

## OBJECTIVE 02

To promote Human Rights and  
Democracy, involving citizens in policy  
dialogue, design and monitoring

# DISTEMPER AND ANIMAL HEALTH

Tayfun Çanakçı

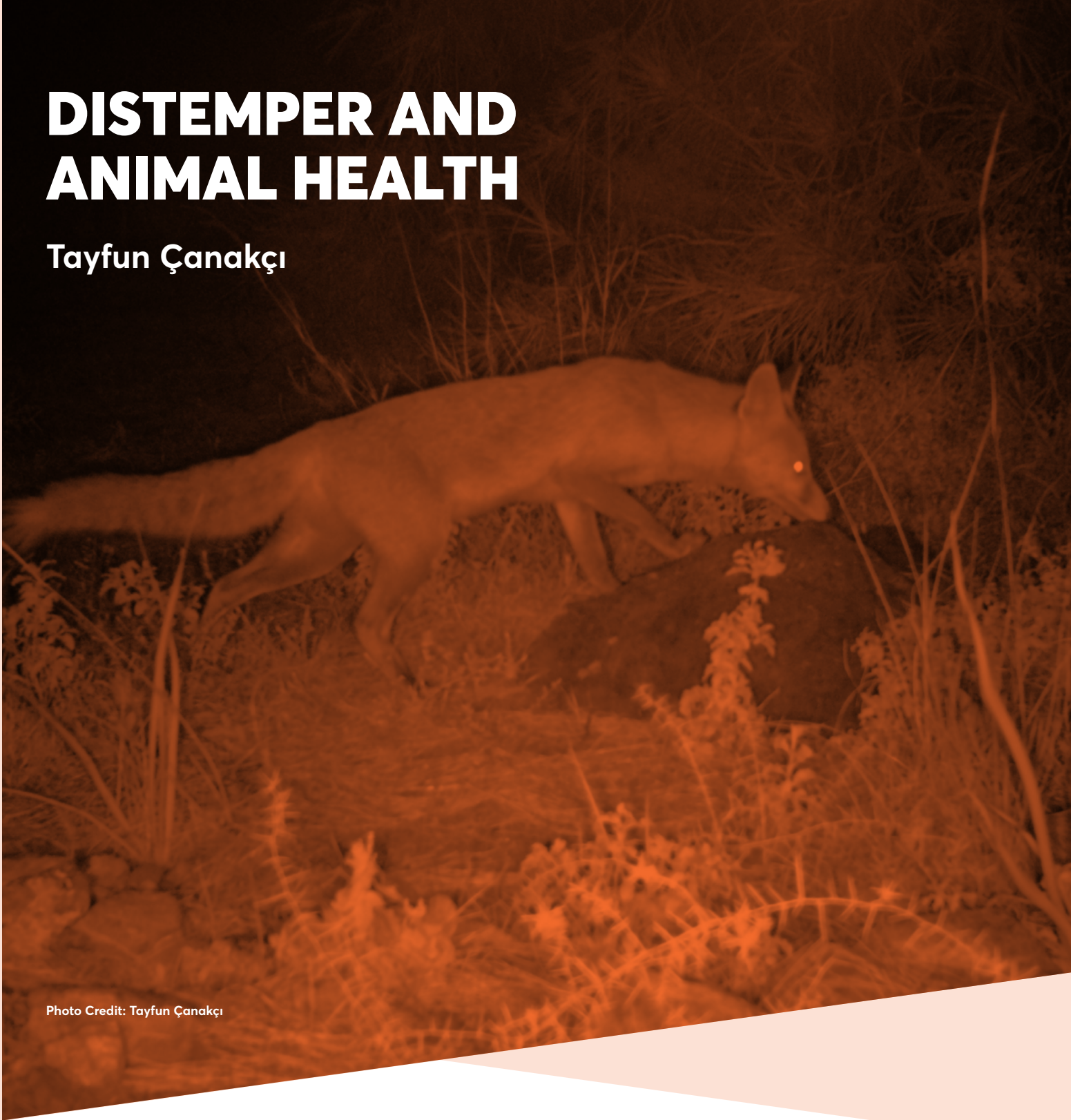


Photo Credit: Tayfun Çanakçı



## THIS ACTION INVOLVED

Studies to prove the epidemic disease in the fox population and the legal text to be prepared in this context

Setting live traps to catch foxes and performing rapid testing for diseases such as distemper, leishmaniasis and Ehrlichiosis between October 2018 and March 2020 in Nicosia district.

Setting trap cameras to estimate fox population and follow the complete cycle of distemper.

Preparation of a report entitled "The study of distemper, leishmaniasis and ehrlichiosis diseases in foxes (Vulpes Vulpes Indutus) in the northern part of Cyprus"

Presentation of the report to duty bearers and stakeholders.

## ABOUT TAYFUN ÇANAKCI

Tayfun Çanakçı is a Cypriot veterinary surgeon with a PhD degree and over 15 years of experience. He is authorised to euthanize unhealthy animals and to report these actions to the local body responsible for environmental protection. He is the former chairperson of the Cyprus Turkish Veterinary Association and owns a veterinary surgery.

## STORY OF THE ACTION

The first outbreak of canine distemper virus was reported in the northern part of Cyprus in January 2018 amongst the dog population. It was a devastating outbreak killing over 500 dogs. The outbreak found extensive coverage in the media but its impact on wildlife was ignored.

Through this action, the activist vet aimed to scientifically prove the impact of the virus on the fox population and present scientific data to the relevant local body to lay the grounds for a much-needed legal text on epidemic disease among wild animals in the northern part of Cyprus.

Between October 2018 and March 2020, Çanakçı, in collaboration with the Hunting Federation and Taşkent Nature Park, conducted a pilot study to trap some foxes and test them for distemper, leishmania and ehrlichia. The study was conducted in Nicosia district covering an area located between Vouno/Taşkent, Dikomo/Dikmen, Geunyeli/Gönyeli roundabout and Mia Milia/Haspolat. The pilot area had been identified in light of the reporting of over 200 dog deaths in the Nicosia industrial area, the existence of some 1,500-2,000 abandoned dogs and the fusion of rural and urban living.

Çanakçı says it was worth the wait to see the landmark outcome of the action:

*"In the first six months, we couldn't catch a single fox. We caught the first one in February 2019 and a total of 14 till the end of the action. We initially intended to test them for distemper but it was a golden opportunity for us to also examine them for leishmania and ehrlichia as we had rapid tests and test tubes, supported by Grow Civic. The results proved that the wild fox population was infected with these diseases. This is the first time in the northern part of Cyprus that it has been scientifically proven that there is a cross sectional transmission of infections from pets to wildlife and maybe from wildlife to pets. This made scientists' hand stronger to urge local bodies to act towards control measures."*

The number of foxes trapped didn't meet the initially targeted number which was 80 because they were on the decrease. But trap cameras used in the study showed that foxes were turning back to the area some two years later.

## RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH

The action created a voluntary network of ordinary citizens and organisations to produce evidence-based data and conducted information-based advocacy for a legal text on disease control strategies. The action itself is an advocacy instrument for sharing the findings with duty bearers including the veterinary unit and environment protection unit of the relevant local body. The action also aims to share the database with the Greek Cypriot stakeholders to initiate a joint effort to address the wildlife crossing issue.

*"As activists, we aimed to urge the local bodies to enact legal texts by taking into consideration our database on distemper virus, a threat both for wildlife and public health."*

Tayfun Çanakçı



Photo Credit: Tayfun Çanakçı

## WHAT'S NEXT?

The activist vet, with the feeling of responsibility for public and animal health, is committed to work for a better understanding of the infections in the northern part of Cyprus. Following the eradication of distemper, he is now interested in looking into two other major infections, leishmaniasis and ehrlichiosis and the impact of the diseases on wild fox population. Çanakçı is also keen to follow-up on local bodies' action on possible enactment of control measures following his action.

**TO FIND  
MORE ABOUT  
THE ACTION**



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