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Thursday 1 January 2015

 **News Europe**



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# Vet abandoned in wilderness and forced to find way home to highlight problem of stray dogs

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One of the pups found by Lucy's Trust recently.

An animal welfare charity has warned that thousands of dogs are being abandoned in the UK and Ireland every year.

In order to highlight the issue, Olivia Kennedy from the charity Lucy's Trust was blindfolded and driven to a location she didn't know and she was then abandoned.

"I had to try and find my way home. I tried to get into the mindset of a dog, who was unsure who to trust, or where to go."

"I carried with me a GoPro video camera and I was being tracked by GPS online for safety sake," Ms Kennedy added.

"For me it was an emotionally exhausting experience, even though I knew that I would be getting home at some stage, I just didn't know when."

Lucy's Trust has begun a STRAY campaign which aims to raise awareness of the problem which peaks between November and January every year.

"It's not just Christmas puppies anymore... that message is getting through; its older dogs, elderly dogs, dogs that get in the way, barking dogs, dogs that shed on the brand new

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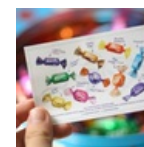
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furniture, dogs that made a mess of your nicely wrapped presents... the excuses are endless," a spokesperson for Lucy's Trust said.

"If you chose to abandon your pet, you must realise, there is not always a happy ending. Stray dogs are shot for worrying livestock, killed on the roads, die from exhaustion/exposure/starvation, contract diseases in pounds and can die from them, can be picked up by people up to no good, and can find themselves abused, in dog fighting rings as bait, or in back yard breeding operations."

"If you ever cared about your pet, please don't leave his life to chance. Stop dumping dogs."

Vet surgeries will see an rise in the number of dog owners leaving their dogs in to be put down, the spokesperson added.

"Pounds are filling up, rescues are full.....dogs are being abandoned. Whatever the reason for "getting rid" of a dog, owners need to realise that dogs feel pain, fear and emotional distress just like we do."

"Most stray dogs had a home at one time, had security and for whatever reason, got lost perhaps, and their owners never attempt to find them,"

**Even with the introduction of microchipping, the problem hasn't abated, the spokesperson said.**

"There are many reasons why animal rescues exist, the problem of stray dogs is one of them. In recent years, we have all but forgotten about what it means to be a stray dog."

"STRAY aims to make people think about what a stray dog goes through when he is lost or abandoned, and hopefully make people think for one second, which may be long enough to stop them from abandoning their dog. If we can stop just one person from removing that leash and driving away, then our project has done its job."

Ms Kennedy, who is a vet, said people should think of alternatives before they simply abandon dogs.

"Every day dogs are abandoned, without thought as to the consequence for that animal, though through my work as a veterinary surgeon for almost ten years, I have met people who admitted to "dumping" their dogs, and felt an immense amount of guilt about it for many years afterward."

"I am sure that some of the people who wilfully abandon an animal do so because they feel they have no alternative. It is these people that the project is geared towards, those who deep down care but feel they have no choice."

Lucy's Trust has issued advice for anyone who no longer wants to keep their pet dog.

- If behavioural concerns are the problem, please seek professional advice from a qualified positive dog behaviourist or trainer. These services are not as expensive as you might think, and often behavioural problems can be managed very successfully with commitment from the owner, enabling the dog to stay at home.
- Animal rescues often take surrendered animals, though please be aware that quite often they are running at full capacity, and you may need to go onto a waiting list.
- Your local dog pound may take surrendered animals also, but you need to be aware that councils DO NOT have to hold on to surrendered pets for any minimum length of time, so when the pound is full they are the first on the list to be euthanised.
- Advertise your dog yourself, but please please always ensure you do a home visit to check out your potential new home. If you are unsure how to do this, your local animal rescue will give you advice.
- If you are having to move home please contact all organisations as soon as you know, not a few days before, also attempt to seek accommodation where pets will be allowed.
- If you have just had a baby, please do not think this means you need to get rid of your



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dog. Many organisations can provide free advice on introducing your child to your dog, and securing your home so both your baby and your dog are safe and sound. Baby gates, barriers etc are often advertised on free sites, and are not expensive to buy new. You will need them when your child starts toddling, anyhow, so they serve two purposes.


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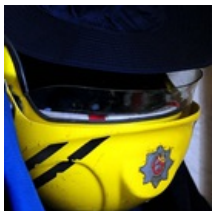
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