

Roaming rovers found at pound

By STEVE CRITCHFIELD
Battalion Reporter

Nine dogs sat quietly on the concrete floor of the 10-foot-by-30-foot Bryan dog pound. Some were of recognized breeds — a German shepherd and an Irish Setter — but the rest were mutts. All but one, a medium-sized female with traces of eagle from past generations, early watched passers-by in hopes of aiding their lost masters. The male sat alone in a corner seemingly disheartened, without hope. These dogs are only a few of the many stray dogs of the United States. The National Humane Society estimated in a 1978 pamphlet that more than 5 million stray dogs fill the nation's dog pounds and animal shelters.

Roger Gerzik, an animal control officer of the Bryan Police Department, said recently only 10 percent of all stray dogs are claimed and returned to their original owners.

Gerzik said, "Ten percent doesn't really sound like many at all. Really isn't — it's a very small number — but our claims (returned strays) rate higher than most other pounds in the state."

The national rate average for city pounds is just higher than 6 percent," Gerzik said.

The Bryan Police Department picks up about 30 stray dogs every week, Gerzik said. Most are collected because of complaints called to the police, and some are found during routine checks by the animal control unit, Gerzik said.

The Washington-based Animal Welfare Institute, along with the National Humane Society, estimates the number of stray animals as increased steadily at rates of 2 to 3 percent per year nationally.

Gerzik said Bryan-College Station is not been exempt from the increase. "Three years ago, 20 dogs a week was quite a few strays, but now we call that a slow week."

Bryan Police Department records indicate the increase. In 1977, 43 stray dogs were placed in the pound, compared to the 1,574 captured in 1978.

Gerzik said the number of cats in Bryan-College Station area also

has increased over the years. "Cats are everywhere you look," he said. "We don't bring too many in because they're so hard to catch, but there's at least half again as many stray cats as there are stray dogs."

Cats are usually caught in a box trap, Gerzik said, which do no harm to the animals.

"Dogs are a lot easier to catch," he said. Dogs can usually be captured by calling them to the department's truck. Mean or vicious dogs are caught with nooses (rope loops attached to long, wooden poles) and sometimes with tranquilizer guns.

Health hazards and public disturbances are the two main reasons strays are picked up, he said. He said disturbances are the most common.

"The majority of our phone calls are complaints about excessive noise, turning trash cans over and things like that," Gerzik said.

"Health reasons include those for picking up vicious or diseased animals," Gerzik said. "We get very few of them..."

The only way to decrease the number of strays, both in and out of the pounds and shelters, according to the National Humane Society, is to decrease the birth rate of domestic pets.

The society stresses the need to spay or neuter dogs and cats to slow their population growth which, in turn, could reduce the number of strays.

The animals are held for the owners to pick up for five days and after that, the animals are put up for adoption until the eighth day, Gerzik said. "If nobody picks them up by then, our animals are sent to the Texas A&M Veterinary Research Center," he said.

The fate of the animals is uncertain once they leave the pound to be involved in research. "I guess you could say our reclaimed animals are lucky," Gerzik said. "Most dog pounds don't have a research center to send their animals to. Most put their animals to sleep after 10-14 days because they can't hold them anymore."



Battalion photo by Lee Roy Leschper Jr.

Speeding cars claim the lives of many stray dogs and cats. Local animal control officers

seldom capture stray cats because they're too quick and too wary.

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Kissane, 64, of Georgia, told aides he pulled up to avoid hitting the dog Saturday as he was about to touch down at a private airport.

When he did, the plane snagged a power line and crashed upside down nearby field.

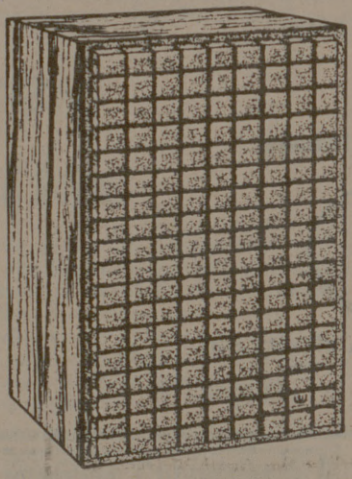
Kissane and a passenger, Werton, 64, also of Georgia, suffered minor injuries and were

treated at a St. Albans Hospital and later released.

"That dog used to fly with me all the time, and when he saw me coming, he dashed out," Kissane said.

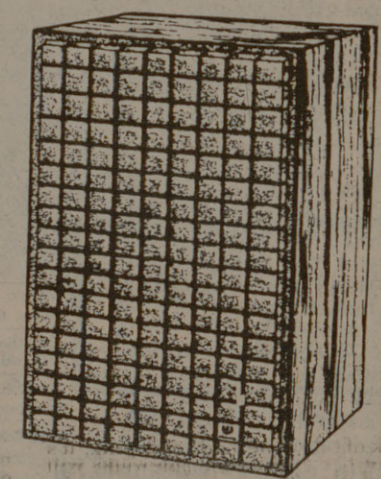
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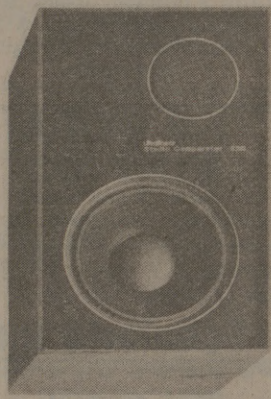
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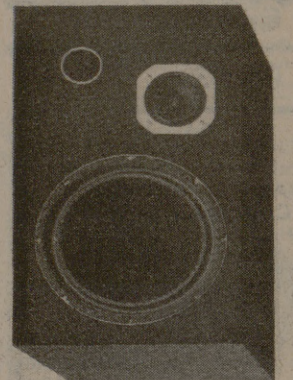
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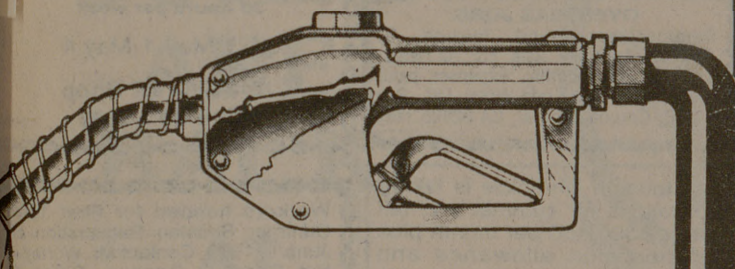
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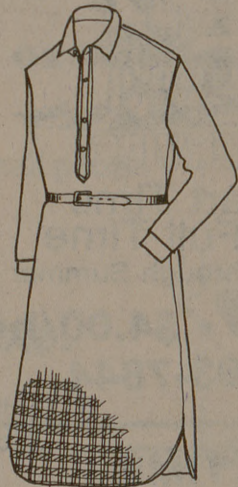


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