Relinquishment Factors Afecting Stray Dog Population in Urban Fragments

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The stray dog's population has been a problem in modern society and raises discussion on different issues like animal welfare, environmental responsibility and public health matters such as dogs bites, zoonosis and traffic accidents. Sao Paulo is a city with eleven million inhabitants and a population of owned dogs around 2.5 million animals. There are no surveys on the distribution of the population of stray dogs and this affects any plan of intervention. In this work, the problem was addressed from the standpoint of relinquishment's probability and environmental carrying capacity. A score was created with thirteen variables out of known risk factors for relinquishment. The data was grouped by district and classified in to three categories (terciles). A convenience sample of six areas was defined (two of each category), chosen to be small and isolated areas, liable to go through on foot. The number of animals was estimated by the pseudo capture method, using photos and notes to identify the animals. Simultaneously, a questionnaire was administered in a systematic random sample of households in each area. Of the six visited areas, only two had dogs roaming in the streets, and only one seemed to have a resident stray population. The score was not as good to predict the presence of stray dogs as the degree of human-dog proximity and environmental factors were. Intervention on these factors through encouraging responsible ownership and enhancing garbage collection could be a solution to gradually reduce the population of stray dogs.