

Massachusetts veterinarians are helping aid abandoned animals in Ukraine

A local Massachusetts committee is working to bring solace to strays overseas.

By **Maggie Scales** Globe Correspondent, Updated July 14, 2023, 1 hour ago



A stray dog in Ukraine. BRIAN RUTTER/K9 GLOBAL RESCUE

The Massachusetts Veterinary Medical Association (MVMA) and a local veterinarian are joining forces to send hundreds of pounds of medical supplies and educational material

to Ukrainian veterinarians struggling to care for countless abandoned animals in the war-torn country.

The [war in Ukraine](#) has destroyed countless homes and businesses, leaving animals without shelter and veterinary clinics without veterinarians. This has resulted in massive numbers of stray animals and pets left on the streets in Ukraine, without aid or nourishment.

Jamie Falzone, executive director of the MVMA, said the association was horrified to hear about the bombing of veterinary clinics and the toll on the animals who are being left behind. This sparked the association to start an International Aid Committee to send resources to Ukrainian veterinarians.

“I think a lot of time, people forget about the animals,” Falzone said. “The human devastation is clear, but we can’t forget about the animals too.”

The animals’ welfare was top of mind for Dr. Amy Shroff, a veterinarian from Wayland, Mass., who joined the MVMA’s International Aid Committee to see how she could help. Now, she has teamed up with the Colorado-based nonprofit, K9 Global Rescue, to gather medicine to send to the front lines in Ukraine.

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Dr. Shroff collects excess medication from nearby veterinarians and pharmaceutical companies and hands them off to K9 Global Rescue volunteers. The volunteers then fly with the supplies to Ukraine animal shelters, many of which have been shelled and destroyed in the war, according to a press release from the MVMA.



Medicine sent by Dr. Amy Shroff was unloaded from a van in Ukraine. BRIAN RUTTER/K9 GLOBAL RESCUE

Dr. Shroff said that they have already shipped 500 pounds of medication to Ukraine, including antibiotics, flea medication, tick medication, antibacterial shampoo, and sutures, among other medication and tools. However, Dr. Shroff said that shipping the medicine has been costly.

“Last month we shipped off a couple hundred pounds of materials, that was \$1,500,” Shroff said. “And we recently shipped off another package that was \$3,700.”

Dr. Shroff's nonprofit, Let's Save the Strays, has started a [fundraiser](#) to help offset the cost of shipping medication to Ukraine.

In addition to medicine for the abandoned animals, Ukraine also needs more veterinarians to keep up with the volume of strays. Dr. Monica Mansfield, president of MVMA, said that because there are so many animals who need care in Ukraine, even families who haven't been displaced from their homes are struggling to find care for their pets.

"It's an unimaginable chain of events in terms of how it affects the animals," Dr. Mansfield said. "In the veterinary hospitals, there isn't enough staff, there isn't electricity, so even for people who haven't had to abandon their animals, getting care is still hard to do."

In an effort to increase the number of veterinarians in Ukraine, Dr. Mansfield is designing educational programs with Tufts University's Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine for Ukrainian veterinarians and veterinarian students. Dr. Mansfield said that during the pandemic, the MVMA used Zoom to host courses for Massachusetts veterinarian students and have since built a library of online educational material.

The dean of Tufts' veterinary school, Dr. Alastair Cribb, arranged for Dr. Vlad Ushakov, a Ukrainian veterinarian who fled Ukraine, to work at the veterinary school and act as a liaison between Ukrainian veterinarians and the International Aid Committee, Dr. Mansfield said.

Dr. Shroff is optimistic about the impact the project can make in Ukraine and hopes veterinarians across the nation will be interested in contributing to the cause.

"My dream is for veterinary medical associations from all over the country to have this option," Dr. Shroff said. "If one portion of the country can gather 500 pounds of medication in just a few months, imagine what the whole country can do."

Maggie Scales can be reached at maggie.scales@globe.com. Follow her on Twitter [@scales_maggie](https://twitter.com/scales_maggie).

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