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Street dogs to benefit from app that keeps canine health on track

Improved care for street dogs is the goal of a new smartphone app devised by an international team of animal welfare experts.

Vets say the free app will support vital work in clinics across the world that provide care for stray dogs – an estimated 200 million worldwide.

It will enable clinic staff to track the wellbeing of dogs as they go through so-called catch-neuter-return – a common public health strategy in countries with high numbers of strays.

During the process – which is key to stabilising the street dog numbers – stray dogs are taken in by local animal clinics and sterilised before being released. Vets say, however, that the welfare of individual dogs can be overlooked during capture, transport or surgery.

The new app – developed at the University of Edinburgh and piloted across Asia and Africa – will support staff to monitor welfare, spot signs of distress and develop strategies to improve care.

It will be launched on Friday (6th April) at the British Small Animal Veterinary Association Annual Congress in Birmingham and will be available online from April. It is based on research funded by Dogs Trust.

Project leader Heather Bacon of the University of Edinburgh's Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies said, "Humane street dog management is key to both animal and human health. However, in any situation involving capture, transport and surgery, there is the potential for welfare problems to arise. This innovative app will support handlers to recognise potential problems and improve care."

Manish Nepal of the Manumitra in Kathmandu, who piloted the smartphone tool, said, "The app is very user-friendly and will have a big impact on our ability to care for these dogs."

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