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# STRAY ANIMAL CARE UKRAINE

## FOUR PAWS' WORK FOR DOGS AND CATS IN 2023

A report covering FOUR PAWS' Stray Animal Care activities  
in Ukraine in wartime, from 01.01.2023 – 31.12.2023

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

FOUR PAWS, operating in Ukraine since 2012, has significantly intensified its animal welfare efforts in response to the Russia-Ukraine war. Even before the war, Ukraine faced a large stray animal population, estimated at up to 200,000 stray dogs and likely many more stray cats roaming the streets of this country. The war has exacerbated the issue, leading to more lost or abandoned pets and a halt of most municipal stray dog management programs. The growing stray animal population is a big animal welfare issue and also poses a risk to public health.

FOUR PAWS, with extensive in-country connections and international support, continued its efforts in 2023. Through our own teams on-site as well as through strategic partnerships, we could help thousands of stray animals in Ukraine this year.

In 2023, we managed to sterilise and vaccinate almost 13,500 dogs and cats - thanks to our mobile clinic activities and to our unique Project Kishka, and through our USAVA collaboration. Via our humane and sustainable ways to reduce the stray animal populations, we could prevent the birth of tens of thousands of puppies and kittens on the war-torn streets. In addition, almost 370 dogs and cats received life-saving medical treatments, including those affected by the floodings after the Kakhovka dam breach in June 2023. This disaster prompted FOUR PAWS to provide immediate aid, including the delivery of rescue equipment and pet necessities, and providing food to 3,450 starving companion animals.

FOUR PAWS' Animal Assisted Interventions (AAI) programme, featuring former stray and now therapy dogs Alice and Busia, played a crucial role in providing comfort to war-affected children and refugees. The duo with their handlers conducted 187 sessions, offering solace to 1,340 people during challenging times.

The war has also strained Ukrainian shelters, intensifying the challenges of overcrowded kennels and increased workloads. Our Shelter Adoption Academy equips shelters with tools to navigate these challenges and enhance the wellbeing of shelter animals.

To broaden our impact, we expanded our projects and forged partnerships, including collaboration with USAVA (Ukrainian Small Animal Veterinary Association) and participation in the Ukraine Taskforce Group by Eurogroup for Animals. These efforts aim to build capacity and address the needs of as many animals as possible in the midst of the ongoing war.

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In this report many Ukrainian regions and cities are mentioned for which this overview is helpful.



Note: The Ukrainian provinces - oblasts - are marked, not their capital cities.

# 1. INTRODUCTION: RECAP OF 2022

The date February 24, 2022, is etched into everyone's memory. Russia invaded Ukraine in a major escalation of the Russia-Ukrainian war, which dominated the news in 2022 in the entire world. While many (animal welfare) NGOs came into action to help those in need, FOUR PAWS is the global organisation that has teams on the ground since over a decade: we have been active in Ukraine since 2012, by establishing a successful Stray Animal Care programme (including later on Animal Assisted Interventions and Community Engagement activities) and by running BEAR SANCTUARY Domazhyr, which housed 28 bears by the end of 2023.

It was important for FOUR PAWS to deliver a quick emergency response to protect the animals within our established programmes, but we also showed that FOUR PAWS is THE animal welfare organisation that knows no borders when it comes to rescuing animals in need. FOUR PAWS goes above and beyond and does not pull out of challenging situations. In 2022 therefore, we did not only continue our existing programmes but did more, to help as many animals in need.

A brief overview of the activities done for companion and stray animals in Ukraine in 2022:

- » Emergency aid for 2,500 pets of refugees in neighbouring countries;
- » Therapy sessions with therapy dogs in refugee centres and for soldiers;
- » Sterilisation and vaccination of almost 2,200 stray dogs and cats via our mobile clinic work;
- » Medical treatments for over 5,150 stray dogs and cats;
- » Launch of the unique Project Kishka to help stray cats, over 460 cats were sterilised, vaccinated and medically treated;
- » Food delivery to three shelters and to Mykolaiv and Kherson, that provided around 4,700 dogs and cats with food for a month;
- » Conduction of the first animal welfare survey;
- » Establishment of heating systems in Vinnytsia Municipal shelter;
- » Launch of the Shelter Adoption Academy in Ukrainian language;
- » Launch of and partnership with UPAW, which took care of the distribution of over 1 million kilogrammes of pet food, which reached over 110,000 dogs and cats;
- » Launch of the partnership project 'Povidok' together with Animals ID, in which 20,000 dogs received a QR ID tag;
- » Launch of USAVA Collaboration to help local veterinarians care for pets and strays, over 700 dogs and cats were sterilised, vaccinated and medically treated.

For a detailed report of the FOUR PAWS activities for dogs and cats in Ukraine in wartime in 2022, [see here](#).

## 2. DIRECT HELP FOR DOGS AND CATS: STERILISATIONS, VACCINATIONS & TREATMENTS

The FOUR PAWS Stray Animal Care team in Ukraine has been working in various cities throughout the country since 2012, and since then we have already sterilised and vaccinated over 42,000 stray dogs and cats by implementing the CNVR method (Catch – Neuter – Vaccinate – Return): the only way to humanely and sustainably control stray populations. Furthermore, we have provided additional medical help to over 5,800 dogs and cats.

Since the war, we provide veterinary care to animals in three different ways, to expand our reach: 1) our Mobile Clinic work, 2) our Project Kishka, 3) our USAVA collaboration (partnership – see chapter 6).

### 2.1 MOBILE CLINIC

At the beginning of 2023, the Mobile Clinic team was not yet active as it was too cold in the country to return animals to the street after neutering them. In March 2023, the team kicked-off the new year by starting their work in Sirius Shelter, which houses approximately 3,500 animals and is located in Kyiv region. Within eight working days, the SAC team sterilised 140 dogs and cats from the shelter and some were brought by local volunteers from the near villages. Meanwhile, one dog catcher helped the Communal Enterprise in Mykolaiv catching some local dogs that no one else seemed to be able to catch.

After the 'intervention' in Sirius Shelter, the SAC Mobile Clinic team continued their work for stray animals in need in several regions, including the regions of Zhytomyr, Cherkasy, Vinnytsia, Zakarpattia, and Volyn.

In conjunction with the CNVR project undertaken in the city of Tulchin (Vinnytsia region), the Mobile Clinic team collaborated with the Tulchin BNAU College of Veterinary Medicine to conduct a seminar in October 2023. This initiative aimed at fostering capacity building among veterinary students. The seminar, comprising both theoretical and



The mobile clinic team at work in Cherkasy region, May 2023.  
© FOUR PAWS



Over 60 future veterinarians participated in a seminar with demonstrative surgeries.  
© FOUR PAWS

practical components, featured several demonstrative surgeries, providing invaluable insights into FOUR PAWS' dog-catching and surgical techniques. Over 60 students, aspiring to become future veterinarians, along with faculty members, participated in the event.

Capacity building among veterinary students is of paramount importance in the pursuit of maintaining and enhancing high-quality and high-volume sterilisation practices. As the next generation of veterinary professionals, these students represent the future stewards of animal welfare in Ukraine. By equipping them with the knowledge and skills acquired through such seminars and practical experiences, we can contribute to the sustainable development of effective, ethical practices in the field of stray dog and cat population management. The investment in the education and training of these future veterinarians ensures a greater knowledge and understanding of sterilisation practices and their need, thereby addressing the critical need for stray animal population control and the humane treatment of these animals.

Output: 2023: 1,792 dogs and cats have been sterilised and vaccinated with the mobile clinic project. Since the start of the war: 3,979 dogs and cats have been sterilised and vaccinated with the mobile clinic project.

Additionally, 60 students (future veterinarians) and faculty members joined the seminar hosted by the Mobile Clinic team.

## 2.2 PROJECT KISHKA



Project Kishka in Mykolaiv.  
© FOUR PAWS

In October 2022, FOUR PAWS launched the unique 'Project Kishka', a project fully dedicated to help the stray cats of Ukraine (Kishka means 'female cat' in Ukrainian). Because despite the ever-changing unpredictable environment in the country, FOUR PAWS continues to find the best solutions to animal suffering. When stray dog populations reduce, it might happen that stray cat populations increase. To prevent a situation where countless of stray cats are suffering in Ukraine, action is needed.

Project Kishka is a long-term project with the goal to sterilise, vaccinate and, if needed, medically treat stray cats. Our first aim was to treat 10,000 stray cats until December 2023. In order to achieve this goal, we are actively running the project in Chernihiv (Chernihiv region), Sumy, (Sumy region), Poltava (Poltava region), Uman (Cherkasy region) and Mykolaiv (Mykolaiv region). Additionally, until June 2023, we also ran the project in Boryspil (Kyiv region). All veterinarians, who are specially hired by FOUR PAWS for this project, are supervised by an experienced FOUR PAWS veterinarian who manages Project Kishka.



Vet training in the Bankya clinic, Bulgaria, for the vets of project Kishka

© FOUR PAWS | Orlin Nikolov

Additionally, since each animal should be treated to the best of our abilities and it is important for veterinarians to stay up to date in the constantly evolving field of veterinary medicine, the new 'Kishka vets' joined a three-day training in our Bankya clinic in Bulgaria, where our expert veterinary surgeons shared their knowledge of high-volume treatments for stray dogs and cats, with a focus on high-quality clinical practice which is paramount for maintaining excellent clinical standards surgical outcomes and animal welfare.

Output: 2023: 7,734 cats have been sterilised, vaccinated and treated. Since the start of the project: 8,195 cats have been sterilised, vaccinated and treated.



### 3. EMERGENCY RELIEF: IMMEDIATE HELP AFTER FLOODINGS



Treatment of a rescued dog in Mykolaiv.  
© FOUR PAWS

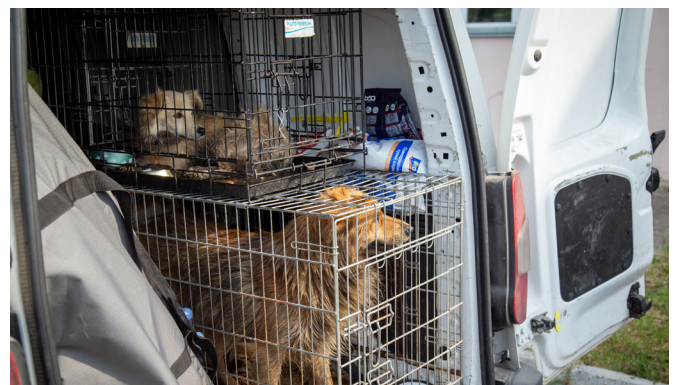
Early June 2023, the breach of the Kakhovka dam in Kherson region had plunged the country into even greater desperation. Thousands of innocent lives, both human and animals, were at risk due to the floods and they needed our help more than ever before.

Since day one of the war, FOUR PAWS has given it all to support Ukraine and its precious animals. From the moment the dam collapsed and resulted into floodings, we reaffirmed our commitment and rushed pet food, medications, inflatable boats and pet carriers/ cages to the affected areas in Kherson region and neighbouring region Mykolaiv.

*Direct help in June 2023:* While the inflatable boats and pet carriers were used by volunteers to pull animals out of the water, the medication went directly to the veterinary clinic in Mykolaiv and the pet food was distributed at a shelter and via a local coordinator from UPAW. Furthermore, one of our project Kishka veterinarians immediately treated dozens of animals rescued from the floods in the veterinary clinic of the Communal Enterprise in Mykolaiv, while our partner

veterinarian from the USAVA partnership clinic in Kherson rescued animals from the floods. Finally, a highly-skilled dog catcher of the SAC Mobile Clinic team travelled to Mykolaiv region to train volunteers from the Communal Enterprise in catching scared and injured dogs and cats.

*Ongoing help in 2023:* Disasters such as the breach of the Kakhovka dam have long-term consequences, demanding not only immediate but also sustained assistance. In the months following the disaster, FOUR PAWS has been actively addressing the ongoing effects of this tragedy. Alongside the Communal Enterprise in Mykolaiv, our Kishka veterinarian onsite has been treating almost 300 additional dogs from Mykolaiv and Kherson regions: victims of the flood, who were covered in ticks, fleas, and parasites. Additionally, the dogs were sterilised and vaccinated against rabies.



Dogs rescued from the flooding area  
© Vatsyk Olena | FOUR PAWS

Output: 30 pet carriers/cages and 2 inflatable boats were delivered for volunteers to rescue animals from the floodings. FOUR PAWS financed the delivery of 18,865 kg pet food which provided food to approximately 3,450 dogs and cats. Additionally, in the veterinary clinic in Mykolaiv we have medically treated 342 dogs who were victims of the flood: 46 who were rescued directly from the floods, 296 who suffered from the long-term consequences.

## 4. ANIMAL ASSISTED INTERVENTIONS: SUPPORT FOR REFUGEES AND CHILDREN



AAI dog Alice with her handler Antonina  
© FOUR PAWS

In the midst of the ongoing horrors of war, through the power of our Animal Assisted Interventions (AAI) programme we have been supporting both children and their parents affected by the war, bringing them comfort and solace in times of despair.

While in 2022 it was solely experienced AAI dog Busia who helped refugees, children and soldiers, this year Busia got the company of a new FOUR PAWS family member: dog Alice, who officially joined our team in June 2022 and after months of training with her dedicated handler Antonina, she was ready to work with children.

During the winter months, the duo of Antonina and Alice embarked on a mission to educate children on animal welfare and responsible pet ownership. Conducting a series of courses in the local library of Chernivtsy, they aimed to instil empathy and compassion for animals in the hearts of the young participants. Antonina even authored a captivating children's book, describing Alice's rescue and her journey to becoming an AAI dog, which the children wholeheartedly embraced.

As the situation in Ukraine deteriorated in March, forcing AAI sessions to be conducted in bomb shelters for safety, Alice's curious and loving nature proved invaluable. Despite the tense environment, she managed to bring a sense of tranquillity to those seeking refuge from the ongoing conflict. The presence of Alice, with her unwavering affection, helped alleviate the stress and anxiety experienced by children and their families.

Meanwhile in Vinnytsia region, Busia, the seasoned AAI dog, has been making a significant impact on the lives of displaced children residing in refugee camps. Tasked with helping these children overcome the trauma of the war, Busia has become a source of comfort and support. With her gentle demeanour and unconditional love, she has managed to bring a ray of light to their everyday lives, offering a respite from the harsh realities they face.

Unfortunately, our AAI team has faced obstacles in their mission to extend their support to soldiers. Increasingly strict hospital policies have hindered their work with the brave men and women who defend the nation. Despite this setback, the team remains committed and hopeful, determined to find alternative avenues to bring solace to those who serve.



Therapy dog Busia has been making a significant impact on the lives of displaced children in refugee camps.  
© FOUR PAWS

From November to December 2023, our team actively participated in the international campaign '16 Days Against Violence', aligning with a fundamental message: violence has no place in our world, whether it targets people or animals. We firmly believe in the interconnectedness between violence against animals and people, as statistics indicate that those who display cruelty to animals often progress to committing violence against humans. Therefore, we take a stand against all forms of violence to protect the defenceless.

During this period, we had the privilege of visiting the St. Olga shelter in Khotyn, Chernivtsi region, where we extended our support to the children of displaced families and those who sought refuge from domestic violence. Our team consistently prioritises the well-being and assistance of those in need.

In a recent initiative, one of our AAI teams actively participated in a training session on combating sexual violence in Chernivtsi. This training not only enhanced our skills but also delved into the ways in which dogs can help in crisis situations. The training marked a significant step in our ability to aid individuals facing challenging life circumstances. We discovered that shelters serve not only as a refuge for forced migrants fleeing war but also as a sanctuary for women with children who have endured domestic violence. We were delighted to contribute to this noble cause and visit two such shelters. Alice brought cheerfulness to the environment and even helped bring smiles to a few children's faces.

Output: 1,340 people were reached during 187 AAI sessions.

## 5. SHELTER ADOPTION ACADEMY: SUPPORT FOR SHELTERS

The ongoing war has taken a heavy toll on Ukrainian shelters, exacerbating the already overcrowded kennels and overwhelming workload. With an increasing number of animals in need of care, it is vital to provide relief and support to both shelter animals and workers.

The Shelter Adoption Academy, a free online course part of FOUR PAWS' Shelter Adoption Programme, plays a crucial role in equipping them with the necessary tools to navigate the challenges posed by the war and ensure the well-being of the animals under their care. The Academy aims to improve adoption rates and enhance the overall welfare of shelter animals.

The course was launched in November 2022 and offers valuable support to transform shelters into effective rehoming centres, through interactive materials, videos and additional resources. Given the overwhelming burden faced by Ukrainian shel-

ters due to the ongoing war, providing comprehensive training and resources has become even more crucial. The feedback received so far has been overwhelmingly positive, with pet owners and teachers also benefiting from the Academy's strategies to reduce stress in dogs.

By implementing the strategies provided by the Academy, such as stress reduction techniques for dogs, pet owners have been able to create a more harmonious and nurturing environment for their furry companions. Similarly, teachers have gained insights into animal behaviour and welfare, enabling them to educate their students about responsible pet ownership and empathy towards animals.

As Ukrainian registrations continue to grow and the impact of the Academy spreads, the collective effort will result in more animals finding loving homes and communities that prioritise compassion for all creatures.

Output: 103 users working directly or indirectly with Ukrainian shelters.



Dogs in a Ukrainian shelter

© FOUR PAWS | Maksym Havrylov



## 6. PARTNERSHIP PROJECTS: BUILDING CAPACITY FOR ANIMALS IN NEED

FOUR PAWS is dedicated to make an impact for animals in need around the world, and while being active in Ukraine for over a decade for both companion animals and wild animals, it is without a doubt that the damage caused by the Russian invasion is greater than anyone could have ever foreseen. This requires a greater approach, and therefore FOUR PAWS has joined forces and entered into new partnerships to help as many animals in need as possible.

### 6.1 UKRAINE TASKFORCE GROUP

FOUR PAWS being a member of the Eurogroup For Animals, also committed itself to the Ukraine Taskforce Group which was set up by Eurogroup For Animals. The purpose of this Ukraine Taskforce Group is to identify needs, coordinate efforts and share information regarding companion animals, abandoned animals and animal shelter affected by the war in Ukraine. More specifically it helps FOUR PAWS to facilitate the exchange of information between members, gather and share information about sterilisation projects, partner clinics and which regions are covered, liaise with WOAHA colleagues and the Ukrainian Chief Veterinary Officers, share information on the delivery of pet food, and create a network within Ukrainian authorities and investigate lobbying opportunities for better animal welfare in the country.

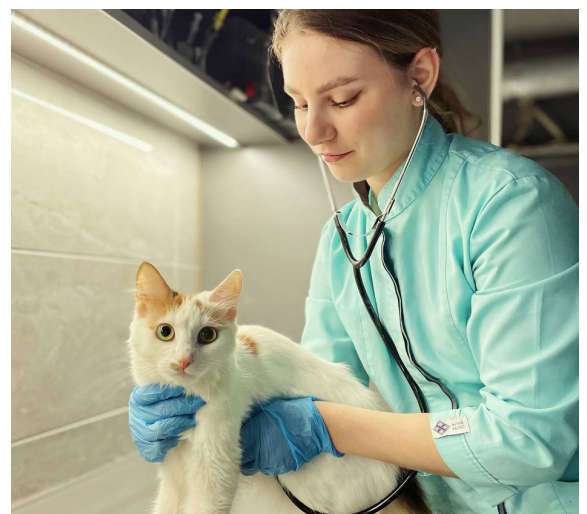
Output: as described.

### 6.2 USAVA COLLABORATION

At the end of 2022, FOUR PAWS started a new project in collaboration with USAVA (Ukrainian Small Animal Veterinary Association). The objective of the collaboration is to continue to provide veterinary services to companion animals (both strays and pets) in some areas most affected by the war. We want to ensure that dogs and cats that are sick, injured or in need of other medical treatments like vaccinations to prevent deadly diseases or sterilisations to prevent pregnancies, can continue to receive them at their local private veterinarian. In addition, we are also reaching out to local shelters and volunteers taking care of strays and let them know to which clinics they can bring animals for free treatments.

For this collaboration, USAVA contracted three private clinics in Mykolaiv, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia in December 2022, and an additional two private clinics in Sumy and Nikopol in June 2023. To ensure no overlap with our Project Kishka, the focus in Mykolaiv and Sumy is solely on dogs, while in the remaining three cities is on both dogs and cats.

Output: 2023: 3,860 dogs and cats have been sterilised and treated. Since the start of the collaboration: 4,566 dogs and cats have been sterilised and treated.



Treating a cat in the USAVA clinic in Zaporizhzhia.  
© FOUR PAWS | USAVA

## 6.3 PROJECT POVIDOK

Thousands of pets have already been reported missing in Ukraine during wartime. Prior to the war, pet identification was not popular in Ukraine. During an emergency evacuation or when there are a lot of explosions around, there is a high risk of losing a pet. Not being able to identify the pet, makes it nearly impossible to reunite it with the owner.



A puppy with the special QR ID tag on its collar.

© FOUR PAWS

To prevent pets from getting lost (during an emergency), FOUR PAWS together with International Registration System - Animal ID, have set up 'Project Povidok' (Povidok means 'collar' in Ukrainian) in 2022 and have repeated this collaboration in June 2023.

The goal of the project is to protect as many pets of Ukraine as possible by being identified with a QR ID tag and be registered in the special Pet Care App, free of charge. A QR ID tag is a small token that can be clipped onto a pet's collar or harness. FOUR PAWS and Animal ID spread the QR ID tags for free through a network of shops that can be found even in very remote areas. The owner signs up to a database and if the animal gets lost, whoever finds the dog or cat can scan the code with his or her phone and directly reunite the lost pet with its owner.

Although microchips have one distinct advantage over a QR ID tag – they are permanent and cannot get lost or removed – they can only be implanted by a veterinarian (and many people in rural areas do not have easily access to a veterinarian, especially not in these challenging times) and they are rather costly. Therefore, the QR ID tag is the best option for many pet owners.

Output: 2023: FOUR PAWS supported 30,000 dogs getting a QR ID tag. Since the start of the collaboration: FOUR PAWS supported 50,000 dogs getting a QR ID tag.

## 6.4 UPAW

In 2022, FOUR PAWS together with Dogs Trust Worldwide, has supported International Registration System Animal ID to launch a new organisation called Ukrainian Pet Association Worldwide (UPAW). The main objective of UPAW was to provide food for starving dogs and cats in wartime. FOUR PAWS together with other animal welfare organisations has financially supported UPAW throughout 2022 and with this, proudly contributed to the distribution of more than 1 million kilogrammes of humanitarian aid, that reached over 110,000 dogs and cats.

A year later, in March 2023, the leadership at UPAW changed and as an outcome, UPAW shifted its focus from the distribution of pet food and other humanitarian aid to sterilisation campaigns with its mobile clinic as well as by cooperating with other veterinary clinics and animal welfare volunteers. As FOUR PAWS already runs its own high-volume and high-quality sterilisation projects in the country since 2012, and since wartime has set up an additional sterilisation project focussing on homeless cats (Project Kishka – see 2.2) in various regions in the country, as well as supports five private clinics through a collaboration with USAVA (see 6.2) we have decided to not continue the partnership with UPAW. We thank UPAW for the successful cooperation and wish them all the best with its further activities.

Output: as described.

*“We don’t know what tomorrow holds for each of us.  
But we know that as long as we live,  
we will help animals during war, famine, floods, or  
droughts.  
This is our motivation.”*

**Olena Sushko**  
Mobile Clinic Team Coordinator



© FOUR PAWS



## About FOUR PAWS

FOUR PAWS is the global animal welfare organisation for animals under direct human influence, which reveals suffering, rescues animals in need and protects them. Founded in 1988 in Vienna by Heli Dungler and friends, the organisation advocates for a world where humans treat animals with respect, empathy and understanding. The sustainable campaigns and projects of FOUR PAWS focus on companion animals including stray dogs and cats, farm animals and wild animals – such as bears, big cats and orangutans – kept in inappropriate conditions as well as in disaster and conflict zones. With offices in Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, France, Germany, Kosovo, the Netherlands, Switzerland, South Africa, Thailand, Ukraine, the UK, the USA and Vietnam as well as sanctuaries for rescued animals in eleven countries, FOUR PAWS provides rapid help and long-term solutions.



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