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Registry of Pet Ownership as Control of Urban Fauna in the City of Riobamba

Registro De Tenencia De Mascotas Como Control De Fauna Urbana En La Ciudad De Riobamba

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Abstract

The main objective of this research is to analyze the feasibility of establishing a pet ownership registry as a means of urban fauna control in the city of Riobamba, Ecuador, in 2023. After examining the situation in Ecuador regarding urban wildlife control in relation to pet owners who do not provide proper care for their animals, it is deemed necessary to implement a system to address this issue effectively. This would help regulate the overpopulation of stray animals in the city of Riobamba. The study has involved a review of literature, as well as local and international news on the subject, making it predominantly qualitative, quantitative, and exploratory. The conclusion drawn is that there is a clear need to implement a system to ensure proper control of both pets belonging to citizens and animals found on the streets, as this issue poses a problem in the urban aspect of the city of Riobamba.

Keywords: System, Pets, Control; Record.

Resumen

El presente trabajo de investigación tiene por objetivo principal, analizar la conveniencia de establecer un registro de tenencia de mascotas como control de fauna urbana en la ciudad de Riobamba, Ecuador, en el año 2023. Pues tras haber analizado la situación en la cual el Ecuador se encuentra respecto al control de la fauna urbana en relación con las personas que tienen mascotas, y no ejerce un debido cuidado para los mismos, se encuentra necesario aplicar un sistema que controle dicha situación. Para de esta forma regular efectivamente la desproporción de animales en situación de calle en la ciudad de Riobamba. Para lo cual se ha realizado un estudio bibliográfico, así como de noticias locales e internacionales sobre el tema planteado, por lo que el estudio es predominantemente cualitativo, cuantitativo y exploratorio. Obteniendo como conclusión que evidentemente se necesita implementar un sistema que realice un debido control de las mascotas pertenecientes a la ciudadanía y a animales que se encuentran en situación de calle, escenario que desemboca en una problemática en el aspecto urbano de la ciudad de Riobamba.

PalabrasClave: Sistema, Mascotas; Control, Registro.

Introduction

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The Ecuadorian State has been trying to deal with a problem that is clearly worrisome for years: the excessive number of stray domestic animals in Ecuadorian cities. Despite various attempts and measures taken by various decentralized autonomous governments, this issue is far from being resolved.

The case of the Chimborazo capital is not an exception. Until 2014, approximately 80,000 dogs roamed the streets of Riobamba, regardless of whether these canines had owners or not; the numbers were around that figure. Subsequently, the number of domestic animals in this situation has gradually decreased. (The Telegraph, 2014)

As a result, various programs have been implemented in the city of Riobamba to reduce overpopulation and halt the proliferation of dogs and cats. This has been achieved through sterilization campaigns that encouraged pet owners to attend certain locations in the city for free spaying or neutering of their pets to prevent reproduction. Additionally, an Animal Rescue Integral Center (CRIAR) was established, which mainly promotes sterilization and the adoption of previously abandoned or stray animals.

These and many other strategies have been executed to address the issue of overpopulation and the poor quality of life for domestic animals in urban areas. It cannot be denied that the implemented programs have been effective. However, it should be mentioned that this situation persists and is far from over. To address and potentially resolve this problem, it is advisable to investigate and, if possible, replicate the measures or procedures that have been implemented in other countries and have undeniably produced results in the battle against the overpopulation of domestic animals in urban areas.

This is the case of the Netherlands, for example, which has been a pioneer in pet control, particularly stray dogs. The country has been proclaimed as the first nation with not a single dog in a stray situation. (Baena, 2021)

The case of the city of Quito is also closely followed, where the Metropolitan Council, to reduce the overpopulation of stray animals in the streets of Quito, has decided to create a computer system that will identify each of the pets owned by the city's residents. It is speculated that this computer system will come into effect starting in 2024, at which time the residents of Quito will be required to register each of their pets, taking another step towards controlling the excessive population of pets that roam the streets without proper care and protection.

Materials and Methods

Regarding the methods, given that this research is focused on the need for the city of Riobamba to implement a system to regulate and control pet registration to manage the excess of stray domestic animals, it is necessary to note that this research is conducted using methods that will facilitate the presentation of the findings. These methods include:

Methods to Use

Inductive: This method will help understand the causes that led to the excessive population of stray domestic animals.

Deductive: To conduct a detailed study on the general issue of neglect of domestic animals.

Historical: To trace past events related to the stray animals of Riobamba.

Logical: Using reasoning to establish connections regarding the historical background of domestic animals and the neglect by individuals that have led to an unprotected population of these animals.

Analytical: By breaking down the whole into its parts through the collection of information from bibliographic or news sources.

Synthetic: To provide a concise summary of each aspect discussed in this research.

Results

For this research, the chosen approach involves analyzing the living conditions of animals in the city of Riobamba by referring to local and national news sources. Additionally, a specific case study of the Netherlands, a pioneer in the fight against the overpopulation of stray animals, is included to gain insights. Finally, the current procedure in the city of Quito for addressing the issue is examined.

Animal situation in Riobamba

As mentioned earlier, the situation of stray animals in the city of Riobamba, like in other Ecuadorian cities and countries, is genuinely concerning due to the lack of attention and care provided to these abandoned animals. Many of them are left to fend for themselves by their owners, while others are born into a life of abandonment, without anyone to look after them.

It was not until 2014 that the city registered around 80,000 dogs roaming the streets of Riobamba. This number included both pets with owners who would leave in the mornings and return in the evenings, as well as strays. This situation not only projected a negative image at the national level regarding the lack of care for animals but also had public health implications for Riobamba. At that time, there was not even a shelter to provide refuge for animals in need, highlighting the urgent need for one and the necessity to start addressing this issue effectively. In addition to this, in that year, a considerable number of sterilizations had been performed to control the unregulated proliferation of stray animals, but it was still not sufficient (The Telegraph, 2014).

On the other hand, among the many initiatives launched by the Autonomous Decentralized Municipal Government of Riobamba (GADM), the Animal Rescue Integral Center of Riobamba (CRIAR) was established. The main goal of CRIAR is to have more effective control over stray animals through adoption and sterilization campaigns. Located near the ecological park, CRIAR takes in stray dogs and cats, sterilizes them, and subsequently offers them for adoption to citizens interested in rescuing a pet.

By the year 2021, the efforts of CRIAR had successfully reduced the abandonment of dogs and cats by 30%. This was achieved because the public became more aware of the importance of sterilizing their pets. Within the CRIAR shelter, around 25 to 30 animals were sterilized daily. Additionally, in the rural areas of Riobamba, the goal was to sterilize 40 animals. The number of sterilizations increased significantly, partly due to the circulation of the webpage created by the Municipality of Riobamba. To adopt an animal rescued by CRIAR, citizens of Riobamba need to complete a form, provide certain identification documents, and undergo an analysis and monthly follow-up by CRIAR staff to ensure the well-being of the adopted animals. (Los Andes Regional Newspaper, 2021).

Moving ahead in time, on April 4, 2022, in commemoration of International Street Animals Day, the same newspaper reported that, according to figures from the Autonomous Decentralized Municipal Government of Riobamba, there are around 30,000 dogs in the city, of which 2,700 roam the streets and marketplaces. The report also highlighted that despite the existence of certain ordinances aimed at regulating mechanisms in favor of dogs, abandonment had increased. It is worth noting that many of these abandoned dogs are believed to be sick or even mutilated. (La Prensa, 2022)

Causes of animal abandonment

Even though the Affinity Foundation is a Spanish organization, it has conducted studies within its home country to determine the common reasons why Spanish citizens abandon their pets, such as dogs and cats. These findings are not irrelevant to the Ecuadorian reality, as they provide insights into the reasons behind pet abandonment. According to a study conducted by the Affinity Foundation on the topic of animal abandonment, the most common reasons for abandoning pets, like dogs and cats, in Spain are as follows:

Unwanted litters (15.3%)

Problematic animal behavior (10.8%)

Economic factors (10.7%)

Loss of interest in the animal (9.8%)

Changes in residence (9.8%)

On the other hand, the less frequent causes or reasons why people abandon their pets are the following:

Allergies of a family member (4.4%)

Birth of a child (3.9%)

Owner's hospitalization or death (6.0%)

Vacations (1.2%)

Fear of contracting toxoplasmosis during pregnancy (0.5%)

Additionally, the mentioned foundation emphasizes that people need a strong commitment to their pets.

If they have one, they will exhaust all possible options before accepting the breakup of the relationship between people and their pets, which could lead to abandonment. (Affinity Foundation, 2019)

In the same way, it lists reasons for abandoning pets, it also highlights a list of recommendations for people who wish to have a pet with a strong commitment. Among the countless pieces of advice that may exist, the following are prominent:

Reflect – Have a clear understanding of the commitment involved.

Inform – Seek advice and guidance from animal welfare organizations to be well-prepared.

Sterilize – Prevent unwanted litter.

Identify – Ensure your pet is properly identified to aid in rescue and return in case of loss.

Educate – Train your pet to improve its behavior for easier coexistence.

Once again, it is essential to emphasize that the previously mentioned data were analyzed in Spain, but it is believed that they are not far from reflecting the reality in Ecuador, and more specifically, in Riobamba.

Situation of animals in the Netherlands

At the beginning of this research, it was pointed out that to mitigate the problem being analyzed, it would be relevant to study the processes or decisions that have been carried out by other countries that are leading the way in the battle to control the proliferation and overpopulation of stray animals in the streets. Therefore, it has been considered necessary to mention the case of the Netherlands, a country that has been recognized as a pioneer in controlling people in relation to their pets.

As is known, the problem of stray dogs in different cities is an issue that affects the community. However, this is not the case in the Netherlands, at least not since 2016 to the present, as the Netherlands is already considered the first country to no longer have this problem of overpopulation of abandoned animals in history. The Dutch government, along with animal welfare groups and various collectives, has worked hard to improve the living conditions of abandoned animals. This was done through raising awareness and encouraging the population to refrain from buying and selling animals, as well as through campaigns for rescue, adoption, and sterilization. Finally, this objective was achieved through strong punishments or penalties for offenders. (Baena, 2021)

The Netherlands is considered the first country to not have stray dogs in its cities. It is important to emphasize that the plan that was implemented did not involve the euthanizing of animals to reduce their population on the streets, and it also did not resort to keeping dogs in kennels. (The Telegraph, 2021)

Pet registration system in Quito

Like in most countries, Ecuador is also making efforts to control stray animals. Various Autonomous Decentralized Governments or Metropolitan Districts in the country have issued ordinances aimed at mitigating this problem that, due to lack of care, continues to spread.

Specifically, in the Metropolitan District of Quito, through the Animal Welfare Unit (UBA), a pilot plan for the Metropolitan Registry of Urban Fauna (Remetfu) has been initiated. This plan is intended to create a database with information about pets, or animals of companionship. As of June 2023, around 321 companion animals and 215 owners had been registered through this system. This system in Quito requires not only pet guardians to register but also service providers, shelters, veterinarians, and even individuals who have been sanctioned for animal cruelty. (Quito Informa, 2023)

Through the previously mentioned pilot plan executed by the Animal Welfare Unit, they aim to familiarize people with the digital platform, the process for registering pets or companion animals, and all the features the system has to offer.

Mandatory pet registration in Quito will be ready by 2024. Through a digital platform, people living or residing in the Metropolitan District of Quito who have pets will be required to register them on this platform for control purposes. Therefore, the Animal Welfare Unit (UBA), part of the Municipality of Quito, anticipates that this platform will be operational starting from the following year. (THE TRADE, 2023)

On the other hand, the Metropolitan District of Quito also disseminates certain guidelines and instructions that every pet owner or entity responsible for a pet should consider. Those who should register in the pet or companion animal registration system may include pet owners and veterinarians, pet-related businesses such as hospitals, lodging facilities, or clinics, as well as research centers or biotechnologies. In addition, regarding the platform's operation, it will identify individuals who have been identified as abusers or have caused or are causing harm to animals. Moreover, it could facilitate the reunion of pet owners with their lost companion animals. (ECUAVISA, 2023)

Finally, concerning the process of registering companion animals by their owners or caretakers, it will be necessary to provide the following information:

1. Personal email address
2. Create an account at www.pam.quito.gob.ec
3. Fill in personal details: names and surnames, exact address, and phone number
4. Register ID number and date of issuance
5. Description of the companion animal
6. Photo of the vaccination card
7. Photo of the sterilization certificate
8. Microchip identification code
9. Full-body photo of the companion animal

These regulations require all pet owners in the city of Riobamba to register their animals and comply with certain regulations to ensure the safety and well-being of both the pets and the community at large.

Mandatory Registration: All pet owners must register their animals in an official registration system administered by the municipality.

Required Information: The registration will include details such as the owner's name, address, contact number, pet species, breed, age, gender, and identification number (microchip if necessary).

Annual Renewal: Registrations must be renewed annually to keep the information up to date.

Pet Ownership Regulations

Sterilization: Sterilization may be required for animals not intended for breeding to control the pet population.

Vaccination: Pets must be up to date with required vaccines to prevent contagious diseases.

Leash Control: Rules may be established regarding the use of leashes and harnesses when walking pets in public spaces.

Waste Collection: Owners must pick up their pets' waste in public areas.

Urban Fauna Control

Sterilization and Release Programs: To control the population of stray animals, capture, sterilization, and release programs can be implemented.

Public Education: Educational campaigns can be conducted to raise awareness among citizens about the importance of respectful coexistence with urban fauna and the responsible adoption of pets.

Management of Dangerous Animals: Specific regulations should be established for animals considered potentially dangerous, such as certain breeds of dogs.

It is important that this structure be adapted to the regulations and specific needs of the city of Riobamba, and that legal sources and competent authorities be consulted before implementing any system for pet ownership registration and urban wildlife control.

There is an ordinance that regulates the ownership, protection, control, and management of domestic animals in the Riobamba canton, which informs us that the autonomous government of the city of Riobamba recognizes obligations for both citizens who have animals and the government with its obligations to these animals. However, it does not specify the need for a proper registration system to recognize pet ownership by their owners in this case, the person responsible for the animal.

Discussion

A system to Create for Riobamba

As analyzed in the section on results, it is undeniable that in Riobamba, the problem of pet abandonment is still prevalent. This is without mentioning that there are animals that are in disadvantaged situations from a young age because they were part of a litter of a previously abandoned pet.

As reviewed earlier, while it is true that the overpopulation of pets or companion animals has decreased significantly, from around 80,000 animals roaming the city to about 30,000, with approximately 2,000 dogs without proper owners, it is undoubtedly a significant improvement. However, it is essential to mention that for every unregistered and uncontrolled animal or pet, the probability of this problem escaping the authorities' control is undoubtedly high. Through simple analysis, it is not difficult to deduce that each unregistered and uncontrolled animal is susceptible to reproducing uncontrollably, in addition to the inconveniences this could cause. These inconveniences may affect health, society, and even the city's image at the national and international levels.

To mitigate the problem of uncontrolled stray animals, it is necessary to look at cities or countries that have faced or still face the same problem as Riobamba is currently going through. In this regard, the process undertaken by the Metropolitan District of Quito to implement a system where pet owners or guardians are required to register their pets to regulate pet ownership and reduce abandonment seems appropriate in the present research.

Therefore, it is considered an initiative that should be applied in Riobamba, both in urban and rural areas. Creating a digital system that obligates citizens to register their pets and at the same time facilitates the rescue process in case of loss would undoubtedly make a significant contribution to the issue of uncontrolled stray animals and pet abandonment, which is a common problem in Riobamba. This is to reduce the population of stray animals with a different mechanism, as seen in countries like the Netherlands, where, as explained earlier, they did not resort to outdated and cruel methods such as animal euthanasia or animal confinement in kennels. Instead, they provide the greatest incentives for people to register their pets and implement certain sanctions for those who refuse to collaborate with the control and registration of their pets.

To achieve this, it will be necessary to establish a procedure similar to what is done in the city of Quito. In Riobamba, through the Municipal Decentralized Government and the Animal Rescue Integral Center of Riobamba (CRIAR), in collaboration with animal protection groups, a digital platform can be created for pet registration. This can be done by conducting pilot programs to familiarize the public with this measure so that, in the near future, all citizens have a registry of their pets. This would help achieve adequate control of stray animals and reduce their population.

Conclusions

In 2014, approximately 80,000 animals were roaming the streets. Years later, this number was reduced to 30,000, with a rate of 2,000 stray animals (without a guardian or owner). There is a need to implement a system that ensures proper control of pets belonging to the citizens and animals in stray situations.

It is imperative to establish a procedure similar to what is done in the city of Quito. In Riobamba, this can be achieved through the Municipal Decentralized Autonomous Government, the Comprehensive Animal Rescue Center of Riobamba, and collectives that are interested in or are actively involved in animal protection.

The recognition of pet ownership through a registration system is essential to ensure safety, well-being, and proper coexistence between humans and animals in the city of Riobamba and to address any challenges that may arise effectively and equitably.

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