



The search for new challenges: the fire that feeds us

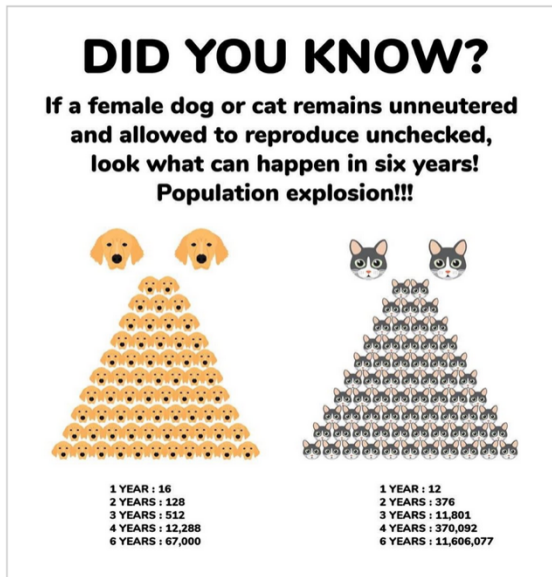
Dear supporters of the Associação Nerina,

We are now coming to the end of this year. We cannot thank you enough. It may be trite to tell you again, but you are the fuel that keeps our activity moving forward and allows us to improve in all types of treatment.

This year-end newsletter is dedicated to what we have done, what we are most concerned about, what we are experiencing, and what we would still like to do.

2023 Activity Summary

Honestly, we would have a lot of happy stories to tell you about 2023, because for instance there have been 40 adoptions abroad so far. Although we have reached this figure, our shelter is still too full.



This year, too, we managed to carry out many sterilisations. Think that with an average of 28 neuterings per month we have exceeded 2370 total interventions since 2018. And we still have two or three weeks of work before the end of the year. If we were to make a projection of the island's dog and feline population without our intervention, we would arrive at astronomical birth figures.

At present, the control of the feline population constitutes our major occupation. This apprehension thus formulated seems unimportant, but it should be summarised as follows: cats are everywhere and increasing exponentially. We encounter them everywhere, as if to let us know that they are mockingly overwhelming us and that we are incapable of stemming their births. Just as we write to you, here it

is 05:00 and there is one under our window arguing with another...

To stay in the numbers of our activities, we have performed 68 surgeries of all kinds and treated over 300 animals suffering from diseases. We have managed to give 44 dogs and cats a new family.

Our concerns

The subject of the feline population on an island is a very special one. While we meet them in hotels, where they are fed by tourists and are relatively well off, we also find them in the wild, even in unthinkable places, where they feed on all kinds of wild animals. Don't ask us where they go to drink, because we don't know. This last category is unfortunately the most nefarious for the island's ecosystem. Cats, thanks to their hunting skills, leave little chance for small reptiles (lizards and geckos) and new-born birds. Few people are aware that there are bird species here in Boa Vista that do not exist elsewhere, that there are birds that only nest here and that are on the verge of extinction if they are not protected properly.



You can therefore understand that our apprehension is related to this disruption of balance in the ecosystem specific to this island.

Our response to stem this 'invasion' has been that of mass castration. We also keep the cats that came to us as babies, hoping to redistribute them through adoptions. We look after over 80 of them, about 15 in Sal Rei and 65 in Cabeça dos Tarafes. What can we say? This last variant is not really the best solution for our resources, both for the work they give us and the costs they generate in maintaining them.

So we remain convinced that castration carried out in a rational manner is the only effective response: sector by sector, in rotation and continuously throughout the island. Never give up!



What we experience or 'emotion and reason, two perceptions of one reality'.

We realise that perception, of one case or another, is particularly subjective. While on the one hand our organisation tries to be rational and effective, on the other hand there are the tourists, who see a desperate situation in some animals. Unfortunately, there are many cases where visitors to the island demand that we abandon the work we are doing in order to rush to the rescue of animals that we would consider to be in absolutely no state of urgency. A classic example is the cat that has climbed a palm tree or a roof, or the dog that scratches itself too much, or even the donkey with wounds from a male fight. There are very few situations where we actually have to go for an intervention. De facto, we have neither the numbers nor the means to guarantee an unplanned external service and, practically always, it falls to Nathalie and/or Spartacus to set off in their private car in search of the animal in need of care.

We leave to your imagination the responses we receive when we attempt to respond by politely denying our intervention, while explaining the reasons for it.

Although we are moved by a deep love for animals, at the end of the month we have to make ends meet. While salaries are the largest outgoings in the association's accounts, our organisation could not survive without our employees. One topic, which we already discussed in August, is the health of those who work for the Association. The fatigue, failures and battles we wage are particularly wearing, both physically and morally. Everyone puts in above-average effort. It is therefore incumbent on the employees to be given their fair share of remuneration, time to rest and time to recover. There is mathematically no time to run around looking for a reported animal, mostly by people inexperienced in veterinary medicine. Here, we ask you, our dear supporters/funders, what do you think of this time invested without results? We have tried to contain this type of announcement by putting a button (link) on our internet page. We explain how to interact with us for the welfare of the animal and to avoid unnecessary travel on the island.



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2372 *Castrazioni a Boa Vista
Sterilizations on Boa Vista*

Assumptions and plans for the future

Evidently, given the concerns expressed above, a constant theme to be addressed with more emphasis will be the sterilisation of cats. We are also pursuing the project of expanding the cattery in Cabeça dos Tarafes, which has been shelved for the time being and for various reasons, mainly time and our means of locomotion. In the first months of 2024, we will proceed with defining the boundaries of the land and claiming ownership with the state of Cape Verde. This is a procedure widely used in the agricultural world, and for the first time the Association will attempt to take ownership of a piece of land free of charge in order to build its own structure on it. We will then proceed to the architectural and engineering design phase.

Another concern that nags us is certainly related to preventable diseases. As everyone knows, prevention is the best healthcare.

Our dream is to be able to vaccinate all the dogs on the island in order to avoid seasonal waves of parvoviruses. Or to treat all the dogs on the island against parasites, trying to protect them as best we can against ehrlichiosis or toxoplasmosis, tick-borne diseases. Both are pernicious and deadly if left untreated. Obviously, these prophylaxes would be completely free of charge for owners.

Vaccination on a large scale and starting from 6 weeks of a puppy's life would avoid the tragedies we see occurring on a regular basis and would give all of us less work (costly in terms of material, medication and caregiver commitment). How much does it cost? Well, the factors that have to be considered to make this calculation are many: How many dogs? How many vaccines? Cost of vaccines?

The dog population to be vaccinated could be estimated at around 1350. The vaccines needed would be exactly twice as many. In fact, a booster, a second vaccine, must be given within 24-30 days. With a reserve of 100, the vaccines needed would be 2800. The price for such a quantity would certainly be very advantageous, but to estimate the costs correctly, one must take into account the current price charged by distributors: 6.80€. This project would cost 19,040. - €. It would, of course, be interesting to do it at the same time as the canine registry, so that we can keep track of the individual protocol and finally have an exact x-ray of how many dogs are on the island.

We can also calculate what prophylaxis against ehrlichiosis would cost. For reference, let us consider the reference product we currently use to protect our dogs, i.e. all those in our shelter and clinic: Bravecto. The treatment covers three months and therefore has to be done four times a year. So that would be 5400 treatments per year. This product is administered in quantities related to the weight of the dog and obviously the cost must also be compared to the amount of active substance: the more there is, the more it costs. To simplify the calculations for a quote, let us imagine an ideal situation with dogs of an average weight of 20 kg. The best price we can currently obtain is 8€ per treatment.

That would mean €43'200 for one year alone.

Both hypotheses appear financially utopian. We emphasise, they appear.

We already perform these treatments, but we demand that the owners share in the costs. The payment of these benefits has two purposes:

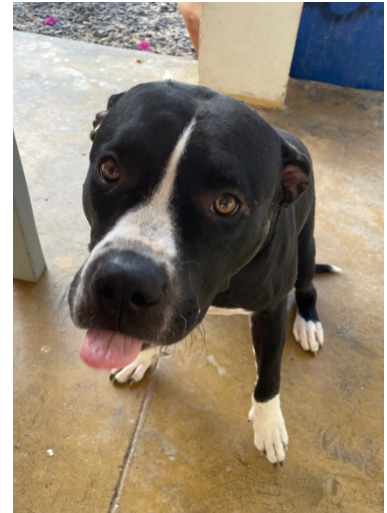
The first is the obvious one of returning the costs incurred by the Association so that we can buy the vaccine or product again for the next patients.

The second has an educational purpose: being the owner of a dog or cat entails costs, and the excessive welfarism, which is unfortunately too prevalent in Cape Verde, does not educate one to this independence, especially in the area of the dog owner's responsibility.

If our two projects (or dreams) of vaccine or large-scale deparasitation seem utopian, this last statement concerning personal responsibility, from a cultural point of view, is even more so. We can assure you of this. Evidently, in this case, the aim of the two actions is to achieve an optimal health situation, the zeroing of unnecessary suffering, and not to save the owners money.

Another project will concern the drafting of the law for dogs considered dangerous. Indeed, for several years now we have witnessed the increase in the pit bull population on the island. If they have not been a serious danger to humans so far, with this trend they will soon become one. We note an increase in the number of incidents in which this type of dog is involved. Smaller dogs often bear the brunt of this and we find ourselves, when we are lucky, patching up lacerations or treating bite infections. The deaths, however, do not come to us.

As we have mentioned before, the question of liability is a particularly complicated issue on the Cape Verde Islands. There is great confusion between the citizen's right and duty. Suffice it to say that such animals, considered as lethal as a firearm, are in the hands of children or teenagers.



Conclusion

As you see, the years go by but we never stop. Every year we have to reset ourselves and find sap for the time to come. We look for acceptable solutions to improve conditions for the animals and humans living in Boa Vista. We definitely want to close chapters. We want the problems encountered so far to become things of the past. We finally want that we are no longer needed, that everything is resolved and that everything is going well.

We want to thank you for your continued trust and support in the Nerina Association. We will continue to fight passionately for the welfare of the animals here in Boa Vista and work tirelessly to create a better future for them.

We wholeheartedly wish you merry Christmas and happy new year.

With gratitude and determination

Nathalie Weiner Zeli

Presidente **Associazione Nerina Svizzera – Boa Vista**
e **Associação Nerina de apoio aos animais**

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