



Mani International Animal Organisation



December: stretched beyond our limits

As we reflect on the past month, it is impossible to ignore the immense challenges we've faced at MIAO. We are beyond capacity. All our safe spaces and fosters are full, and finding temporary homes for those in transition—such as two long-term fosters whose caretakers headed abroad—has tested the limits of our resources.

The litter of puppies added to our workload, requiring us to split the litter to prevent bullying, which left us managing safe spaces scattered across the Mani. This has stretched our volunteer base, making it more challenging than ever to ensure all our rescues receive the care and attention they deserve.

And yet, in the face of these obstacles, we find reasons to celebrate and remain hopeful. This year has been another remarkable one for MIAO, as we've successfully found loving homes for 50 wonderful dogs! It is a testament to the unwavering dedication of our volunteers, supporters, and community that these achievements are possible.

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Adoptions, Fosters & Godparents



Pippin

December, too, was a slow month for adoptions. Still, 3 more dogs found their forever family and we are delighted to share that Pippin, Freya and Martha have been adopted.

Pippin has been adopted by a family in Germany and he will soon live in Bavaria. Freya has been adopted by a wonderful lady who often volunteers as a flight buddy for us. Freya will live part of her life in Germany and partly in Greece. Last but not least, little Martha was adopted by one of our local volunteers. She is now a much loved foster fail.

Lord, one of the dogs that was in long-term paid foster care further afield has moved back to the Mani and is currently fostered by a local volunteer, although it still needs to be seen whether this will work out, and Keftes, who was at the same address is back with us again too. We are desperately looking for a better solution, or better even – their final loving home – for both of them.

“You cannot share your life with a dog... or a cat, and not know perfectly well that animals have personalities and minds and feelings.”

JANE GOODALL



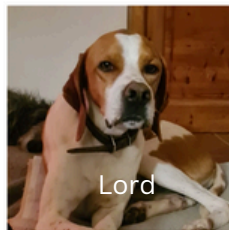
Pippin



Freya



Martha



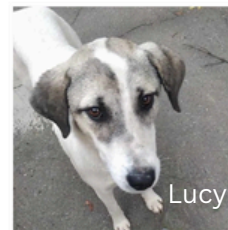
Lord



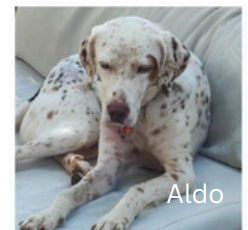
Keftes



Issy



Lucy



Aldo

DOG OF THE MONTH

KEFTES

Keftes is an affectionate, fun and sweet dog who LOVES human contact; he walks well on the lead, is house-trained, knows a few commands and gets on with puppies and cats. Keftes is relaxed in the car, lies calmly next to you in the restaurant and is not afraid in busy spaces. He will follow you wherever you go when he knows he can fully put his trust in you. He is still very playful and has an absolute passion for digging. Which is, by the by, a great way to help him get a good amount of exercise. Give Keftes a digging pit in the garden or take him to be on the beach and he will happily dig all day long!

The only downside with Keftes is that he isn't keen on adult dogs, male or female. He is fine with puppies though.

We are looking for a loving and happy home for Keftes, preferably with cats and children if you happen to have any— simply because he absolutely adores their company! And of course he will be just fine with only you as his companion as well 😊

Keftes is truly a kind soul and whoever abandoned him definitely didn't deserve him...but perhaps you do?



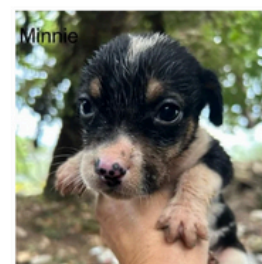
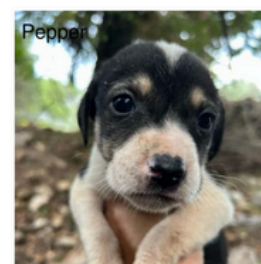
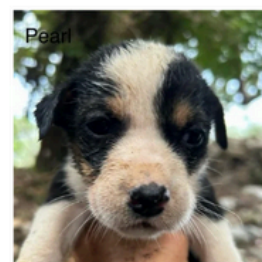
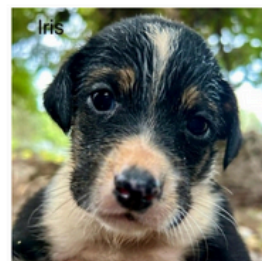
New arrivals

Nova, Perdita, Iris, Greta, Storm, Pepper, Jaz, Pearl & Minnie - Winnie's Pups

This bunch of cuteness overload was born to a small stray mum who is a dickens to catch - we tried again recently with sedation in food, but adrenaline just rushes through this dog and she once again escaped. We can't tell you much about the characters yet as they are only just starting to shine through, but they are already well socialised and very friendly with all of our volunteers who come and visit.

Issy, Lucy and Aldo

We have 3 new arrivals - Issy was found in Prosillio and taken into foster on Xmas Eve, Lucy was found in Sotirianika, where she is currently fostered too. Then there is Aldo from Agios Dimitrios. You can find their images on the previous page.



2024 -A year of learning, expansion & resilience

Below you will find some very personal stories and highlights of the year from the true stars of our organisation - the volunteers. These are the people who never give up, who always find a way and who will give their time and energy to those who have no voice in Greece - the millions of strays - for free. come rain or shine.

From Eva, our President:

As an Animal Welfare volunteer, you must learn to be tough. You start working with abandoned cats and dogs because you love animals, but all too often Animal Welfare is not about love and care, it is about saying NO. No to picking up more strays when your compound is overflowing and the manpower has reached its limits, for example. Or no to letting a cat or dog have her unborn babies - as long as they are still small enough for abortion - because birth control is the most important part of our work.

So it caused very mixed emotions in me when late in 2023 we had to realise that one female stray dog we tried to catch was getting more and more pregnant. By the time we finally caught her the vet just shook his head and said it was far too late for an abortion. There was nothing we could do but wait and think of the consequences. What if she gave birth to eight or nine or even more puppies? Where would we find homes for them? Her belly grew huge...

In the early morning hours of 11.01.24 her time had come. My friend C. was on morning shift and called me to come, in case it needed the two of us to help the young motherdog with, what we were sure, her first litter.



But she did not need any help. She gave birth to four (thank God it was only four) beautiful and healthy little pups. Two boys, two girls. Two shiny white, two light brown. She licked them to get their circulation going, she bit through the umbilical cord. Blind and clumsy as they were, they all found their way to Mum's "milk bar" one by one. Once they were all sleeping beside each other and in their Mum's embrace.

C. and I left the little family. It was a morning that I will never forget and that stays with me as an absolute highlight of my Animal Welfare Year 2024.

PS: only one of the pups is still looking for his forever home, Falkor...

J.'s highlight of the year - Kefalas, from chained dog to freedom and happiness in the UK

I officially met Kefales back in November 2023. I was alerted to his presence by people at the local taverna - told he had been abandoned with Roubi, his brother from another mother. His owner - an old village woman - had gone to Athens for good and simply left them behind. We were told she couldn't be contacted.

People didn't seem to know whether they were scary or friendly. However, when I met them the answer was very clear from the first minute. Both loved people, and I found Kefalas to immediately be the most people-oriented of dogs. We had an instant bond - I immediately loved him unconditionally.

It was then I realised that we had met before - I recognised him as a dog I had seen around the village when he had broken free from the chain that has kept him tied all his life. Tragic.

They were living in terrible conditions. They had no shelter or warmth. They had no water. Their skinny bodies showed very clearly they had not been eating enough food - although some local people had given them scraps. Their chains were tied tightly - leaving wounds around their necks. Despite all this both only ever greeted me with love and warmth - they were as hungry for affection as they were for food.

The first task was to make their environment safe, give them shelter and give them proper food to rebuild their strength. This was complemented by regular walks on and off a lead - which they both adapted to brilliantly. They also enjoyed meeting people and other dogs on their walks. It was then I knew for sure then that these dogs could have a future living with a family.

We also neutered them both. Things were still not straight forward. They were still predominantly living their life on a chain, albeit now one that didn't damage their necks. Things had to change.



At this time we were lucky and able to move both to brilliant foster care - a new place and a new chance away from their sad history. I visited them a lot. Both were happy to see me, but Kefales would always be over the moon with our special bond.

From a position of safety I was then able to look for homes - and we found the most perfect one for Kefales with a wonderful couple in the U.K. who were willing to take a chance on him. He went to the start his new life in the U.K. in August. His adopters love him and the feeling is mutual. He's adapted brilliantly and is growing in confidence all the time. I'm been able to stay in regular contact and I was lucky enough to go and visit him when I was in the U.K. which was wonderful. I will certainly continue to stay in touch with this very special boy. He has rewarded me a million times over for believing in him and I am so proud.

His brother Roubi remains in foster care, as he has problems with his hips which make adoption difficult. But he couldn't be happier as he loves his foster mum and the feeling is mutual - he is not going anywhere soon.



Dagmar's highlight of the year - Caspar's adaption

Caspar had been with us about a year - and we could all see that he was a very confused dog. So we tried to learn his full story, which we did, eventually. And it was a long and sorrowful one... He was given to an Albanian woman with family in Kampos when he was about 7 weeks old. There, he was placed in a room in an unfinished part of the house under the grandmother's flat. The room had only one window (without glass) and very little light; in the beginning, someone came every day with food and water. But soon the supply became irregular. He was excited when he saw someone, but apart from feeding he was on his own all day and all night.

Then he started barking and crying at night because he was scared, but no one came. The neighbour thinks they were afraid someone would report him, so they took him behind the house to a stable with a concrete hut and he was on a short chain. He never came out of there either.

The woman of the house cleaned the yard regularly and often with a pressure washer; she always let the water run into the stable - and also into the unfinished room where Caspar was at the beginning. Caspar was helplessly at the mercy of the water and the noise even as a puppy - and even more so later on the short chain. A neighbour asked if he could help the dog, but was brusquely refused.

After about 6 months, Caspar somehow managed to free itself or was thrown out. The neighbour saw him in the street and gave him something to eat and went back to get a lead, but when he came back he was gone and he assumed he had been recaptured.

The next day he found out that Caspar had followed a woman walking her dog and that he had slept on her doorstep in Kampos. She fed him and he never left her doorstep. A few days later, this woman called animal welfare. What is unclear within all of this, is how Caspar lost his ears. They were brutally cut off - for whatever reason.

After learning his history, we began to understand so much more about his behaviour - his fear of water, his fear of certain people, his inexperience and sometimes random behaviours around other dogs - it all made sense now.

A miracle happened when a couple from Switzerland came to see Caspar with view to adopt. Dagmar and another volunteer wanted to make sure that Caspar had the best chance of adoption and wanted to make sure he would overcome his fears and sometimes unpredictable behaviours. They spent hours with him every day - re-socialising, desensitising, strengthening his belief in himself, problem-solving without panicking. It worked. The couple from Switzerland fell in love with him and took him home and Caspar lives a very happy life now.

Julia's story -why she loves to foster for MIAO - and the happy end when a dog gets adopted

I started fostering dogs on behalf of MIAO after the untimely loss of my dog Theoni (who was also a MIAO rescue) . My first foster dog was Bongo, who came to me post surgery. After almost 6 months of rehabilitation and training (Bongo was very reactive) Bongo, who is now called Whiskey, lives in Germany with his forever family.

Next came Bruno, a young and excitable pup, powerful and energetic. He stayed with me for about 4 months and now lives a happy life locally and is now called Mars.

The latest, longest and most challenging foster so far was Teddy. Teddy was found bleeding & broken at the roadside. He had been hit by a car and left for dead. He was only 2 months old. Teddy was rushed to the vet where he received lifesaving emergency treatment. His nose and jaw were pretty messed up and he would need several corrective surgeries to enable him to live a pretty normal life and he needed a lot of attention and training. The trauma of the accident had left deep scars. With lots of dedication, Teddy healed both in body and mind, and found his perfect forever home locally too.

I love to foster as even though it breaks my heart when they leave me, the joy each foster brings to my far outweighs that tinge of pain when they move on into a happy forever after.



Leah's highlight of the year - Troufa's adoption

Troufa, together with her siblings, was found near the bins on the road in Stavropigio 4 years ago. They all went to one of our super fosterers - where they were all safe. 3 of the siblings got adopted pretty quickly but Troufa and her brother Loupo stayed behind. They were both incredibly shy and anxious around new people and situations and instead of greeting visitors when they came, they would hide in the back of the garden.

It was decided to move Troufa into one of our small compounds, so she could get used to a constant stream of people and also different dogs, so she could learn to be more confident and assertive. Little did we know just how amazing her transformation would be - she went from being shy and anxious to becoming the Mama dog of them all - she stepped into the role of the leader and protected the weak, sorted out quarrels and grew into a kind, gentle, balanced and confident dog.

We were over the moon to hear that a family in Germany was interested in her and she moved into her forever home in October. A happy end after 4 years of waiting to be seen!

Some personal Reflections on the Year

Joschi says: I think what impressed me most this year is the incredible team spirit that we have cultivated within the team – no matter how busy we all are in our lives – if someone cannot do a shift because of illness or unexpected happenings – we all step in unconditionally and help each other out. We have grown deep friendships and we respect each other and we give each other the freedom and space to be just who we are. We are a very international team and celebrate our differences. We have each other's back. That is priceless and makes working in animal welfare – which can be incredibly challenging, both mentally and physically – manageable, enjoyable and so worthwhile.

Dagmar says: For me, "animal protection" here in Greece is much more than just feeding and petting cute furry friends; I often find myself facing neglected and tortured animals, feeling helpless, angry, and overwhelmed. For me, helping these animals means gaining their trust and strengthening them individually – both mentally and physically. However, I have learned that I can only gain trust with animals when I am completely authentic and honest – with myself and the animal. There is no room for tricks here, no room for "wrong" expectations, no room to hide my anger. I gain trust from them when I accept their individual development with patience, allowing all the time they need, without me wanting to be the captain of the ship. The dogs all need their individual time and nothing can be rushed. This experience has given me a lot more confidence in life. It has given me courage and also made me personally stronger and more resilient. Animals don't forgive or accept you if you're not yourself. And every day I realise – working with animals is a gift – never a burden.

Bee says: I am relatively new on board but have found myself getting more and more involved in MIAO this year. I can honestly say that I have found a passion and love for this work that we do, that I cannot explain rationally. Something inside of me has been set on fire – it is as if I have finally found the answer to my question: Why am I here? What is my purpose? The answer seems clear – Animal rescue, protection and welfare. In a country that is awash with strays and that has little to no compassion for their suffering, I find myself so deeply touched by this that I HAVE to be part of the solution. I have found, what I would say is my "inner calling" and I cannot ignore that call.

The animals are on my mind all the time and I know that I will dedicate a significant part of my life to help those who are broken, mistreated, chained, neglected and have no voice for themselves – the millions of abused and stray animals of Greece.

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