There is a wide variety of equipment available that falls between these options.













Traps

- Use only live or box traps, **NOT** leghold traps, entirely.
- These traps typically consist of a baited cage with a trigger door.
- It is important to check the traps frequently while they are set and active.



Intermediate Methods



Slip Leash

The first option, used alongside hands, is ideal for friendly dogs (lure or reward catching). It can function as a lasso for capturing and briefly restraining the dog. Additionally, it can act as a quick, temporary muzzle to stop biting.



Catchpoles

The catchpole can be used to fully restrain an animal, but it is ineffective for capturing animals that are running freely.

Feral or unsocialised dogs may react aggressively to a catchpole.

It's important to avoid over-tightening the loop and always check the dog's tongue; a blue tongue indicates danger for the dog.



Important Health Notice!



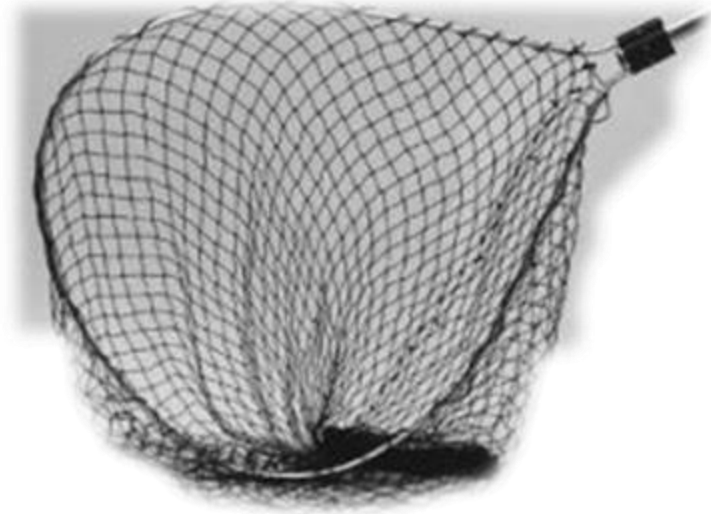
Catchpoles can seriously damage a dog's health and are potentially lethal unless used correctly.

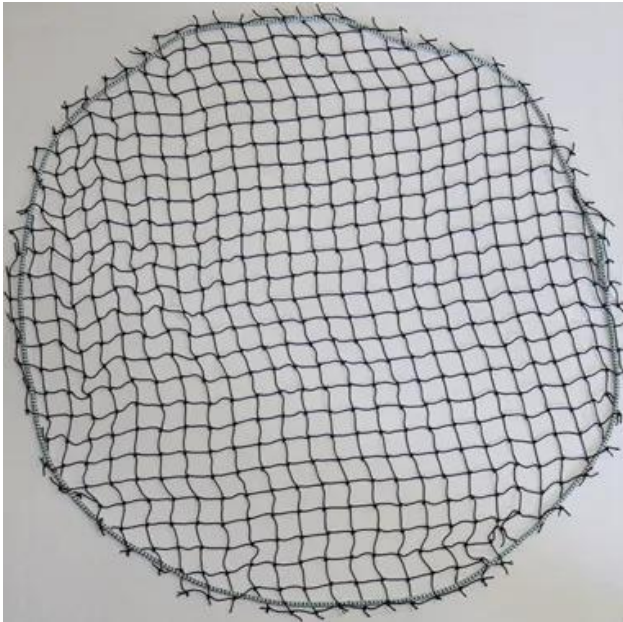
Snares

- Useful for catching 'free running' dogs.
- Not suitable for long-term restraint.
- Un-socialised dogs may react violently.



Nets!





Throw Nets
Not the most efficient
option for “Catching dogs in
motion.”



Drive Nets

These nets are intended for capturing, containing, or restraining animals in open spaces like fields or gardens.

During use, the net is held firmly and stretched tight between two individuals to create a barrier, similar to a tennis net, and then moved toward the animal to capture it. The net measures 4.5 meters long and 1.3 meters high.



Hoop Nets

The hoop frame is made from lightweight 25mm aluminium tubing and creates the opening of a 1.5-meter deep netting bag.

Intended for capturing dogs and other small animals, the Hoop Net is especially effective when animals are moving.

With sufficient practice, the hoop net can be thrown a significant distance to catch a running animal. Once the hoop net is over the animal, it can be enclosed within the netting, the hoop frame lifted, and the animal securely contained in the base of the netting bag for treatment or safe relocation to appropriate containment.



Pole Nets

There are various types of pole nets available, and this basic model is designed to humanely capture feral dogs. It features a detachable pole measuring 122 cm in length, allowing the dog to be held temporarily for treatment or transport without the burden of the pole. With enough practice, the net can be used to catch a running dog. Once the net covers the dog, twisting the pole handle traps the dog inside. The pole handle can then be removed, enabling multiple dogs to be safely transported in an appropriate vehicle. This approach has been tested and endorsed by experts as the preferred method for managing feral and stray dogs in TNR and vaccination programs.

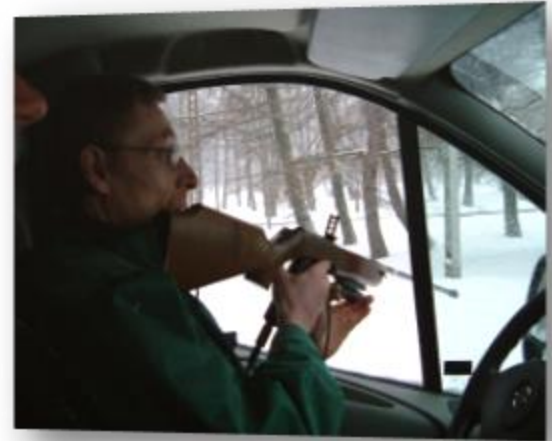




Means the remote capture of animals by means of drugs.
Blowpipes are more acceptable than guns!
Less trauma for the dog.
Many problems are recognised with the use of chemical capture, especially within the urban environment, this method should never be considered the first choice but

Last Resort!!

Chemical Capture



Chemical Capture



Habituation



Summary: WOAAH Guidelines for the Humane Catching of Free-Roaming Dogs.

The World Organisation for Animal Health has issued guidelines to ensure the humane capture, handling, and management of free-roaming dogs.

The main goal is to minimise fear, stress, and harm to both animals and handlers during the process.

Common Issues in Dog Catching

Aggressive or poorly trained staff, excessive or inappropriate equipment, and inadequate procedures often lead to inhumane treatment.

Key Recommendations

- All personnel involved should receive thorough training in humane handling, dog behaviour, and body language.
- Only the minimum force necessary should be used; equipment must support humane handling.
- Uncovered wire loops are specifically banned due to their potential for causing injury.