Them Cheeky Dogs
Challenges & Opportunities in Remote Community Animal Management

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Overview

Value of companion animals

Impacts of unmanaged populations

Ingredients of effective companion animal management

AMRRICs work

Opportunities
Across the nation:

• 62% of households own pets
• Two in five households have dogs
• Three in ten households have cats

Companionship
Incorporation into kinship system
Hunting
A source of warmth
Protection - physical and spiritual
Dogs’ Importance in Aboriginal Culture

Incorporation into creation & ‘dreaming’ knowledge

Artwork: ‘Papa Tjulurrpa (Dog Dreaming), Doris Bush Nungarrayi
"I just don’t want any more puppies. It’s not my choice she keeps having puppies. The boy dogs keep getting to her. I don’t want any more puppies. Too many."
• Elderly Yolngu lady, Maningrida 2016
Parasites
Welfare

After:
Litter
Threat
Cycle of Intolerance

Adapted from 2016 International Conference on Human Behaviour Change for Animal Welfare presentation by Dr Kate Atema, International Fund for Animal Welfare
Problems caused by companion animals

Intolerance for companion animals

Ambivalence or cruelty to companion animals

Lack of effective companion animal management

- Trauma & anger
- Inhibited empathy development

Cycle of Intolerance

Adapted from 2016 International Conference on Human Behaviour Change for Animal Welfare presentation by Dr Kate Atema, International Fund for Animal Welfare

- Annoyance & frustration
- Sadness & shame
- Fear – attack &/or health risk

- Discord amongst community members
- Inhumane management practices

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Key ingredients for effective companion animal management

1. Geographic and economic access to veterinary services, prophylactic treatments and animal care products

2. Local Government Authorities (LGAs) that have the resources and knowledge to implement appropriate Animal Management Programs (AMPs)

3. Societal culture that generally adheres to local by-laws and encourages the concept of responsible animal ownership
1. Access to animal health care & services
2. LGAs resourced to implement AMPs
3. Supportive societal culture
Benefits of effective animal management

- Improved animal health and welfare
- Improved human health and wellbeing
- Improved community amenity and safety
- Reduced negative impacts on wildlife and ecosystems
- Reduced biosecurity risks
- Enhanced empathy development
Keys to AMRRIC’s approach

1. Understanding and respecting peoples’ connection to their animals
2. Working with all stakeholders to develop culturally appropriate tailored programs that meet the needs of the community as a whole
3. Building trust and implementing changes slowly, allowing people to personally recognise the benefits of participation
AMRRIC aims to be a resource:

• For Local Government Authorities and animal management staff
• For veterinary service providers
• For stakeholders impacted by, or with an interest in remote community animal management
• For communities
AMRRIC’s areas of work

Assisting **Local Government Authorities**:

- to develop and implement animal management programs
- by advocating for increased resources
- to connect with veterinary service providers
- to promote responsible pet ownership
AMRRIC’s areas of work

Assisting **veterinary service providers**: 
• with guidelines, resources and advice
• by linking with local community contacts
• by facilitating mentor/mentee relationships
• by supplying vet and vet nurse volunteers
AMRRIC’s areas of work

Assisting stakeholders impacted by, or with an interest in remote community animal management:

• by providing advice
• by catalysing relationships
• by promoting evidence-informed decision making
• to promote a culture of responsible animal ownership
Assisting communities
Opportunities

- Further evidence in support of One Health links
- Resources and training to build local animal management capacity
- Legislative requirements, and concurrent resource allocation to support the delivery of effective animal management
- Knowledge transfer aimed at increasing empathy and responsible animal ownership
- Improved collaboration between stakeholders at all levels
“Being an AMW is important for dogs so they don’t get scabies... which they then don’t share with people. So it’s important for people too.”
“Aboriginal people have always looked after their dogs, but they’re seeing there’s more control of numbers if less puppies are being born. There’s more food to go around as well and less problems with aggressive dogs. Kids are learning and washing their hands.”
“I like being an AMW because it’s a job where you can see results. For example, you go back [to a community] a month or so after you’ve visited and you can tell which dogs have been treated. They do look fit and healthy... ultimately the job is making that difference in closing the gap and improving the health of dogs and people.”
Further reading

  https://doi.org/10.2752/089279396787001455

  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Otxno3NExg


  http://dx.doi.org/10.2752/175303710X12750451259336


