

Lost and abandoned dogs: photos on the Internet

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Lombardy Region's canine registry has set up a website to help anyone looking for their lost dog or for an animal to take home.

On the website, it is now possible **to access datasheets and photos of dogs recovered by the dog catchers** and taken in by the kennels in a number of towns. **Dr Eraldo Oggioni**, who is **in charge of the local health authority's veterinary department**, explains, "Once the dog has been found and we've checked it has no microchip, it's handed over to the veterinary kennel, where it's treated and microchipped. If the owner isn't identified within 10 days, the animal is handed over to the **municipal kennel, and can be adopted**. This situation is temporary, but becomes **permanent after 60 days**."

The new application makes it possible to carry out more detailed searches, selecting the province and even the municipal kennel. Each section presents datasheets of any dog found, with its photo, gender, breed, the colour of its coat, date, town and kennel in which it is being kept.

Last year, **1344 dogs were found, of which 78% were returned** to their owners. This year, until 15 December, **1198 dogs had been found** and sent to the veterinary kennel. In the province, there are **9 kennels and 2 veterinary kennels**. **In 2014, 294 dogs were sent to the kennels**, an increase over the 268 of the previous year. Dr Oggioni said, "The phenomenon of voluntarily abandoning the animals has dropped over the years. However, there are still some who aren't aware of the responsibilities and obligations of owning a dog or a cat. We are much more frequently called to recover animals that have got lost, after a storm or after the fireworks of the holidays."

Thanks to funding from Lombardy Region of €150,000 for the next three years, **the local health authority's veterinary service is also setting up a text message service for police officers that ask for it.** "We're going to give them a microchip reader," the vet explained. "Once the number has been read, they only have to send a message to one of our numbers, and all of the information related to the chip will be sent back. The animal can then be returned immediately, without the owner even having to pay the cost of the dog catcher."

In the case of **cats**, the intention is to start **closer checks of the 900 cat colonies, which have about 9000 cats.** "Unfortunately, these colonies are continually growing," the head of the veterinary service explained. "Thanks to the contribution from the Region, **we're going to increase the funds available from €25,000 to €40,000 to proceed with sterilisation.** The fact is that a large number of cats are still abandoned, and the situation can't be managed, because the animals are often not sterilised. So, we've come to **an agreement with the associations of "cat lovers"**, who should get their animals microchipped, and if necessary, sterilised. Anyone who then takes on the animal, will be linked to it and will have to take responsibility for it."

To report an abandoned dog, call the local health authority's veterinary service and, on public holidays or at night, the switchboard, on 0332 277111 to start the recovery procedure.

di Translated by Sfregola & Pellegrino (Reviewed by Prof. Rolf Cook)