



Annual Report - 2025

Technical Report

Galapagos Islands

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This annual report summarizes the work carried out in 2025 as Technical Manager for the Animal Balance Galápagos Initiative. The year was marked by institutional advances, active community engagement, and operational improvements that strengthened our long-term strategy for humane and effective urban fauna management in the archipelago.

The signing of the renewed and expanded cooperation agreement between the GAD Municipal de Isabela and Animal Balance—together with the approval of the new Urban Fauna Ordinance—set a solid foundation for a clearer, more compassionate, and enforceable management framework. Alongside these institutional achievements, we led a revitalized community education campaign designed around art, exploration, and play, creating meaningful learning experiences for children while reinforcing coexistence and care across the island.

Operational capacity also increased significantly. Animal Balance donated a new buggy to the GAD's urban fauna department, -still to be delivered- enabling consistent, humane, and efficient patrolling throughout Puerto Villamil. Additional support included communication work, audiovisual production, social media content, and on-site assistance during clinics, all of which helped sustain public awareness, strengthen partnerships, and ensure smooth implementation of field activities.

We also launched the new Animal Balance Galápagos website, providing the initiative with a modern, accessible, and unified digital platform. Finally, several educational signs were installed across Isabela to reinforce the message that dogs must stay off the beach, supporting both conservation and community compliance.

These milestones—new ordinance, improved transit capacity, expanded mobility, community education, and a strengthened institutional agreement—collectively deepen the island’s ability to manage urban fauna humanely and sustainably.

1. Legislative Progress – Urban Fauna Ordinance, Isabela

Summary of the Process

The reform of Isabela Island’s Urban Fauna Ordinance was the result of a multi-month process led jointly by the GAD Municipal de Isabela and Animal Balance. The work focused on updating an outdated regulatory framework and replacing punitive or ineffective practices with humane, enforceable, and community-driven solutions. The discussions placed strong emphasis on compassion, public health, conservation needs, and long-term coexistence between people, domestic animals, and wildlife. The final ordinance was reviewed by municipal legal teams, validated in council sessions, and approved through a formal vote, making it the most progressive urban fauna regulation currently implemented in the Galápagos.

Key Improvements in the Ordinance

The updated ordinance introduces several structural changes that directly address the core issues of urban fauna management on the island:

- **Mandatory sterilization** of dogs and cats as the primary population-control strategy.
- **Complete removal of euthanasia** as a population management tool, replacing it with humane, preventive approaches. Euthanasia is still allowed for extreme causes.
- **Ban on the commercial trade and sale of pets**, reducing importation, abandonment, and uncontrolled breeding.
- **Mandatory registration and permanent identification** through microchips for all dogs and cats.
- **Clear operational protocols** for the transit center, field patrols, and guardianship responsibilities, ensuring consistent and humane enforcement.

Expected Impact on Island Management

The ordinance is expected to significantly improve how Isabela manages domestic animals and their interactions with both people and wildlife. Key impacts include:

- **A measurable reduction in roaming animals** through sterilization, registration, and consistent patrols.
- **Improved public health and safety**, especially regarding bite prevention and responsible guardianship.
- **Better protection of wildlife and nesting areas**, thanks to stricter rules and clearer enforcement mechanisms.
- **Higher community participation**, supported by education programs and transparent processes.
- **Greater operational efficiency** for the Urban Fauna Department, now equipped with clearer protocols, updated legal tools, and stronger institutional backing.

Overall, the ordinance establishes a modern, humane, and workable framework that strengthens Isabela's capacity to manage urban fauna sustainably and in alignment with the conservation needs of the Galápagos.

2. Inter-Institutional Collaboration

Renewed and Expanded Agreement with GAD Municipal de Isabela (GADMI)

The renewed and expanded cooperation agreement marks a strategic shift in how Animal Balance engages in the Galápagos. Historically, Animal Balance worked primarily through the Biosecurity Agency (ABG). However, the new governance model—where GADs are now the competent authorities for urban fauna—requires a stronger, more direct institutional relationship with municipal governments.

This agreement responds to this new scenario by formalizing a closer collaboration with GADMI and expanding our operational reach and technical influence on the island. The new framework

strengthens coordination, clarifies roles, and supports the municipality in fulfilling its mandate through humane, evidence-based, and community-driven practices.

The agreement is valid for **18 months** and establishes clear commitments for both Animal Balance and GADMI.

Scope of the Agreement

The agreement covers coordination in education, sterilization campaigns, population surveys, capacity building, donation of equipment and supplies, infrastructure improvements, and long-term support for humane management of domestic species. It sets the operational and legal parameters for joint activities and defines shared responsibilities for implementation, monitoring, and sustainability.

New Commitments

Animal Balance Commitments

- **Design and deliver free educational campaigns** on responsible coexistence with companion animals, in coordination with GADMI.
- **Plan and execute evidence-based sterilization campaigns**, aligned with animal welfare protocols and coordinated with ABG as needed.
- **Organize and coordinate urban fauna population censuses** every two years or as required, including database development and training in mobile data collection tools.
- **Provide donations and logistical support** for:
 - Artistic and community projects
 - Infrastructure improvements
 - Technical advisory and ordinance development
 - Other initiatives evaluated and approved by Animal Balance

- **Supply, when possible and based on budget availability**, materials and equipment for the municipal transit center (food, cleaning supplies, construction materials, medications, tech equipment, and other essentials).
- **Train GADMI technical staff** in humane handling and positive-reinforcement dog training.

GADMI Commitments

- **Provide an adequate office or physical workspace** for planning, storing supplies, and hosting sterilization campaigns in coordination with Animal Balance.
- **Ensure continuity of municipal staff** dedicated to urban fauna management.
- **Receive all donations appropriately** through the municipal warehouse system, ensuring correct documentation and handling.
- **Facilitate all administrative procedures** required for the reception of donated goods.
- **Ensure that all municipal activities related to population control**—both urban and rural—comply with strict humane standards and the newly approved urban fauna ordinance.
- **Maintain and properly use all donated equipment and infrastructure**, ensuring sustainability, reporting its condition to Animal Balance, and replacing damaged equipment when necessary.
- **Make donated equipment available to Animal Balance** upon request for sterilization campaigns or other programmatic needs.

Alignment with Long-Term Goals

The renewed agreement directly supports Animal Balance’s long-term strategy for the Galápagos by strengthening institutional continuity, improving municipal capacity, and ensuring consistent enforcement of humane policies. By working directly with GADMI—the authority now responsible for urban fauna—the program aligns itself with the island’s governance structure and creates a scalable, sustainable foundation for future work.

This collaboration allows Animal Balance to:

- **Institutionalize humane management practices**, ensuring that protocols remain in place even during periods without on-island campaigns.
- **Support long-term population control** through sterilization, registration, and census-based monitoring.
- **Build local capacity** so that municipal staff, educators, and community members can continue the work independently.
- **Integrate humane education**, technical training, and operational support into a single coordinated framework.
- **Strengthen transparency and shared responsibility**, improving compliance with the new ordinance and aligning all actors under a unified vision.
- **Secure long-term access and operational stability**, making it possible to plan multi-year interventions and respond to new challenges effectively.

Overall, this agreement ensures that humane, evidence-based urban fauna management becomes a permanent, institutionalized component of Isabela's municipal operations—consistent with Animal Balance's long-term goals of sustainable, compassionate population control and community-centered solutions.

3. Community Education Campaign

Objectives and Methodology

The 2025 community education strategy focused on using art, games, and experiential learning to promote responsible coexistence between people, dogs, and cats. The campaign also aimed to strengthen local capacity by training community members and artists who can later lead creative educational activities independently. Through this combination of artistic engagement, play-based learning, and skill-building, the initiative seeks to create a more informed community and a sustainable base of local providers capable of continuing the work.

Artistic / Exploration / Play-Based Approach

Throughout the year, four major activities were carried out. Each one used creativity and direct experience to build empathy, awareness, and long-term behavior change.

1. Mural of Coexistence

A participatory mural designed and painted with more than 20 children from the community. The mural presents clear messages about compassion, responsible guardianship, and coexistence with wildlife. As a permanent public artwork, it now serves as a daily reminder for residents and visitors, reinforcing humane values in a visible and accessible way.

2. Theater for Coexistence

A locally produced theatrical performance created by a team of more than 10 community members, reaching over 300 attendees. The narrative used humor, storytelling, and relatable characters to illustrate the impacts of irresponsible pet care and the importance of coexistence. Because it was entirely developed and performed by locals, the messages were culturally grounded, accessible, and well received.

3. Walk of Coexistence

A school-based activity that engaged more than 150 children through guided walkabouts, games, and interactive learning. The sessions highlighted how roaming dogs and cats affect public spaces, Galapagos endemic wildlife, and community wellbeing. A key achievement this year was transporting children from the highlands to Puerto Villamil using a borrowed bus, allowing them to explore the beaches and participate in town activities.

4. Workshop for Local Artists

A capacity-building workshop led by a professional museum coordinator from Quito, with more than 15 participants. The workshop introduced practical tools and methodologies for using art as an educational medium. Local artists gained new skills for designing murals, community activities, and creative interventions, strengthening the island's long-term ability to maintain and expand humane education initiatives.

Number of Participants Reached

- **Mural of Coexistence:** 20+ children
- **Theater for Coexistence:** 10+ actors and production team; 250+ attendees
- **Workshop for Local Artists:** 15+ participants
- **Walk of Coexistence:** 150+ children

Main Outcomes

- **Mural:** Established a permanent public message promoting compassion and coexistence.
- **Theater:** Delivered educational content in a fun, narrative format created entirely by local talent.
- **Workshop:** Provided specialized training and tools to local artists, expanding long-term educational capacity.
- **Walk of Coexistence:** Reached schools directly with experiential learning; offered a standout field experience for highland students and strengthened awareness around the impact of roaming animals.

4.- Operational Strengthening

Project Mobility — Buggy Acquisition & Registration

Purpose of the Vehicle

The acquisition of the new buggy responds to a concrete operational need: reliable, humane, and efficient mobility for the municipal urban fauna team. Isabela's terrain and the need for rapid response make a dedicated vehicle essential for day-to-day enforcement of the ordinance.

The buggy now allows GADMI to:

- Conduct routine patrols to identify roaming animals and address incidents quickly.
- Transport dogs safely and humanely to the transit center.
- Support educational activities and field logistics.
- Increase presence in public spaces, reinforcing compliance with the new ordinance.

In short, the buggy expands the municipality's operational capacity and ensures that humane urban fauna management is not only legislated, but also executable.

Purchase, Shipment & Matriculation Process

The process requires several steps, it is ongoing.

1. **Purchase:** The vehicle was acquired through Animal Balance as an institutional donation aligned with the new inter-institutional agreement.
2. **Shipment to Isabela:** The buggy remains to be shipped to the island through local cargo operators, requiring additional coordination due to size, import procedures, and municipal donation protocols.
3. **Registration** The vehicle is already registered with the national transit authority.

This multi-stage process ensured full compliance with local regulations and municipal requirements for donated equipment.

The buggy has effectively removed one of the biggest operational barriers on the island: mobility. With reliable transportation, GADMI's urban fauna team can now act proactively rather than reactively, ensuring better outcomes for animals, the community, and local wildlife.

5.- Digital Presence

New Animal Balance Galápagos Website

www.animalbalancegalapagos.org

Why It Was Needed

The program required a dedicated digital platform to serve the specific context and needs of the Galápagos. Until now, information was scattered across social media, internal documents, and the main Animal Balance website, making it difficult for local authorities, partners, and community members to access clear and updated information. A standalone website was necessary to centralize resources, communicate progress transparently, and give the Galápagos initiative an identity aligned with its growing institutional role.

Main Improvements

The new website introduces several key upgrades:

- **Clear navigation** designed for local users, authorities, and collaborators.
- **Dedicated sections** for humane education, technical resources, and municipal coordination.
- **Project transparency**, including summaries of activities, census reports, and visual documentation.
- **Modern and more accessible design**

Overall, the new website consolidates the identity of the Animal Balance Galápagos Initiative and gives the project a stable, long-term digital foundation for communication, education, and institutional alignment.

Complementary Contributions

– Audiovisual production

Created photo and video material to document activities, explain the project's purpose, and strengthen visibility with partners and the community. This content is now used in reports, social media, fundraising, and stakeholder outreach.

– Social media communications

Maintained presence across platforms, sharing updates on education activities, operational work, clinic logistics, and key messages about coexistence. Helped position the initiative as active, transparent, and community-focused.

– Support during clinics

Provided field support during Isabela clinic, assisting with coordination, community guidance, animal flow, logistics, and stakeholder relations.

Closing Remarks

The work achieved in 2025 set a new standard for humane, coordinated, and community-centered urban fauna management in Isabela. With an updated ordinance, strengthened institutional agreements, expanded mobility, and a revitalized education strategy, the island now has the legal tools, operational capacity, and community engagement needed to manage domestic animal populations responsibly and sustainably. The groundwork is solid, and the collaboration between GADMI, Animal Balance, and the community is stronger than ever.

The challenges for 2026 are clear. We must close the remaining 20% gap in sterilizations to finally reach full coverage of the dog and cat population. We also need to carry out a new population census to update the baseline, evaluate progress with precision, and make decisions grounded in current data. At the same time, the new ordinance must be brought fully into public consciousness through stronger, more frequent educational actions—especially now that registration, responsible guardianship, and beach restrictions require higher levels of local compliance and understanding.

Meeting these goals will demand consistent field operations, tighter coordination with GADMI, stronger logistics, and continued community trust. But the foundation built this year makes the path forward clear and fully achievable. With sustained commitment and strategic action, 2026 can be the year in which Isabela consolidates the first fully humane, fully operational urban fauna management model in the Galápagos.

Picture folder:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/17qA9JB_qtZ3qcc1rbhkQhKIZI8L-anQU?usp=sharing

Social media videos:

Theater:

https://www.instagram.com/reel/DOJ5pBKDtXn/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFlZA==

New agreement with GAD:

https://www.instagram.com/reel/DN9VYnwEbQX/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFIZA==

Clinic:

https://www.instagram.com/reel/D0l065IDt1N/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFIZA==

Dog training:

https://www.instagram.com/reel/DPcorTJDrfp/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFIZA==