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William J. Fielding

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**Inquiries into dog ownership
in Abaco with specific reference to
AAREF/SNIP SN Project**

Submitted to: HSUS, Dr. A. Rowan

Prepared by: William J. Fielding

11 October 2001

General comments

- The monetary incentive is of little consequence to the genuine owner
- Owners with male or “nice” dogs are unwilling to have them sterilised, even for free
- The monetary incentive may encourage non-owners to present animals at the clinics in order to earn money
- Veterinarians should not encourage owners to use free ARRF/SNIP operations.

It is suggested:

- The ARRF/SNIP monetary incentive is stopped
- The programme concentrates on young (under two) owned animals
- ARRF/SNIP clinics should have a sliding scale of charges: e.g.: pay 100% of first sterilization, 50% for second and 25% for subsequent animals
- The programme must continue to offer a collection service for those who are unable to get their pets to the clinics
- ARRF/SNIP should provide owners with literature on pet care, in particular the importance of visiting the veterinarian
- Veterinarians should be encouraged to reduce their spay/neuter fees to encourage owners to get used to having to pay to have their animals sterilized.

Introduction

Abaco, an island in the Bahamas, has a population of 10,003 in 2,998 households. Of this population, 3,381 (or 34%) live in 1,177 (or 39%) of the households in Marsh Harbour, the largest community on the island (Bahamas Department of Statistics, 2000).

Two studies of the Abaco dog population in Marsh Harbor were conducted. The first was in February, 2000 and the second was in October 2000. Three AARF/SNIP clinics were held between the two studies in February, May and July, 2000. A fourth clinic was held in October after the second survey. The results of the clinics are given in Table I.

Table I: Results of four AARF/SNIP Clinics.

	February	May	July	October
Dogs Sterilized				
Males	67	46	32	34
Females	86	56	62	49
Total	153	102	94	83
Incentives Paid	\$1570	\$800	\$620	\$429
Cats Sterilized				
Males	21	0	9	15
Females	21	10	15	17
Total	42	10	24	32
Incentives Paid	\$260	\$40	\$80	\$70

In the first investigation, 105 people from the 1,117 households of Marsh Harbor were interviewed and a photographic capture/recapture study was undertaken to obtain an idea of the roaming dog population.

In this first study (Fielding, March, 2000), the results were extrapolated as follows.

1. Thirty-four and a half percent (34.5%) of the households own an average of 2.6 dogs each giving approximately 1,000 owned dogs in Marsh Harbor.
2. Thirty seven percent of these dogs are females, 50% of the dogs (or approximately 500) are allowed to roam and 62% are reportedly sterilized. Furthermore, 55% of households reported feeding an average of 4.2 roaming dogs each for a total of more than 2,500 dogs.
3. It is likely that any particular roaming dog is fed by a number of households and Fielding suggested that the actual number of roaming dogs may be around 650 with only 150 unowned.
4. In the photographic "capture/recapture" study, a 12-mile route through Marsh Harbor was traced at the same time on two consecutive days. A roaming dog population of approximately 395 (95% Confidence Limits - 301-489) was estimated from the data.

5. The “capture/recapture” method may not identify all the roaming dogs in Marsh Harbor if the dogs are territorial and do not spread randomly through the community. This is very likely. The actual route covered 12 miles of streets out of a total of [insert] in Marsh Harbor. Therefore, it is possible that the number of dogs on the streets could be as high as [insert] and the roaming dog population could be even higher if some dogs have territories that do not include any of the streets.

The second study included a street survey of 100 people, a telephone survey of 30 people who had participated in the AARF/SNIP in either or both of the May and July 2000 clinics, interviews with veterinarians at both clinics on the island, interviews with staff at both pet shops on the island, and interviews with officers at the Department of Agriculture and the Ministry of Environmental Health.

1. The street survey.

One hundred people (50 men and 50 women) on the streets and other public places (shops, fast food outlets and offices) were interviewed in October 2000. The weather was dull and cool, in contrast to the sunny weather of the first study. Twenty-one percent of the sample owned a total of 62 dogs (an average of 2.95 per household) of which 42 (68%) were potcakes. Forty-six percent of the pets were males and 64% of all animals were sterilized. The median age of the 55 dogs for which ages were supplied was 3.5 years (3.9 years in the first study).

Seventy-six percent of owners and 42% of non-owners (49% of all interviewees) had heard of AARF/SNIP. Some people appeared to be confused as to who was responsible because the sterilizations were done at a veterinary clinic. Six of the dogs (10%) in the street study had been sterilized by AARF/SNIP in the preceding 12 months. Seventy-three percent (11 of the 15 people who responded to this question) of owners had taken their adult pets to the veterinarian in the previous 12 months.

Only seven (18%) of the females were now unspayed. Two litters were reported. One litter was born before April 2000; the mother is now spayed, but did not have access to the road. The other litter, of eight pups, was born between April and June 2000 and none had survived. This animal, which was now spayed, has access to the road. No pup, from either litter, visited a veterinarian. Forty-eight percent of owners had allowed their pets to get on to the road in the previous month.

TABLE: Comparison of demographic data from two studies.

	February	October
Owning Households	34.5%	21%
Average dogs/owning HH	2.6	2.95
Dogs/All HH	0.897	0.620
Females	37%	54%
Median age	3.9 years	3.5 years
Dogs sterilized	62%	78%

At least one interviewee reported that some people had taken dogs that they did not own to be sterilized by ARRF/SNIP so that they could pocket the \$10 incentive fee.

Forty-three percent of interviewees fed dogs that they did not own. Of these, 56% fed an average of 2.8 dogs on the previous day. Some feeders clearly stated that they fed dogs “everyday” Dog owners are less likely to feed unowned dogs as only 33% of them fed animals compared with 46% of non-owners. Men and women are equally likely to feed animals that they do not own (44% and 42% respectively).

Comments

In the February study, 32% of households owned an average of 2.6 dogs and 62% of dogs were sterilized. Seventy-six percent of owners took their pets to the veterinarian “when needed” or each year, and the dog had a median age of 3 years. Fifty percent of owners allowed their pets to roam and 55% of households fed dogs they did not own. Sixty-two percent did not know the name of any animal welfare group.

These comparative figures are generally in line with those collected in the new street study, except for the fact that now almost half of the people had heard of ARRF/SNIP. The fact that owners interviewed on the street had a lower proportion of potcakes than in the telephone study suggests that potcake owners are more likely to participate in ARRF/SNIP; i.e. owners of breed animals do not want to get them sterilized.

The age profile of the owned dog population indicates that about 25% of the population dies each year, so it can be expected that in order to maintain the proportion of sterilized animals, some 25% of the owned population (or 250 dogs) must be sterilized each year. This may account for the fact that no major increase in the proportion of sterilized dogs was observed between now and February, when about 205 dogs were sterilised. In addition, if owners are presenting their dogs at ARRF/SNIP clinics to utilise the free operation rather than visiting the veterinarian, then ARRF/SNIP may be involving relatively few “new” owners in the sterilization process.

It is to be expected that the free-roaming population, like that on New Providence, is sustained by recruits from the owned population; i.e. abandoned owned dogs. Therefore, ARRF/SNIP needs to concentrate on owned dogs and cared-for dogs, rather than free-roaming dogs which have limited reproductive ability.

The new information on handouts, suggests that the assumption made in the previous study that, on average, a household providing handouts, feeds one dog, would appear to be fair.

2. A telephone survey of 30 people who had participated in the AARF/SNIP in either or both of the May and June 2000 clinics

The records made at the two previous ARRF/SNIP clinics were used to contact, by telephone, people who had participated in the program during May and/or June. In some cases, where the owner of the dog could not be found, another family member supplied information for this investigation. This study was able to contact 30 owners of 50 of the 205 animals (24%) of the animals for which records were available. Some participants no longer had dogs while other owners had animals that had not been sterilized. The people contacted had an additional 31 dogs at home so the telephone study covered a total of 81 dogs of which 64 were potcakes (includes cross-breeds). A lack of response was mainly due to respondents not knowing the ages of the dogs (understandable when potcakes are acquired), not being the person who took the dog to the clinic, and the late insertion of a question relating to veterinary care in the telephone survey. A copy of the survey form is included in Appendix 2.

Summary of telephone survey of ARRF/SNIP users

Forty-eight percent of the dogs in the study were male. Seventy-nine percent (n = 64) of the 81 dogs were potcakes. Overall, seventy percent of the dogs were sterilized. Sixty-one percent of these had been sterilized under the ARRF/SNIP programs. Fifty-one percent of the male dogs were sterilized compared with 88% of females. Fifty percent of the dogs were one year old or less.

Respondents stated that the money incentive offered by ARRF/SNIP was not important. The most common reason given by respondents for saying they would have had their animals sterilized without a cash incentive was associated with a wish to avoid having any more litters. For some having the operation done free-of-charge was sufficient incentive. The most common reason for not having the animal sterilized earlier was because of the age of the dog (66%). Only one person (4%) stated cost as a reason for not having had their pet sterilized. Other reasons included, "it was convenient" (4%), "wanted a litter" (17%), "no one came to do it" (4%), "missed previous clinic" (4%).

All the owners said that they would have next their next (a new) dog sterilized; but later questions put this response in doubt as some people then went on to say that they would not pay for the operation themselves. Some owners made it clear that if the dog were a male or a breed dog ("nice dog") then they would not get it sterilized. When asked, "how would they get the next animal sterilized", 13 (52%) said they would take the animal to the veterinarian and the remainder would prefer to wait for the next free (or reduced rate) clinic. (At this point the interviewee was reminded what is the commercial cost of a spay.) Six owners (23%) then said that they would not pay the full amount to get their animals sterilized.

Seven (29%) owners who had had animals sterilized under ARRF/SNIP had taken their animals to the veterinarian since Floyd (approximately last 12 months).

Comments

The ARRF/SNIP has increased the percentage of sterilized animals above the 66% level for a number of owners. Some of these owners have also brought in neighbours' dogs to be sterilized. Barriers to sterilization are breed and sex of the animal, as in New Providence. Like New Providence, it is seen that potcake owners are more likely to have their animals sterilized than owners of breed dogs.

The ability of ARRF/SNIP to bring animals into the clinics for owners increases the accessibility, but it engenders a dependency by owners on ARRF/SNIP for sterilizations. Although people said that they would get their next dog sterilized, it could be expected that cost and inconvenience would result in a reduced number of new dogs being sterilized.

Owners of dogs sterilized by ARRF/SNIP did not show any heightened level of pet care towards their dogs and about the expected number (30%) had visited the veterinarian in the last year. This observation was backed-up by the veterinarians themselves. This points to the requirement of further education of owners to visit the veterinarians and the importance of clinics keeping fees as low as possible so as to encourage owners to take their dogs to the veterinarian.

3. Assessment of the reliability of pet ages

In these, and other investigations the age of the pets are usually supplied by the owner. However, it is often not possible to assess the reliability of such information, and accuracy is important when assessing pet welfare based on age.

In order to obtain a crude assessment of reliability, the ages of the dogs given at the ARRF/SNIP clinics were compared with the ages given over the telephone in the follow-up study. The two sets of ages have a non-zero correlation coefficient (0.525) ($p < 0.001$), which indicates a bias between the two sets of ages (see Figure 1.).

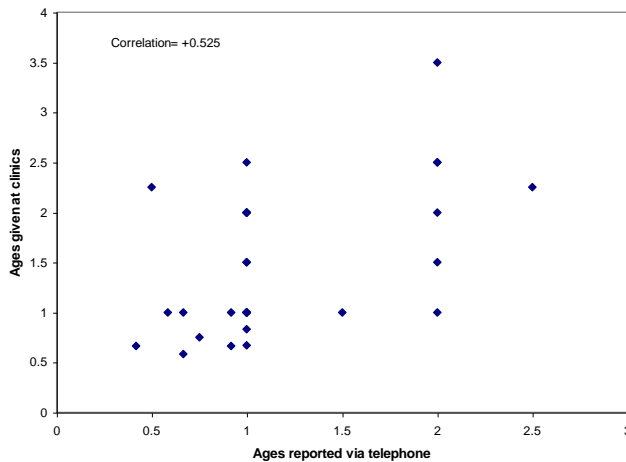


Figure 1: Illustrates the bias between ages reported by dog owners on two occasions.

In order to investigate this issue further, Molly Roberts will get owners to state the ages of their pets at the next clinic and then the ages will be verified using a tooth wear pattern provided by Alan Beck.

4. Interviews with veterinarians at both clinics

One veterinarian clinic has been operating for sometime, but it is open only three days a week; however, from January 2000, it will be staffed by a full-time veterinarian. The other clinic has only been staffed by the present veterinarian about seven months, but it is staffed full-time and answers emergency calls.

One veterinarian supplied answers that were “guestimates”, while the other consulted records for a specified period and these were multiplied up to obtain yearly estimates. As the part-time clinic is staffed by two vets and only one of these was interviewed, it is not possible to get a complete picture of the work at this clinic.

Apart from some HSUS and commercial leaflets, the clinics had no information on pet care. However, one clinic is in the process of putting some newspaper articles into leaflet form.

The most common breeds seen at the clinics were:

Breed	Clinic 1	Clinic 2
Labrador	20%	5%* (20%)
“Toy” dogs/other breeds	30%	5%*
Potcakes	50%	10%* (15%)
Cocker spaniel		52%*
Other breeds		28%* (65%)

Figures marked * are based on clinic records for one month, all other figures are “guestimates”.

Both veterinarians will assist people to buy breed dogs. It was claimed that one of the veterinarians imported dangerous breed dogs and may collect as much as 10% of the purchase price. One veterinarian knew of a pet shop having brought in three German Shepherds from Freeport, and was aware of another eight breed dogs having been imported in the previous six months. It was stated that there were strong gender, age, and income factors associated with ownership of the various breed dogs. For example: Pit Bulls are typically owned by young males in the lower income bracket.

The frequencies with which the clinics were involved in the following activities were:

Aspect	Clinic 1	Clinic 2
No. of dogs seen/year	1,560	252*
No. of litters seen/year	17	6*
No. Spay/neuter/yr§	520	16*
No. put down/yr	21	45*
No. of poisoned animals/yr	17	12* (21)
No. adopted out/yr	26#	No programme

Figures marked * are based on clinic records for one month or more, all other figures are "guesstimates"

These are sterilized.

§ These are full-priced operations, not paid for by ARRF etc.

One clinic said that it could do an additional 1,300 sterilizations per year and the other 340 per year. One veterinarian stated that he had never sterilized a Pit Bull or German Shepherd. Poisoning occurs in cycles; one clinic saw five poisoned dogs in May but only two in September, these "poisoned" dogs are, of course, the ones which are not killed outright.

The most common disorders seen at the clinics are: Skin problems, allergies and mange at one clinic; and at the other: heart worm, parasites, ticks and fleas.

The cost of a canine spay varies between \$90 and \$100 while a neuter costs \$80. Heart worm treatment at one clinic costs between \$300-\$400. The bills at the clinics vary between \$45-\$125 and \$30-\$150/visit. An average visit probably costs about \$45. Costs of some medicines at one clinic were:

Heartworm: \$13.50-\$33.00 per six tablets
 Tick flea: \$11.50-\$14.75 per month's dose
 Shampoo: \$12.95

Both veterinarians reported that very few owners who participated in the ARRF/SNIP visited them after their animals had been sterilized. Those who do, tend to be the richer owners, so the cost of animal health care is not an issue for them.

One veterinarian had seen and knew of no one catching any disease from dogs in Abaco, while the other said that he only knew of people catching diseases (human mange) from owned dogs.

Comments

The fees charged by the clinics are higher than those charged in New Providence, the differential is supposed to reflect the higher cost of living in Abaco. However, if customers do not have a similar increased income this would make the fees comparatively higher than in New Providence.

Given the observation that potcakes make up about 75% of the owned dog population, it is clear that they are taken to the clinics less often than breed dogs. It has been observed that breeds and potcakes have similar average ages, so this suggests that potcakes are better adapted to the local environment than imported dogs. It also suggests that potcakes get a lower level of health care from owners and could, consequently, live longer if given better health care.

Veterinarians perform relatively few sterilizations outside the ARRF/SNIP. This is, in part due to veterinarians encouraging people to take advantage of the free operation under ARRF/SNIP. Owners who are willing to pay other veterinarian bills should be encouraged to consider the cost of a sterilization as the normal cost of owning a pet. Rather than ARRF/SNIP pay for such operations, Dr Rowan's idea of a raffle (one ticket per operation), with a \$200 (say) prize would not only encourage owners to get their pet sterilized but also be cheaper for ARRF/SNIP. The draw could be made after a specified number of operations. This approach would also ensure that the clinics keep good records of the sterilizations they perform, as well as allowing ARRF/SNIP to devote its resources to owners who are less able to effort the cost of sterilizing their pets.

The number of animals adopted out is about 2.5% of the owned population in Marsh Harbour and all of these are sterilized.

5. Interviews with staff at both pet shops

One pet shop has only been open three weeks; the owner of the other pet shop has been in Abaco since 1993.

Both shops offer an adoption service for potcakes. One charges adopters \$10 per animal (the pet is probably unsterilized), the other charges the adopter nothing, but expects a donation from the person surrendering the animals. Both shops recommend that adopters use the ARRF/SNIP to get the animals sterilized. One shop requires adopters to sign an undertaking to have the animal sterilized. Both shops depend upon personal knowledge to decide if the adopter is a suitable owner. The new shop has not yet adopted out any animal, but suggested that its staff would check the yard where the adopted animal was to be kept. It currently has five potcake pups in its care. The other pet shop adopted out 30 pups in January-February 2000, but only two in September 2000. The main period when potcake pups are brought in was said to be December-March. This suggests a single peak in the breeding of potcakes.

It should be noted that both adoption programmes effectively indicate that potcakes are worthless as the charge is \$10 or less. A "breed" animal will cost between \$500-\$800 in both shops, with "toy" breeds in the region of \$1000 plus.

The established pet shop indicated that it was very easy to adopt out cats.

Dogs are not typically sold as gifts. The established pet shop was looking to enhance its fences so that it could contain larger and more dogs. Neither shop had literature on dog, pet care. Both shops would also supply breed dogs on request. Both would import dogs from outside The Bahamas if necessary. Staff at one pet shop claimed that the veterinarians sold Euthanol, but this was denied by Molly Roberts.

Costs of selected items at one shop:

Dried food (50lbs)	\$29.50
Canned meat (24 tins)	\$20.90
Shampoo	\$14-\$10.50
Vitamins	\$15.50-\$26

Comments

The fact that potcakes can be obtained from the pet shops for free makes potcakes worthless, by definition. When breed dogs cost hundreds of dollars, it is easy to see why owners will pay health care bills for them but not for potcakes.

The unavailability of literature at both the clinics and the shops does not help owners to learn about better pet care. This lack of information is of concern when 80% of interviewees in the February study wanted more education for children on pet care.

6. Interviews with officers at the Department of Agriculture and Ministry of Environmental Health

Garbage collection typically occurs every 3-4 weeks at present. However, new arrangements are being made and the situation should improve by January 2001 when a new garbage collection will start. It was pointed out that few garbage bins have lids and this can allow dogs to gain access to garbage. It was admitted that it was difficult to prosecute people who did not store their garbage correctly when the collection was so poor.

Environmental Health regarded the Department of Agriculture as being responsible for the collection of dead dogs from the road, but the Department does not do this. Environmental Health does liase with Agriculture on the matter of stray dogs.

The Department of Agriculture would like to start an Animal Control Unit, but feels that local government would need to fund it. There are two traps in Abaco, and Dr. Bailey assists with putting down nuisance dogs. Therefore, it is possible for nuisance dogs to be removed legally.

Agriculture confirmed that few owners license their dogs. There are few if any complaints from tourists about stray dogs.

Appendix 1: Survey form used in the street study

Dog Survey – Abaco
International Humane Society

Date:.....Survey Form No.:.....

Interviewer:.....

Location of interview:.....

Sex of interviewee: Male / Female

1. How many dogs do you own?

If you do not own any dogs please go to question 9

2. What is the age/sex/status of each? Dog 1:(M/ F /U S) Dog 2.....(M/ F /U S).

Dog 3:.....(M/ F /U S) Dog 4:.....(M/ F /U S) Dog 5:.....(M /F /U S) Dog 6:.....(M/ F /U

S) Dog 7:.....(M/ F/ U S) (U S=unspayed/neutered, delete U if sterilised)

3. How many are potcakes?

If there are no females go to question 7

4. How many litters have your females had in the last 12 months?

5. How many pups were born after June?

many pups are still alive?

6. How many pups were between April and June?

many are still alive?

7. Have you taken any of your adult dogs to the vet in the last 12 months? Yes / No

8. Have you taken any of your pups to the vet in the last 12 months? Yes / No

9. Have you heard of the AARF/SNIP spay/neuter programme? Yes / No

If not a dog owner go to question 13

10. How many of your dogs were spayed/neutered by AARF/SNIP in the last 12 months?

If none go to question 12

11.(a) If animals were sterilised by SNIP, would you have brought your dogs if the cash incentive was:

(a) No money

(b) \$3

(c)\$7

11(b) Explain why:.....

11(c) Why did you not get the animal(s) sterilized before?.....

.....
12. Have any of your dogs got on to the road in last month? Yes / No

13. Do you feed roaming dogs? Yes / No

14. How many roaming dogs did you feed yesterday?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP IN THIS STUDY

Appendix 2: Survey form used in the telephone survey

SNIP Survey – Abaco
International Humane Society

Date:.....Survey Form No.:.....

Interviewer:.....

Sex of interviewee: Male / Female

1. How many dogs do you own?

2. What is the age/sex/status of each? Dog 1:(M/ F /U S) Dog 2....(M/ F /U S).

Dog 3:.....(M/ F /U S) Dog 4:.....(M/ F /U S) Dog 5:.....(M /F /U S) Dog 6:.....(M/ F /U S)

Dog 7:.....(M/ F/ U S)

(U S=unspayed/neutered, delete U if sterilised)

3. How many are potcakes?

4. How many of your dogs have been sterilized by SNIP in the last 12 months?

5. Would you have brought your dogs if the cash incentive was:

(a) No money

(b) \$3

(c)\$7

5. Explain why:.....

.....

6. Why did you not get the animal(s) sterilized before SNIP was available?.....

.....

7. Will you get your next dog sterilized? Yes / No

8. How will you get your next dog

sterilized?.....

.....

9. Would you pay to get your next dog sterilized? Yes / No

(Added later) 10. Have you taken your dogs to the vet in the last year? Yes / No

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP

UPDATE - 2001

Observations by Kathleen Hargreaves of SNIP in a letter to Kelly O'Meara of HSI dated January 25, 2001 based on conversations with people in Marsh Harbor since Jan. 8th, 2001.

- An obvious reduction in the number of stray and roaming Potcakes in Murphy Town/Dundas Town. Visual estimate: 50 – 75% fewer than one year ago.
- Majority of dogs observed are recognized, therefore sterilized. Potcakes appear healthier and larger. Same observations re sterilized Sandy Point dogs.
- Other than one cat, no road kill observed in the last two weeks; road kill sightings averaged 1 dog/day one year ago. No litters of puppies observed or reported; one year ago there would have been at least five. One to two pregnant females & only one nursing Potcake observed; down from @ 12 a year ago. Have seen only two emaciated Potcakes with no coats; down from 10 to 20 a year ago.
- Conclusion: Population reduction goal reached on time and as predicted in Murphy Town/Dundas Town. Massive community outreach unwarranted & untimely in March.
- AARF's Chris Roberts says he will assess changes in canine population in The Mud and Pigeon Peas prior to the March Clinic.
- SNIP/AARF propose a fully subsidized Friday/Saturday walk-in Clinic at both Marsh Harbour veterinary practices. SNIP incentive money offered only for animals presented at Clinics. Upon request, volunteers will continue to pick up and transport animals to Clinic from Murphy Town/Dundas Town but will offer no cash incentive for these. The purpose of this trial is to: (1) gauge reproductive resiliency; (2) measure changes in community cooperation/response to “no cost” S/N Clinics; and (3) determine how often volunteers will need to schedule periodic “hunting and gathering” in these communities for program to remain effective.
- Until Marsh Harbour roaming dog packs are sterilized, their nuisance effect reduced and their population controlled, business interests and tourist perceptions will remain *unconvinced* of the program's efficacy. Humane problem resolution requires on-going individual trapping throughout the year. Crucial to success is regular pack feeding and gradual socialization. Linda Giovano is the ideal resource. To continue she needs financial help to offset dog food (pack management & socialization) costs in excess of \$1,200/year.
- Roaming Potcakes at “The Wild Horse Farm” recently attacked and killed a domestic dog. All roaming Potcakes there are now being “quietly” and systematically exterminated. Mimi Rehour, our only contact with The Farm, has repeatedly requested that we “hold off” approaching management there with offers of help. It now appears our *window of opportunity* has passed. Conversely, we hope that our timely intervention within the Marsh Harbour area has precluded similar action there.
- Breeding, sale, importation from Freeport and Nassua, and the presence of aggressive breeds such as Pitbulls, Rottweilers, German Shepherds, Akitas, Chows and Dobermans continue to increase. This poses multiple threats to both human and Potcake populations. Valued for their aggressive tendencies these breeds mate with unsterilized female Potcakes, are used (it is reported but unconfirmed) for dog-fight gaming and are intentionally let off leash to attack and destroy Potcakes; deaths have been reported. It is just a matter of time before human injuries or deaths also occur.

- The brother of a man who breeds Pitbulls in Murphy Town recently attended a meeting where he complained stridently to Town Fathers about garbage overturned and strewn by roaming Potcakes. He called for rounding up the dogs and either removing them or containing them in a pound for destruction or adoption. SNIP/AARF is composing a polite Letter to The Editor rebuttal in which we not only will point out our strides via S/N but also suggest that better garbage containment and collection is a better and more direct solution to the problem than the (at best) removal and temporary elimination of Potcakes.
- We have identified a number of appropriate couriers who will deliver a letter from SNIP-AARF to Prime Minister Ingraham regarding Project Potcake. A letter will be composed within the next week.
- SNIP continues to look for the right opportunity to “reach out” in hopes of forging an alliance with the Treasure Cay Humane Society. None has occurred to date.
- Feline breeding on outer Cays is, by and large, unchecked. Unwanted litters and intact adults are trapped, collected, sometimes euthanized, but more often drowned or removed to remote cays or unpopulated areas (such as Hole in The Wall, the prime rookery of the endangered ground-nesting Abaco Green Parrot) where the cats either starve or multiply unchecked. While local groups on the outer Cays do their best to S/N cats on a weekly basis, their efforts are restricted by availability of funds and lack of an organized program. Unless a comprehensive S/N program for cats -- in both populated and unpopulated areas of Abaco -- is initiated soon, growing public sentiment will result in wholesale removal via dumping, poisoning, drowning and shooting, depending on location and persons involved. A humane and organized program to reducing Abaco’s stray, roaming and reproductive feline population would greatly reduce inhumane remedies and would also enhance safe breeding of endangered Abaco Green Parrots.
- In the past, SNIP and AARF have endorsed but not solicited the spay/neutering of cats at our Clinics. We have absorbed all costs for these procedures. Based on conversations by SNIP with animal welfare contacts at the south end of Great Abaco as well as those on the Outer Cays, we believe it incumbent upon us to become more involved. We must encourage and facilitate feline S/N by offering funding, organizational expertise and all practical methods SNIP has developed as a result of our on-going TNR Program (RETURN) for cats in Northern New England.
- Having now identified this need and having been solicited for help by Abaco animal welfare groups, SNIP and/or SNIP-AARF agree to initiate project specific alliances with these various organizations and will seek funding from animal welfare organizations, foundations and philanthropies to help subsidize the costs we incur as we help Abaco-based groups reduce feline populations.