



ANIMALS AT WAR

THE IMPACT OF
THE **CONFLICT**
IN UKRAINE
ON **DOGS**
AND CATS



ANIMALS AT WAR

THE IMPACT OF THE *CONFLICT* *IN UKRAINE* ON *DOGS* *AND CATS*



This document has been compiled by the staff at Save the Dogs Italy and Romania, by the Executive Director in Romania Gregg Tully and by our President Sara Turetta.

The compiling of this report would not have been possible without the invaluable contribution of our more than 20 partners in Ukraine who, despite their ongoing plight, are still taking care of the animals that have remained in the country, and who continue to send us their testimonials.

We are especially grateful to Giammarco Sicuro for his foreword, his personal commitment to animals and his sympathy for their suffering.

Published by *Save the Dogs and other Animals*

www.savethedogs.eu

First issued in February 2023

© *Save the Dogs and other Animals* 2023

This publication may be used at no charge for advancing advocacy of our association, supporting our campaigns and the purpose of research, provided that the source is credited in its entirety.

Cover photo: Johnny Zigger (Tatiana Myko)





TABLE OF CONTENTS

5 PREFACE

8 INTRODUCTION

10 THE CONFLICT IN UKRAINE: *SAVE THE DOGS'* RESPONSE

10 The strategic priorities

11 What we have done

14 ON THE BORDERLINE OF WAR

17 The family in Mykolaiv and Odessa the dachshund

18 The Doberman breeder on the run from Kharkiv

20 WELCOMING REFUGEE ANIMALS

23 30 dogs fleeing Odessa

25 OUR PARTNERSHIPS WITH UKRAINIAN ASSOCIATIONS AND VOLUNTEERS

26 Establishing a support network

29 The village of the lost dogs

30 THE ANIMALS THAT STAYED BEHIND

32 Spending the long winter in the cold and dark

34 *SAVE THE DOGS'* FIRST MISSION IN UKRAINE

37 LOOKING BEYOND WARTIME

40 CONCLUSION

41 How we used the donations in 2022

42 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

PREFACE

When I was asked to visit the village of Prybuz'ke, I had no idea what awaited me. I was well aware that there would be a great many ruins as well as all the rubble caused by the numerous bombings that were affecting the area, and I knew that I might come across families fleeing from those dangerous zones. However, I was not even slightly prepared for how desolate everything would appear when I finally got to Prybuz'ke.

I had only arrived in Ukraine relatively recently: it was late March and the war had begun less than a month earlier. I had already had the opportunity to observe the effects that mortar shells had on villages, and to document the deadly lethality of cluster bombs on unarmed civilians, but what I was about to witness in that tiny community was something I had never seen before. It was as dire as could be and worse than many of the long list of dreadful things that inevitably go cap in hand with every type of warfare. I thus became acquainted with what I would later call "the village of abandoned dogs", and it was then that I also decided to try to do something to help them.





Prybuz'ke is positioned just south of Mykolaiv and was at that time right on the front lines. We were accompanied by some soldiers, who were kind enough to

Prybuz'ke is positioned just south of Mykolaiv and was at that time right on the front lines. We were accompanied by some soldiers. The unit's mission was to rescue any families still stuck in the bunkers. In reality, we did not locate any humans that day, but we soon came to realize that the village was indeed inhabited, and that those present were, to a man, all... animals.

go to the trouble of taking three or four journalists with them as they went, which was a big responsibility for these soldiers who were on constant patrol. The unit's mission was to rescue any families still stuck in the bunkers: given the dangerous nature of the area, these were to be enforced evacuations. In reality, we did not locate any humans that day, but we soon came to realize that the village was indeed inhabited, and that those present were, to a man, all... animals.

There were hundreds of dogs, and not only: there were also cats, cows, hor-

ses, geese and many other types of animals. From the get-go, I named it "the village of the abandoned", but there was a wide and diverse variety of species, to the extent that we even saw two pigs grazing around a little swimming pool in what had been a pretty little villa. We also came upon some chickens under the porch of an old wooden cottage and even spotted a few pheasants strutting along the main road of the village. The toughest moment came, however, when I was confronted with the carcass of a wretched dog, indicated to me by a likely former "friend" of his as he discreetly approached the lifeless body. Everything in that poignant scene seemed to take place in slow motion, giving me time to take a symbolic and emblematic photo. In the image, the living dog recognizes and sniffs his dead companion, killed perhaps by a stray bomb going off nearby.

Many of these animals moved in packs, defending what had once been their homes. The inhabitants of the village had fled overnight, and a great many of them had not been able (or maybe had not wanted)

to take their four-legged friends with them, leaving these poor creatures to live, abandoned and alone, from that day forward. A slow and agonizing death lay before them. They had no food and had to live with the terror of constant explosions. We even managed to set one of the dogs free: he was locked inside a house and it was the captain of the soldiers who opened the door for him, risking being bitten by an animal that was both starving and terrified in equal measures.

When we got back to the hotel in Mykolaiv, I decided I had to do something about this dreadful situation. Along with my producer, Tanya (a local Ukrainian and a dedicated person who loves animals very much), I decided to tell the story to my friends at *Save the Dogs*. Our partnership was immediate and tons of food started arriving shortly after, thanks to Tanya's unflagging work and the efficient network we built up with Ukrainian volunteers.

Since then, the team has expanded and gone from strength to strength, enabling us to distribute

vast quantities of food to the thousands of animals that have been abandoned during these long months of warfare, animals that would otherwise have been sentenced to certain death. Hope springs eternal, as the saying goes, in the little "village of abandoned dogs" in Prybuz'ke and in many other communities across the country.

Giammarco Sicuro

Italian reporter in Ukraine for the State broadcaster

INTRODUCTION

We could never have imagined that Save the Dogs and other Animals would get involved in events as tragic as those occasioned by warfare.

Yet in February 2022, the **worst nightmare humanity could possibly face** did indeed become a reality just 144 km from our center in Cernavoda, Romania, forcing us to **re-evaluate all our existing priorities** and cope with an emergency that came literally “knocking” at our door. Together with Poland, Romania was the country into which the largest number of Ukrainian refugees came pouring in (nearly three million people, according to official estimates), setting in motion a **complex system for welcoming those fleeing war**, a challenge that posed even greater challenges for this impoverished country characterized by enormous organizational problems of

its own. Over the following weeks we saw Ukrainian everywhere: at the supermarket in Cernavoda, in the hotels in Bucharest that had been completely overrun with the new intake and at the roadside cafes along the highway.

From the very first days of the conflict, **it was apparent that Save the Dogs’ efforts would not be merely short-term measures** limited to the initial, large-scale movement witnessed by popular participation, which (unfortunately) died down a couple of months later. Our physical proximity to the locations where the tragedy was being played out meant that we were charged with

a **great deal of responsibility** from the very outset, and indeed many international organizations looked upon us as their partners of choice for gathering information in the first instance and subsequently getting concrete aid into Ukraine. March 2022 turned out to be a hectic month, with our phones ringing off the hook. It was **very difficult to measure the impact of the conflict on the animals**, but it was also very hard to verify the many news reports that were circulating at a time that was dominated by a general sense of high emotion that often spiraled out of control. As a result, we decided to visit the **southern Romanian-Ukrainian border** in person to





Sara Turetta

ascertain the needs there. We patiently began building **a network of contacts in the Odessa region**, which enabled us to get aid to the animals who most needed our help, without running the risk of our shipments ending up on the black market. One whole year since the start of this tragic chapter in European history, we are still unfortunately heavily engaged in supplying material assistance, in a bid to prevent many more cats and dogs from starving and freezing to death, which is tragically very real risk to many animals that we cannot reach. **It is heartbreaking to see images of entire litters roaming through half-destroyed villages** and reflect on the necessity there for effective birth control, but we are also very aware that it is too soon for us to be able to plan for after the conflict ceases. On the contrary, attacks are still taking place and the situation continues to be both dangerous and unstable.

In this report, we aim to inform you about our year of commitment on behalf of animals who were victims of the war in Ukraine, and also tell you about their human companions, volunte-

ers and associations who have continued to feed and protect them even as missiles rained down on their cities. The messages of heartfelt gratitude we have received over the past twelve months have confirmed once again that in helping cats and dogs we have also helped everyone who has cared for them by hiding them in bunkers, taking them into their own modest shelters, or wedging them into a travel bag. More than ever, it was confirmation of the expression, “we are all in the same boat”: wherever there are people who suffer, there are suffering animals too. But even if this is so, the reverse is also true: **whenever we are able to alleviate the suffering of animals, we also alleviate that of human beings.** It is a fact that people find consolation and comfort in animals when everything else around them seems to be falling apart and there is only uncertainty at every corner.

We decided to visit the southern Romanian-Ukrainian border in person to ascertain the needs there and started building a network of contacts in the Odessa region.

Sara Turetta
President

01

THE CONFLICT IN UKRAINE: *SAVE THE DOGS'* RESPONSE

24 February 2023 marks one whole year since the large-scale invasion of Ukraine first began. These last twelve months have resulted in unimaginable death, destruction, loss and suffering for people and animals.

In the days immediately following the outbreak of the conflict, *Save the Dogs* was immediately active in providing relief aid on two fronts: in Romania, assisting people fleeing the bombs with their pets in tow, and in Ukraine, with the dispatching of food supplies to animal shelters in the Odessa area.



THE STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

- ✓ Ensuring that people arriving at the border, fleeing with their animals, received the basic necessities, assistance and information about the documents they needed in order to be able to continue their journey into other European countries
- ✓ Installing a new area at our shelter in Cernavoda which could accommodate cats and dogs that could not continue the journey with their owners, as well as animals evacuated from Ukraine
- ✓ Ensuring an ongoing supply of food for shelters and a network of volunteers in Ukraine in the Odessa area with whom we are in contact.



WHAT WE HAVE DONE

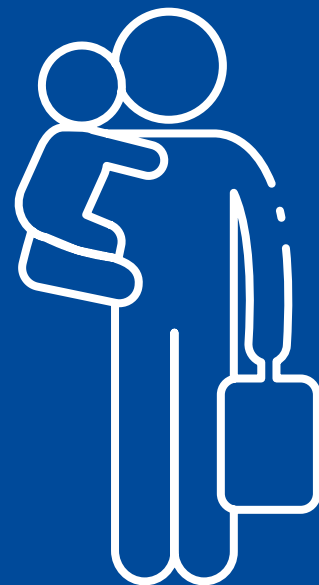
IN ROMANIA

AT THE BORDER WITH ISACCEA



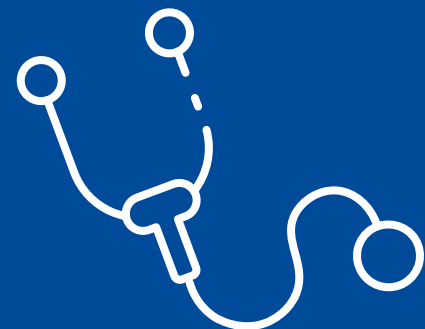
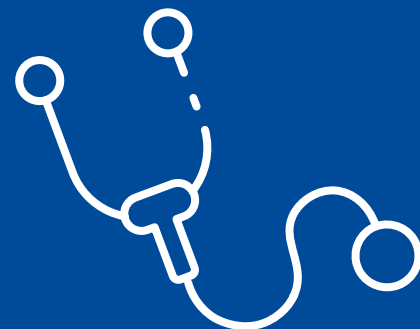
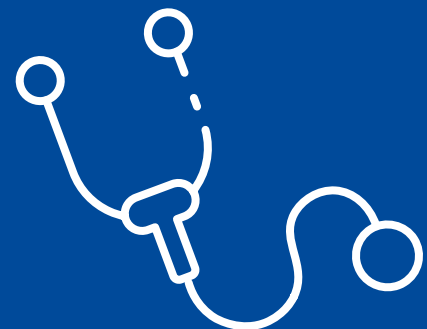
42

Volunteers and staff
at border



1025

Refugee pets assisted



3

Vet emergencies



414

Pet carriers donated
to refugees



105

Pet carriers donated
to Airport + north train
station



132

Tray cat litters
for refugee
animals



343

Bowls



88

Blankets



407

Harnesses
+ leashes



338

Pampers



898 kg

Pet food for
refugee animals

WHAT WE HAVE DONE

IN UKRAINE

ODESSA, IZMAIL, MYKOLAIV, KHARKIV

2367

Dogs that
received
food



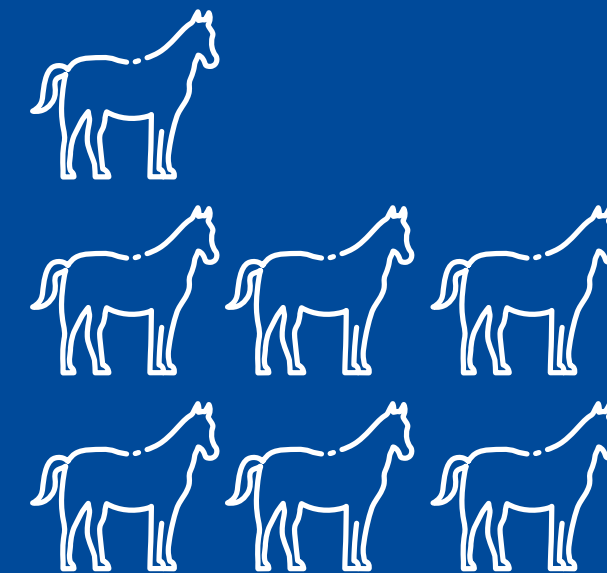
2029

Cats that
received food



+ 400

Volunteer street feeders
that received food



7

Horses that received
hay and straw (Ukrainian
horses that arrived in
Romania with a refugee)



533,000 kg*

Dog and cat food
provided to shelters



455

Kennels for dogs



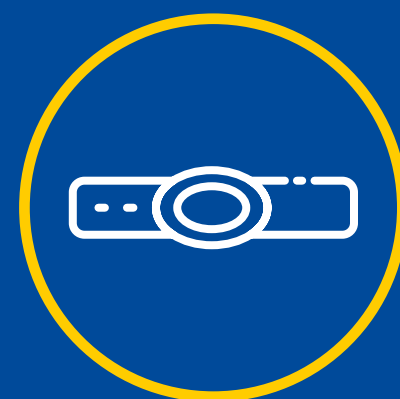
80

Blankets for animals



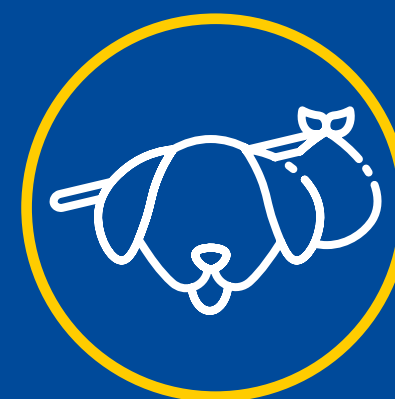
180

Dog coats



1548

Flea/tick collars



30

Dogs rescued
from shelter

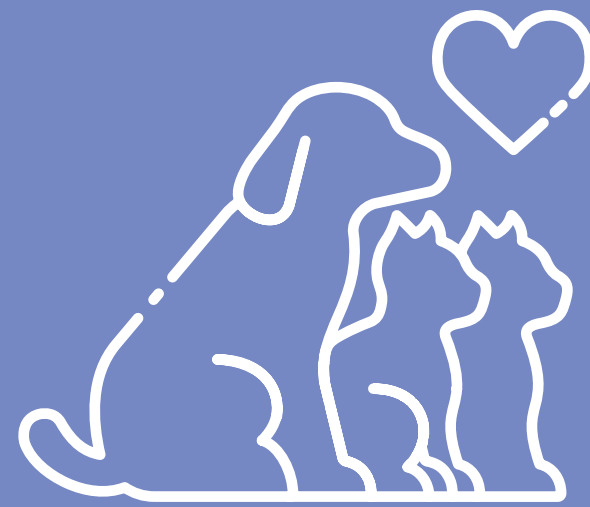


+ 20

Shelters that received
food

* update 10th February 2023

OTHER ACTIVITIES



3

Animals reunited
with their family



2

Accommodation
found for refugees
with their pets



1

Boarding paid
for refugee pets

02 ON THE BORDERLINE OF WAR

I arrived at the Romanian-Ukrainian border at Isaccea in early April. A series of boats were regularly ferrying people over the Danube River which divides Romania and Ukraine. They comprised mostly women, children and the elderly, some bringing their animals with them, and all exhausted by their long and difficult journey through war zones. Those who had experienced the bombing directly were clearly in a state of distress and apprehension, and their despair could easily be discerned by seeing the looks on their faces. No words were needed. The time I spent in Isaccea left an indelible impression on my heart. Being able to offer comfort in contrast to the weapons and destruction on the other side was a truly unforgettable experience.

CATERINA

VOLUNTEER AT THE SAVE THE
DOGS STATION AT ISACCEA

The conflict in Ukraine sparked a dramatic exodus of people who, stripped of all certainties and terrified by the bombardments, fled to save themselves and everyone they held dear, including their pets.

As of the end of 2022, 7.8 million refugees had been sheltered all over Europe, principally women and children, while an estimated 5.91 million people had been internally displaced.

As of the end of 2022, 7.8 million refugees had been sheltered all over Europe, principally women and children, while an estimated 5.91 million people had been internally displaced¹.

3,039,504² people entered Romania, many of them at the Isaccea border crossing, which is only two and a half hours from the Save the Dogs center. Despite the fact that many refugees

could only travel with items they could physically carry, many chose to bring their pets with them, carrying them in their arms or tucked inside their jackets, often with no leashes, dog collars or food.

Save the Dogs had a fixed station at the Isaccea border point between March and the end of June. More than 40 volunteers volunteered their time to help distribute essential goods to refugees and their pets, in addition to the humanitarian aid relief provided by similar organizations.

Volunteer support was also provided at Bucharest airport and Romania's main train station, where we sent essential supplies for the refugees' cats and dogs.



Note di chiusura

- ¹ *International Organization for Migration;
**Flash Appeal Ukraine (March-December 2022)
- ² Romanian Border Police, Official Statement
12.12.22



“*I was shocked to observe refugees carrying cats and small dogs in their arms or tucked into their jackets to protect them from the freezing cold, sometimes without even a leash or a collar. Most of the refugees had to leave their homes taking only the bare minimum with them. The animals clearly needed to be given provisions and food, which is why we decided to set up a **permanent station at the Isaccea border**. Our team of volunteers and staff distributed dozens of pet carriers and other basic supplies for them every day, making it possible for the refugees to safely continue their onward journey with their pets.*”

GREGG TULLY
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF
SAVE THE DOGS ROMANIA





The family from Mykolaiv and Odessa the dachshund

Extract taken from "Urme de Bucurie, și alte amintiri românești ale unei italiene" ("Footprints of Joy and other Romanian memories by an Italian"), Sara Turetta, Edizioni Humanitas 2022

Along with her elderly mother, preteen son and dachshund Odessa, Yulia was among the hundreds of refugees arriving from Orlovka on March 13. Their faces were pallid and gaunt. Alessandra and I first encountered them in the triage tent, chilled to the bone and sitting quietly on the sidelines. We immediately guessed that they had traveled a long distance.

Odessa the dog was glued to the grandmother, protectively shielding her by growling at anyone who came close. The little boy could have been no more than 13 or 14 years old, and his sky-blue eyes were bloodshot. It was clear that he had recently been crying. Who knew where his father was and if he was still alive?

We couldn't find a translator to help us communicate with them, but we understood through gestures that they needed some practical things for their dog. After a few minutes, Alessandra came running back with a blanket, a warm dog coat, a harness and some packets of dog food. After a bit of a tussle, she managed to put the jacket on Odessa, who was shaking like a leaf in the grandmother's arms. The grandson looked at Alessandra and me, smiled shyly and said "Thank you", the only two words of English he knew. We

wanted to talk to them and to comfort them, but there was no one there to act as translator for us. We weren't brave enough to give them a hug, but we were dying to do so. When we left the tent, we came upon Yulia nervously pacing outside, staring at the ground, in an almost trance-like state. We recognized what looked like the symptoms of post-traumatic stress.

Alessandra went back several times during the day to see how the family was doing, and at one point I caught a glimpse of her coming out of the tent in floods of tears. "Those poor people," she said, "what are they going to do, where can they go...?" Now she was the one who needed a hug. The following day, the American news channel NPR posted an interview with Yulia on its Instagram page. She was crying in despair, holding onto her little dog.

«They started shelling Mykolaiv», she told the reporter, her face covered in tears. «We could not stay at home waiting for a missile to hit us. Life had become impossible.»

The photo of Yulia crying was one of the images we always carried with us when we wanted to demonstrate the plight of the Ukrainian refugees we had witnessed.

The doberman breeder on the run from Kharkiv

Extract taken from 'Urme de Bucurie, și alte amintiri românești ale unei italice' Sara Turetta, Edizioni Humanitas

As a blizzard mercilessly pummeled the refugees disembarking from the ferry at Isaccea, we caught sight of a woman in the distance, making her way toward us with a very heavy step. She was probably in her seventies and was wearing a woolly hat and threadbare jeans. Her shoes were in tatters. Dragging her along were three massive Doberman dogs with cropped ears that were tugging frantically on the leash. The elderly woman was struggling to keep up with them, not only because she was clearly exhausted, but also because with her other hand she was also pulling a shopping trolley with mangled wheels behind her. Sticking out of the trolley was a kind of square shape enveloped in dirty rags, which made it impossible to get a good look at what was hidden inside. A volunteer took her by the arm, fearful that the poor woman was about to collapse; someone else picked up her suitcase, the only other item she had been able to bring with her.

We approached her with concern, trying to understand the situation. We discovered that she and the dogs had managed to make their way to the border from Kherson, a Russian-occupied city more than 500 km from Isaccea, and that they had had to cover long distances on foot. The lady was in fact a Doberman breeder, and someone was waiting there to accompany her to Italy where her granddaughter lived. We lifted the blankets

off the square object, only to find it was a cage containing four Doberman puppies all squashed on top of each other. That explained the whimpering sounds we had heard...!

Photographs taken by Greek photographer Odyssey Chloridis recorded our meeting with the woman from Kherson and the loading of her animals onto the van that would transport them to Italy. While Gea was expertly handling the dogs, their owner continued to weep and embrace us, constantly repeating «Spasiba, spasiba», thanking us for our assistance.

We do not and cannot sympathize with those involved in breeding animals, because we know the suffering their work causes. But this woman's love for her dogs was clearly apparent, and we couldn't help but be moved by her story. As Alessandra and Gea returned to our station, I found myself clutching the woman from Kherson's crumpled shopping trolley, the cords and rags still embedded in its structure. These were the only remnants left behind to tell the tale of a heroic journey undertaken in the company of the only thing that mattered to her: her precious dogs.



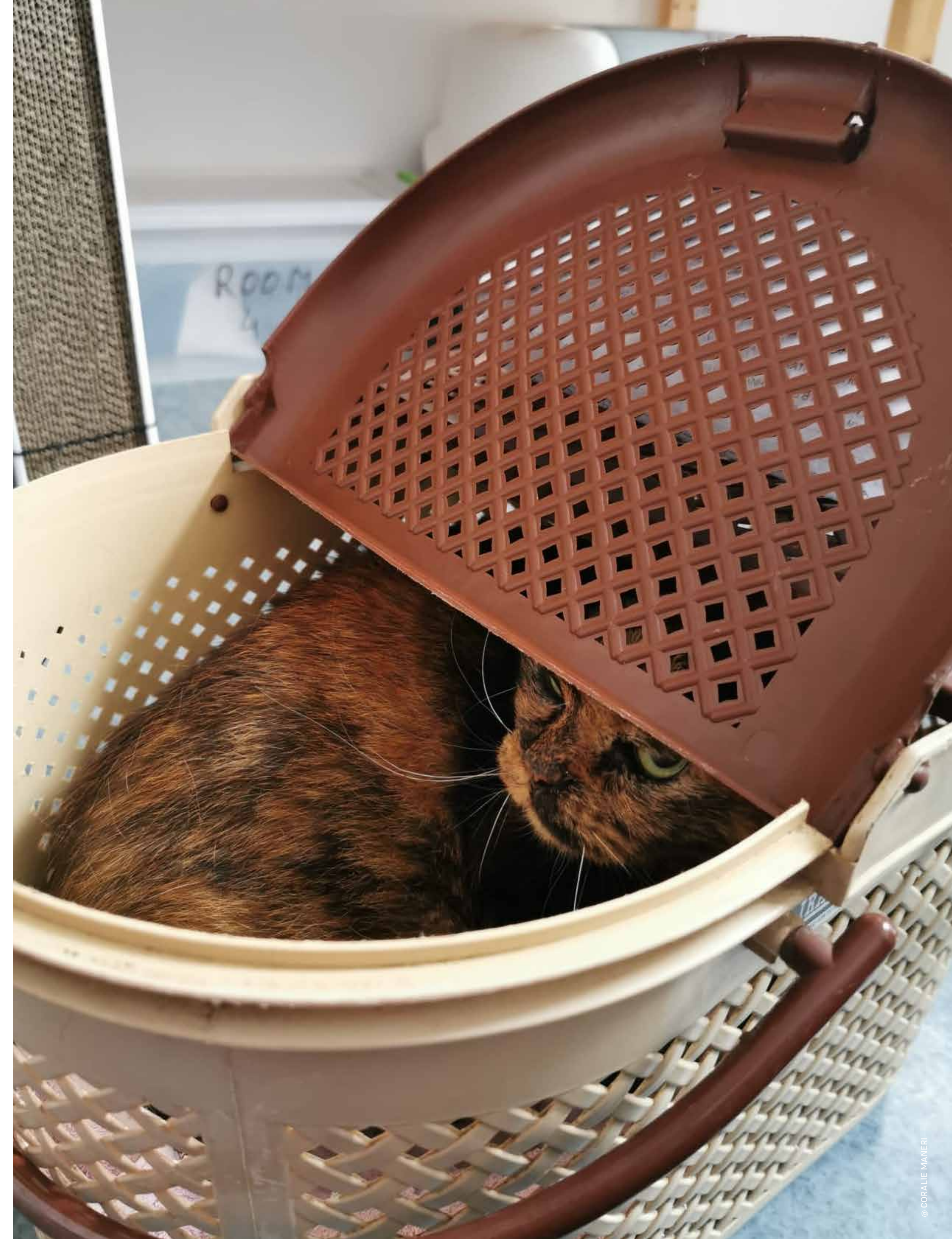


03

WELCOMING REFUGEE ANIMALS

*In addition to providing necessities, **Save the Dogs** also opened the doors of our shelter in Cernavoda in southeastern Romania, 144 km from the Isaccea border, offering to take in cats and dogs fleeing the war either for a short period of time or permanently.*

We temporarily housed, for example, a 14-year-old cat called Marisya who was brought to our center in the arms of her owner, Lidya. After their long and arduous journey to Romania, Marisya's journey with her human companion ended abruptly at Otopeni International Airport. Due to the boarding regulations stipulated by the low-cost airlines, it was unfortunately prohibited for animals to travel in the cabin or in the cargo hold of the plane, even if they were refugees fleeing war. Although *Save the Dogs*, in conjunction with a number of other Romanian associations, collected thousands of signatures petitioning for a waiver to these rules, it was unfortunately in vain: the airline companies completely ignored our requests. Many refugees were forced to tear up





their plane tickets and opt for long train journeys, which was the only way to proceed without leaving their animals behind. Most of the refugees arriving in Romania

Many refugees were forced to tear up their plane tickets and opt for long train journeys, which was the only way to proceed without leaving their animals behind.

ended up simply transiting through the country before going on to join friends or relatives in other countries.

However, thanks to the work of *Save the Dogs*, Marisya was not abandoned. We welcomed the cat into our shelter in Cernavoda, confirming we would reunite her with her owner in Germany as soon as was hu-

manly possible. And we managed to fulfil our promise. After a few days with us, Marisya was taken to Germany by one of our staff members, coinciding with the departure of some of our own residents who were being adopted by families there. Lidya and Marisya's **successful reunion was one of the three** that were made possible thanks to *Save the Dogs'* efforts at the border and at Bucharest airport, where we worked in synergy with the airport's refugee assistance point and other Romanian animal welfare organizations who were at the front lines during the emergency.

We also permanently housed **thirty dogs evacuated from a shelter in Odessa** in the month of March, **carrying out the largest rescue mission in *Save the Dogs'* history.**



30 dogs fleeing Odessa

Extract taken
from 'Urme
de Bucurie, și
alte amintiri
românești ale
unei italice'
Sara Turetta,
Edizioni
Humanitas

There are hundreds of animal shelters scattered throughout Ukraine, some of them housing over 1,000 animals. Adoption programs are almost nonexistent, apart from a lucky few shelters that manage to organize transport to Germany, which has always been the most generous country for accepting strays from southern and eastern Europe. In 2012, at the time of the European soccer championships, reports of the slaughter of stray cats and dogs ricocheted all over the world. Since then, however, Ukrainian animal activists have remained on the sidelines of activism in Europe, and information about the current situation is sketchy at best. The language barrier has played a decisive role, as the second language in Ukraine is traditionally Russian, while English is rarely spoken, and use of the Cyrillic alphabet serves only to further complicate matters, as this makes it difficult to establish stable partnerships.

The killing of abandoned dogs is no longer permitted by Ukrainian law, although we recently heard reports about a (failed) attempt to reintroduce such legislation. Unfortunately, however, no structured sterilization programs such as those that *Save the Dogs* and other associations have been carrying out for some time now in other Eastern European countries are in existence. There is a

general feeling that Ukrainian animal welfare is experiencing a very similar phase to the one that existed in Romania twenty years ago, which I recount in the first chapters of this book: activists hoard animals “rescued” from the streets without seeing adoption as a priority and without being committed to adopting preventive measures. For them, the key thing is to keep the dogs “alive,” without asking too many questions about what “being alive” really means when it signifies these poor creatures being imprisoned for the rest of their lives in a cage.

When the war broke out, we quickly realized how many Ukrainian dog pounds existed, and how overcrowded they were, not to mention their being isolated from each other and highly disorganized. Most of the bank accounts we had access to were registered to individuals, and it was impossible to understand what kind of principles governed the work carried out by the volunteers. Deciding what to donate to whom became a dilemma, so with Gregg we quickly agreed that the best thing to do would be to dispatch food in bulk for the thousands of cats and dogs left behind in the country, thereby avoiding money transfers. We also recognized that, given the current circumstances, there was a risk in fact that the money might not even be put to good use.





One of the shelters we were in contact with was Loving Hearts in Odessa, which was managed and run by Olga. She had more than 200 dogs in her care, and when some of the fences were damaged by a Russian attack, she asked us to take in thirty or so of her residents. By a happy coincidence, twenty dogs had just left Cernavoda bound for Sweden, so we were fortuitously able to organize the reception of these Ukrainian animals.

It was a very hectic time: it was a real challenge for Gregg to obtain suitable photos and paperwork for the incoming animals, and we quickly realized that we would have to do everything from scratch, only assessing their adoptability and health status once they had safely arrived at our center. There was a strong possibility that it would be very difficult to prepare some of the dogs for adoption, but we decide to take that risk.

Over the whole course of this crisis, the day that Olga traveled to the border from Odessa

was one of the longest ever for the Save the Dogs team.

Alessandra and the girls working in the adoption department prepared all the special areas where the new arrivals were to be placed, both in and close to the clinic; Gregg stayed in constant contact with Olga, who duly left at dawn with a driver and another volunteer. Communication via WhatsApp proved tricky, as the connection was frequently interrupted, and at one point all we managed to ascertain was that there were countless Ukrainian armed force checkpoints along the way. It was unclear if they would make it through and what time of day they would arrive at the border. During the afternoon, Alessandra, Gea and four other drivers and staff members traveled to Isaccea, where they waited for Olga to arrive for hours on end in the freezing cold, not knowing whether she would actually make it across the Danube with her four-legged companions.

At 10 p.m. the dogs finally arrived and the team's joy at the border was indescribable. Videos taken at Isaccea show the 30 dogs jammed into makeshift cages being expertly

transferred by our staff into the four Save the Dogs vans. I had decided to wait for the convoy at the Cernavoda shelter with Gregg, but when news came that they would not arrive before midnight I went home to give myself a couple hours' sleep.

As the clock struck midnight, we stood at the doors of the clinic waiting for the vehicles to drive up, together with a small group of workers who had offered to take care of the dogs as they arrived. When the four vans finally made their appearance, we were all exhausted and emotional. The only person to show no visible signs of stress was Gregg, who was as unflappable and calm as ever, despite having worked for 15 hours straight under intense pressure. We all finally retired to bed at one o'clock in the morning, worn out but relieved.

I fell asleep thinking how grateful I was to be sharing this complicated moment with such an extraordinary team of people.

04

OUR PARTNERSHIPS WITH UKRAINIAN ASSOCIATIONS AND VOLUNTEERS



Quantities of food are regularly dispatched every two weeks to more than 20 local partners, who in turn distribute the provisions to a network of over 400 volunteers.

Food is in very high demand and people are prepared to stand in line to receive bags containing even as little as 2 kilograms of animal fodder.

In March 2022, *Save the Dogs* started to assist a small number of partners in Ukraine who were located near the Romanian border (in particular, associations in **Odessa** and **Izmail**). As the war continued, outreach expanded to other areas where there were also large numbers of animals in need. Today, **the operation has extended to cover an even wider area of Ukraine**, including **Kharkiv** in the northeast, **Mykolaiv** in the south,

“We received your food consignment today! Thank you so much for your help! Many centers have been liberated in the Kharkiv region. Thanks to you, we will be able to feed a great many animals.”

LENA

A PARTNER OF SAVE THE DOGS FROM KHARKIV

and **Kherson** just behind the Russian front line.

Developing partnerships with shelters and volunteers who are feeding dogs and cats on the streets is essential for enabling us to understand what is going on in the country, as the situation can change from one day to the next, and means we can adjust our actions accordingly and maximize the impact of our assistance.

Our chief partner is **Lyudmila Melnikova**, the director of the **My Loving Dogs** shelter in **Odessa**. Lyudmila

works with us to help organize the distribution of food to other shelters and volunteers, and coordinates the drivers who transport supplies to the eastern cities. The food we send is therefore shared with other shelters and volunteers in the region, increasing the number of animals we can reach. Food is in very high demand and people are prepared to stand in line to receive bags containing even as little as 2 kilograms of animal fodder.



ESTABLISHING A SUPPORT NETWORK

“At the beginning, I spent entire days contacting Ukrainian shelters via email, on WhatsApp and through social media, trying to understand their needs and work out how best we could help them. They told me about widespread shortages of supplies including pet food, and I understood that they were so dedicated to their animals that they wouldn't leave them behind. One shelter vet told me she wouldn't leave even if a tank drove over her. Furthermore, countless people had fled their homes and had to leave their dogs and cats behind, causing a sudden increase in the number of animals roaming the streets. I remember that the manager of one shelter wrote to me, saying: "I'm terrified that the dogs will starve. I'm not afraid for myself. But it's very worrying for the animals." In a very short span of time we managed to organize regular shipments of large quantities of food supplies to be sent across the border to Ukrainian cities where we knew there were thousands of starving animals”.

GREGG TULLY
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF
SAVE THE DOGS ROMANIA



OUR AID NETWORK

1. **Odessa**
Odessa
Izmail
Mykolaivka-Novorosiis'ka
Chernomorske-2 (Vyselky)
Bolgrad
Nova Dolyna
Velykyi Buialyk
Novohradkivka
Vylkove
Sarata
Zorya
Zatoka
Tatarbunary
Bilolissy
Burlacha Balka

2. **Mykolaiv**
Mykolaiv
Ukrainka
Berezhnivate
Kotlyareve
Lupareve
Oleksandrivka
Zelenyi Hai
Zasillya
Novoselivka
Pervomais'ke
Novomykolaivka
Ukrainka
Kostyantynivka
Snihurivka
Ternovi Pody
Liubomyrivka
Krasne
Kostyantynivka
Zorya
Maksymivka
Lotskyne
Partyzans'ke
Shevchenkove
Novorus'ke
Luch
Nove Zhyttya
3. **Kharkiv**
Kharkiv
Zelenyi Hai St
Luchky
Shevchenkove
Novoselivka
Kostyantynivka
Slatyne
Derhachi
Pisochyn
Vodyane
Korotych
Chuhuiv
Solonytsivka
Pereyaslavska St
Manchenky

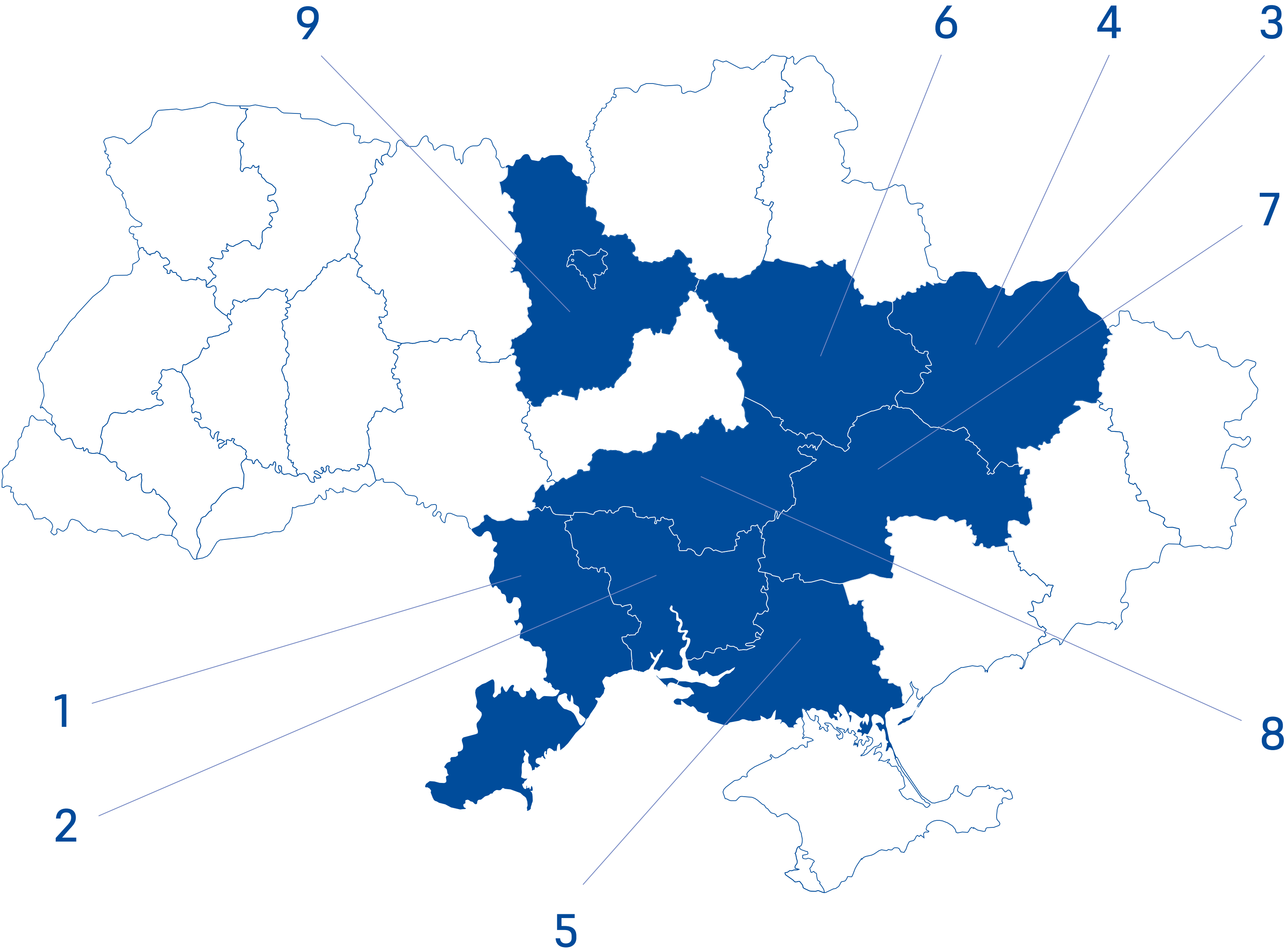
4. **Kharkivskyy Inovatsiynyy (Kharkiv)**
Merefa
Zolochiv
Saryi Merchyk
Izyum
Zmiiv
Tsyркunyy
Pivdenne
Vysokyy
Cherkas'ka Lozova
Prudyanka
Tsupivka
Kozacha Lopan'
Eskhar
Novopokrovka
Stara Pokrovka
Ternova
Vvedenka
Pechenihy
Mala Danylivka
5. **Kherson**
Kherson
Kyselivka
Novomykolaivka
Zelenyi Hai
Myrne
Oleksandrivka
Kozats'ke
Pervomais'ke
Tryfonivka
Beryslav

6. **Portalva**
Krementxuk

7. **Dnipropetrovs'k**
Shyroky

8. **Kirovohrad**
Kropivnitski

9. **Kyiv**
Kyiv







The village of the lost dogs

Tatiana is a photographer and videographer who distributes humanitarian aid, together with a group of volunteers. It is thanks to them that we are able to continue sending provisions to feed abandoned animals in the Mykolaiv area.

In countryside villages bombed by the Russian troops, very few people stayed behind to look after their animals. The majority of these are elderly people who were not able to leave or who have preferred to remain, given that they cannot take their farm animals with them or don't have the strength to leave everything behind.

Prybuzke is one such village, and it was from this village that the plea first came from Giammarco Sicuro, an Italian RAI television reporter, who highlighted the dreadful suffering that animals were experiencing due to the conflict. The journalist reported:

«What struck us most was the number of abandoned animals roaming about in ghost-like villages, where the houses have all been destroyed by artillery fire. Many people have died here, while those who were able to have fled their homes, obliged to leave their animals behind them. Only a few of the older villagers have stayed behind to look after the farm

animals. There is no food to be found in the villages, and there is an urgent need to get help to feed the cats and dogs left wandering around the streets before it is too late».

These were the words Giammarco wrote on his social media in March, after images of the devastation in the rural areas around Mykolaiv were shown on prime-time TV news.

Save the Dogs responded immediately to the journalist's appeal. We contacted Tatiana, the young woman who had accompanied Giammarco to the destroyed villages and who belongs to a group of volunteers distributing the humanitarian aid that arrives at the official collection point in Mykolaiv. With her help, we were able to deliver 4 tons of food directly to the cats and dogs who have been left behind, as well as those that were already strays before the war started. Tatiana and the other onsite volunteers personally took care of the distribution, leaving food to be reallocated by the Ukrainian soldiers in areas she was not able to access for security reasons.

05 THE ANIMALS THAT STAYED BEHIND



ESTABLISHING A SUPPORT NETWORK

©JOHNNY ZIGGER (TATIANA MYKO)

We are doing our best to build shelters for them during the winter, to get blankets for them. But there is also the financial problem. People have lost their jobs; the whole economy has been destroyed. But we carry on doing everything we possibly can.

ALISA

A PARTNER OF SAVE
THE DOGS IN KHARKIV



© SAVE THE DOGS

While some managed to take their pets with them, **countless people had to leave their cats and dogs and cats behind**, and they are consequently now roaming the streets in search of food and shelter.

Although we have no official figures, our partners report back that the situation is desperate, and that **an appalling number of pets have been left wandering the streets**.

The majority of people caring for the animals are women, children and the elderly. Although most of them have not earned any money since the beginning of the

crisis and live in permanent fear of attacks, **they risk their lives every single day feeding and caring for animals in need**.

As the months go by and despite our efforts to feed them, the animals are becoming visibly thinner, and we fear that their health will continue to deteriorate. Because most have not been sterilized, many dogs and cats have given birth, so the already large number of stray animals is on the rise.





GA
SPI

SENSI

SPENDING THE LONG WINTER IN THE COLD AND DARK

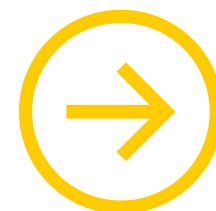
“Good evening, Gregg! There is no electricity. We've been bombed! It's almost impossible to get a connection and electricity. If possible, we need blankets for people and animals. It is very cold. We would be very happy to receive whatever you can send us.”

LYUDMILA
SAVE THE DOGS' PARTNER
IN ODESSA

Exacerbating the already desperate situation faced by both humans and animals, **winter has now arrived with its freezing temperatures**, made even more difficult due to **Russia's ruthless strategy to leave civilians in the cold**. The frequent and widespread attacks on Ukraine's power infrastructure have plunged millions of people and animals into darkness, depriving them of heat, electricity and water. Emergency and scheduled blackouts continue, even when the power is restored. Temperatures have brutally dropped to -15° to -20°C in Northern

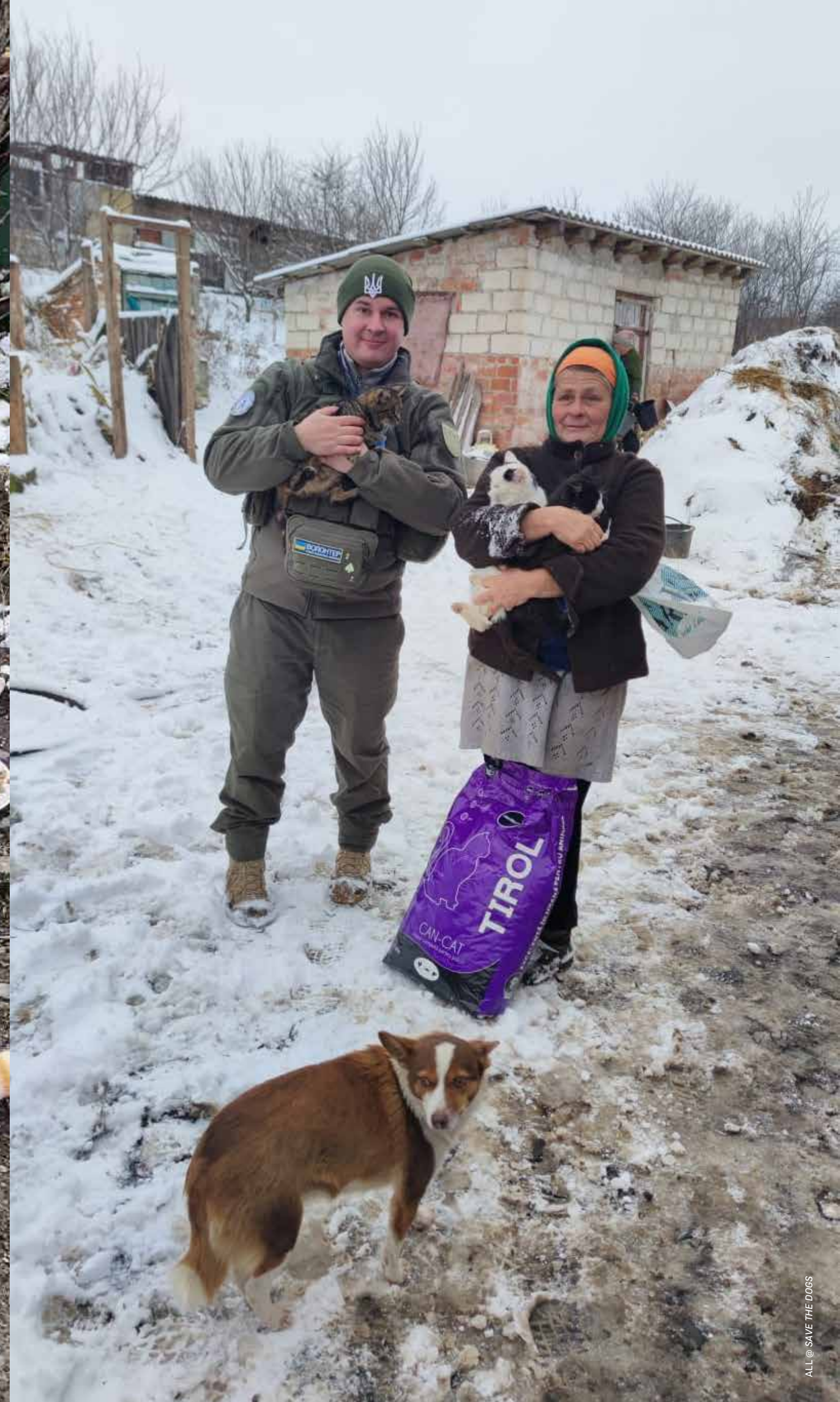
Ukraine, and many people only have little wood stoves and candles for light, cooking and warmth. They also sleep in the same bed with their pets, to keep each other warm.

To address this additional emergency, *Save the Dogs* has dispatched **kennels, dog coats and blankets** there to help save as many animals as possible from the cold, as well as from starvation.



“Winter is the hardest time for street animals in terms of their survival. Their life is always hard, but it's been made even more complicated now due to the war. There have always been homeless cats and dogs on the streets in Ukraine. But in peacetime, many people fed them and saved them... with the advent of war, everything has changed for them too. Many people have fled, many have lost their homes, their jobs and the priorities have changed. Many of us animal lovers, are trying to save them, but we cannot keep up with the increasing number of animals left behind. **For animals who were formerly pets, living on the streets is a death sentence.** Many cats and dogs are now with caring people who have opened their homes to more than 100 animals each! Many do not have any funds, but just cannot abandon them ... there is no money and the sterilization programs have stopped ... cats and dogs are multiplying uncontrollably. We are facing an emergency. Winter has arrived, bringing with it the cold and snow. **Because of the power outages, it is no longer possible to cook food for the animals, so your dry food is a lifesaver.** We really need it! During the winter, only food will save them from starving to death.”

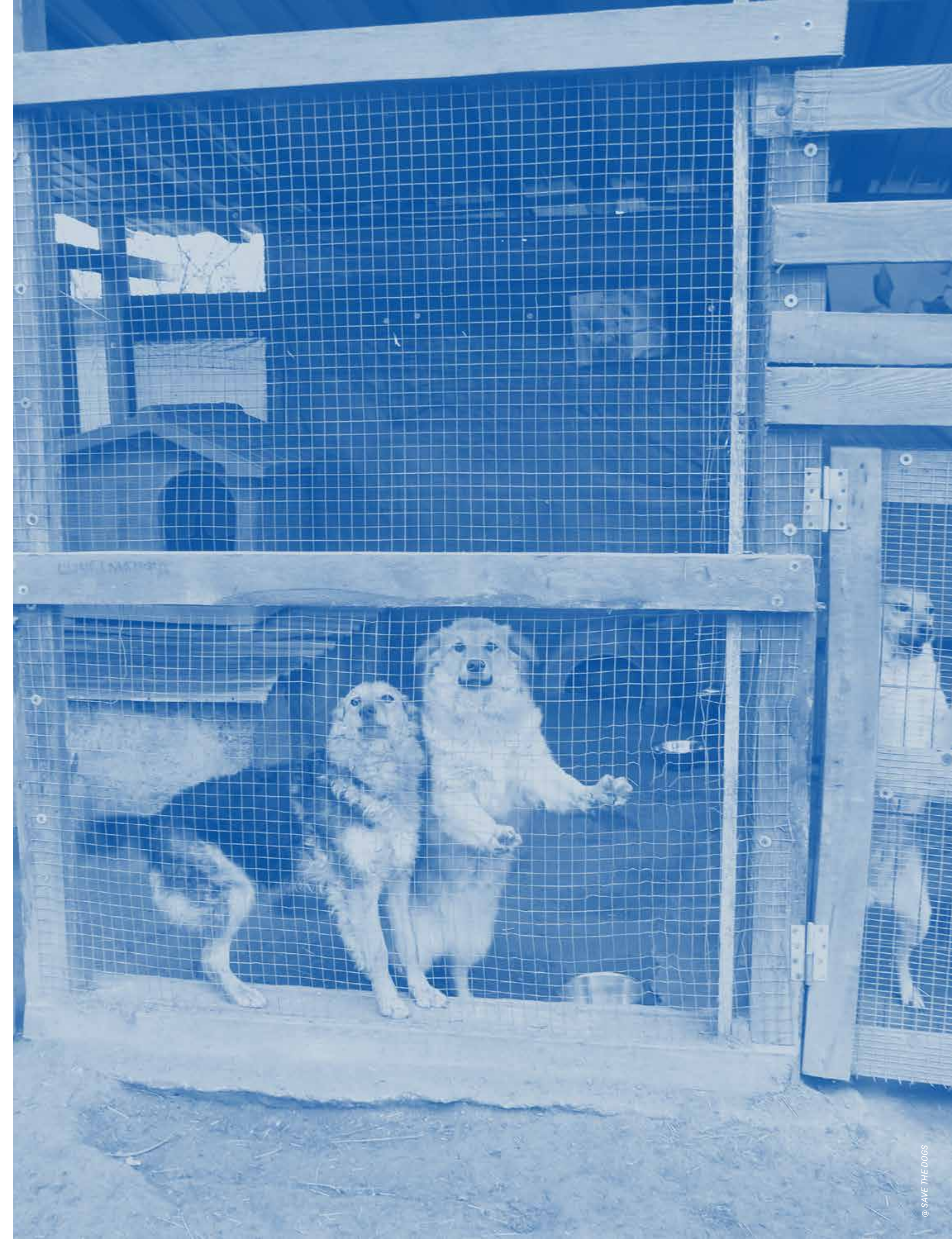
TETYANA
SAVE THE DOGS' PARTNER
IN ODESSA



06

SAVE THE DOGS' FIRST MISSION IN UKRAINE

It was a very early start. It was practically deserted in Cernavoda that morning as we loaded all our supplies and everything we needed for Save the Dogs' first mission to Ukraine. Destination: Odesa, which had been our focal point for the dispatching of relief aid and food for the animals since the beginning of the conflict.





Ukraine has always had serious problem with the number of street dogs and cats and a lack of proper animal shelters and animal nonprofits. However, the outbreak of war and the resulting shortages of money, electricity, and water have broken whatever systems were in place for caring for the animals.

We had been planning to see for ourselves the terrible conditions of the animals we had been told about by our partners in this year of conflict for quite some time. We seized the opportunity of a reduction in the number of attacks in Odessa at that time to organize meetings with our partners, plan operations for the coming months and evaluate the possible impact of our support.

When we arrived at Isaccea, the Romanian-Ukrainian river border point, we couldn't help but think about the many refugees we had assisted between March and July 2022. This time we were the ones jumping on board and entering a war-torn country. Once we had crossed the border into Ukraine, we could see collapsed bridges and gutted houses in front of us, and all around us were hordes of cats and dogs just roaming about the streets in search of food and shelter from the bitter cold.

Ukraine has always had serious problem with the

number of street dogs and cats and a lack of proper animal shelters and animal nonprofits. However, the outbreak of war and the resulting shortages of money, electricity, and water have broken whatever systems were in place for caring for the animals. **I've lived in areas with huge numbers of street dogs in the past, but I've never experienced such a feeling of admiration for the volunteers who dedicate their time to rescuing and caring for the animals.** We heard countless times about their decision to stay in Ukraine, even in devastated cities like Mykolaiv, because they didn't want to leave the cats and dogs to starve or freeze to death.

When we finally arrived in Odessa, it was to discover a city that mercifully had not devastated by the conflict, although the streets were deserted and most of the stores were closed up. Nearly everyone here has been out of work for months. Power outages were ongoing, but nevertheless we felt safe and were ready to meet our partners.



OLGA'S SHELTER

Together with some volunteers, we visited Olga's shelter, which is 25 km outside Odessa. Olga has been one of our main partners since the beginning of the war. It was a hard and emotional visit. **The shelter is underfunded, and it hosts almost 150 dogs, dozens of cats, and unbelievably, dozens of goats that had been abandoned.** The dogs live in precarious conditions, in confined spaces built from motley pieces of different fencing and materials such as spring bed mattresses and doors. Some of the animals live in the shade with very limited access to natural light. Olga basically built the shelter with her own hands and using her own funding. We were overjoyed to come across Akella again, a young dog who had been terrified and hungry for days before being rescued by Olga. Despite all the difficulties, he had been saved by the care and affection of the people who rescued him.

VALENTINA AND HER 90 CATS

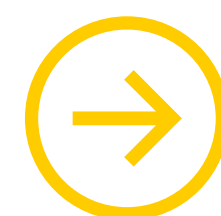
We visited Valentina, who lives in a little apartment in an old communist-style building with more than 90 cats that she rescued, most of them sick and elderly. She singlehandedly cares for this unbelievable number of animals! With the help of Save the Dogs she is able to feed and care for them all.

LYUDMILA'S SHELTER

At Lyudmila's shelter, we were able to see where a fire that had taken place at the beginning of the war had destroyed the shelter's entire food storage. Her shelter is well kept, and the animals seem happy. She is doing a great job and her dream is to open a clinic to rehabilitate dogs from injuries and other disabilities. After a long visit, we travelled with her and volunteers she gives our pet food to and saw where they feed animals on the streets and especially areas destroyed by the war. Alla is one of the volunteers living in Zatoka, a war-torn village. Like many people, Alla led a normal life before the war and she and her husband used to run a hotel. With the outbreak of the conflict, they turned it into a refugee center to take in displaced people and the many animals that had been abandoned.

PUPPIES LEFT ALONE

Together with Zhanna, another volunteer, we went to feed some of the many dogs she looks after, including litters of puppies, mainly in the industrial area in Northwest Odessa. It was starting to snow and it was definitely below freezing. Unfortunately, their situation is dire; they are alone, and are looking for food and protection. Zhanna and some other volunteers are trying to take care of them.



Through hearing people's stories and after seeing things with my own eyes, I feel confident that the **food, blankets, dog houses, and other supplies we are delivering every month are essential for the survival of these animals.** The volunteers we met said **Save the Dogs is basically the only organization providing any support to them.**

Countless animals in Ukraine are only alive because of our help.

This mission also gave us the opportunity to meet with veterinarians and to visit some clinics in Odessa. *Save the Dogs* would also like to begin to do its bit with regard to sterilizing stray animals in a bid to reverse the dramatic escalation of births that run the risk of dying on the streets just shortly after entering the world.

Gregg Tully
Executive Director
of *Save the Dogs* Romania

07

LOOKING BEYOND WARTIME

To paraphrase the words spoken by Judge Giovanni Falcone,

«War is a human phenomenon and, like all human phenomena, it has a beginning and an evolution and it will therefore also have an end.»

These are words we repeat to ourselves every day in order to garner courage in the face of the images of destruction that come from Ukraine that we are gradually finding ever more intolerable and dispiriting.

Even though this conflict seems interminable, it too – like all the other conflicts that have involved humanity – will come to an end one day. And when it does, this country will need us and the efforts of all the nonprofit organizations even more. We will need a real “**Marshall Plan**” that – unlike the original – **will need to include animals**, because their suffering is finally plain and in full sight of the whole world and can no longer be ignored. We are not the only ones saying this, because the Ukrainians themselves are demanding action.

The *Save the Dogs* staff will need to spend time on Ukrainian soil to thoroughly understand the situation and create the best opportunities for working together, in order to try and make a significant contribution to the country’s reconstruction. It will not entail working alone, **as we will coordinate with British, German and Austrian organizations** with whom we are already in contact, so that we can work in synergy and not duplicate our efforts in the same areas.

This conflict - like all the other conflicts - will come to an end one day. And when it does, this country will need us and the efforts of all the nonprofit organizations even more.

We know for a fact that **the phenomenon of canine and feline strays will be dramatically exacerbated by the destruction caused by warfare**. Even before the Russian invasion, sterilization was not a widespread practice in Ukraine among the associations, which have historically limited themselves to taking in thousands of animals with no prospect of adoption, housing them in more or less spartan shelters, without making any impact on the canine and feline population. It is for this reason that, **once the war has ended, *Save the***



Dogs will try to figure out, together with other international partners, how to tackle the phenomenon of strays and what the best way will be to initiate one or more sterilization programs, depending on the resources available and the partnerships we manage to establish. It is likely that **setting up a mobile clinic that can cover even the most isolated areas in the east is the best option strategically,** but we will need to carry out a small viability study to see if this

The phenomenon of canine and feline strays will be dramatically exacerbated by the destruction caused by warfare.

option really can be feasible, especially with regard to sourcing local staff and overcoming any bureaucratic hurdles.

In parallel, we will visit the shelters in the Odessa area that we have been assisting during this period, to see how we can help them to improve their welfare stan-

dards, **organize training for the local staff** and perhaps set up **one or more veterinary clinics** that can conduct sterilization programs and offer medical care.

All of this will of course be dependent on the resources we can secure, but as anyone who knows *Save the Dogs* knows, we will proceed as rationally as we always do, taking steps forward based on analyses that are completely objective. We know this is the only way to have a meaningful and lasting impact on this tortured land and help Ukraine turn the page for once and for all.





CONCLUSION

It was St. Augustine who said that God knows how to derive goodness even from evil acts. I don't believe you have to be religious to see that in some mysterious way **even tragic events like war can produce unexpected silver linings**. We have all witnessed this with the huge surge of **international solidarity** in Romania, in Italy and in many other countries that has arisen due to the conflict taking place in Ukraine. Never before has the response to a mass exodus been handled in such a "collective" manner, as institutions, non-profit organizations and individual citizens have come together in such an exceptional way (including so many families who have generously opened their doors to welcome

in refugees!). Likewise, we at *Save the Dogs* **have met some terrific people** at the Isaccea border whose paths we may never have crossed in other circumstances, such as Adriana Susma, our new Director at Cernavoda, her Deputy, Steliana Mazilu and the new Director of the Community Engagement program, Liliana Pacheco from Spain. We have also experienced this mobilization with our **first real collaboration with other Romanian animal welfare associations**. We all helped and supported each other by sharing information, resources and supplies. This was unprecedented in our field, which has previously always felt fragmented and at times confrontational. However, in my opinion the most important benefi-

cial effect indirectly produced by this tragedy is yet to come. I believe that **animal welfare associations in Ukraine will be liberated from the complete isolation in which they worked and existed until now**. While this war has indeed undoubtedly worsened the plight of thousands of cats and dogs there, I am convinced that ultimately the conflict will eventually be perceived as an **accelerator of better practices** and will open up a window into Europe that Ukrainian activists and volunteers would not be able to experience had we not become involved with their country at this dramatic time in its history. Please don't get me wrong: it goes without saying that it would have been better had this heinous war never taken pla-

ce and had Ukraine's gradual *rapprochement* with Europe occurred with no trauma or loss of life. None of this pain can be erased and there is no justification for any of it, nor – unfortunately – is there even a glimmer of a logical explanation to be found. And yet, given that the trail of events took a different turn, **we still prefer to look for the good aspects that this evil has wrought**, because it helps us to keep the flame of hope alive and kicking, and allows us to decide – once more – which side we prefer to be on. And as far as this is concerned, we at *Save the Dogs* are unequivocal: we choose to stand for goodness.

Sara Turetta
President

Sara Turetta



HOW WE USED THE DONATIONS
IN 2022

TOTAL EXPENDITURE:
900,118 €



2%
Donations to other
organizations



2%
Volunteers at the border



8%
Supplies donated at the border
and new storage area



12%
Personnel



61%
Food & transport to Ukraine



10%
Purchase of vans



5%
Dogs houses

CONCLUSION

HOW WE USED THE DONATIONS IN 2022

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It is often when faced with the biggest challenges that the best synergies are created. This is exactly what happened with *Save the Dogs'* international partner companies, associations and foundations, that provided incredible support for our actions to assist animals and people affected by the war in Ukraine. This were matched by the incredible solidarity of all our supporters, both individuals and families, who responded to our requests for help from the very start of our relief efforts with huge generosity.

Thanks to their monetary support and the in-kind donations we received, it was possible to provide immediate succor for the fleeing animals and those left behind in the country.

To this day, *Save the Dogs* continues to feed thousands of animals who have stayed in Ukraine.

To each and every donor we would like to extend our deepest appreciation.

ITALIAN DONORS

- Save the Duck
- Miomojo
- Petsoul Jewelry
- Calze G.M.
- Trixie
- Royal Canin Italia
- Ca' Zampa
- Save the Polar Bear
- KPET Charity di KPET
- Unione buddista italiana
- Umanità
- More than 4,000 donors (individuals and families) for *Save the Dogs*

INTERNATIONAL DONORS

- A Kinder World Foundation
- Abraham Foundation
- Ahimsa Foundation
- Animals' Angels
- Arukah Animal International
- Blue Cross
- Center for a Humane Economy
- Dogs Trust
- Fondation Brigitte Bardot
- Greater Good Charities
- Humane Society International (HSI)
- Hundhjalpen
- IFAW
- International Animal Rescue (IAR)
- K9Aid
- L'homme et son Chien
- Magic Marble Foundation
- Marchig Charities
- Mars
- Soi Dog Foundation
- Summerlee Foundation
- Susy Utzinger Stiftung fur Tierschutz
- TASSO
- Vets Beyond Borders Australia
- Vets Beyond Borders Denmark
- Wagmore Foundation
- Wellbeing International
- World Animal Protection



The association founded by Sara Turetta came into being in 2002 in Romania with the mission of changing the fate of animals doomed to be put down in the country's public dog pounds by initiating alternative projects for managing strays. All of *Save the Dogs and other Animals'* projects aim to improve the welfare of these animals and the communities in which the organization operates, focusing on the following areas of intervention: sterilization programs and treatment, census of stray animals, raising awareness and organizing adoptions. To date, more than 8,000 adoptions have been successfully carried out in Europe, with 1,750 sterilizations conducted in Italy (Campania and Calabria), while 2,000 animals are attended to every year in the modern veterinary clinic built in Romania, and 41,000 cats and dogs have so far been sterilized for no charge.

www.savethedogs.eu



tiktok.com/@savethedogsstd



facebook.com/SavetheDogsSTD



savethedogsandotheranimals



youtube/savethedogs1