



Report of the 273rd Session

Thursday 09th June 2011, 11.00 - 12.00 hrs
Room LOW N1.2 – European Parliament, Brussels

I. Introductory remarks

Election of Nadja Hirsch (ALDE-DE) as new Vice-President of the Intergroup

Nadja Hirsch (ALDE, DE) presented her motivations to become a Vice-President of the Intergroup on the Welfare and Conservation of Animals. She is a German Member of the Liberals Group who has been in the European Parliament since 2009. Previously, she was a town Counciler in Munich and was already then committed to animal protection. She was involved in banning the use of wild animals in ciruses on local level. Moreover, she worked against animal hording.

Mrs Hirsch is active in the Committees on Civil Liberties, on Employment and on Culture but animal protection is an issue of major importance to her. She has tabled several animal welfare related written questions and has closely followed the Animal Welfare Intergroup's activities during the last two years.

Nadja Hirsch was elected by acclamation as new Vice- President of the Intergroup.

II. Presentation of the written declaration N° 26 on Dog Population Management in the EU

The Vice-President of the Intergroup **Janusz Wojciechowski (ECR, PL)** gave an introductory presentation about the new written declaration N° 26 by **Daciana Octavia Sârbu, Elisabeth Jeggel, Adina-Ioana Vălean**, and himself on "*Dog Population Management in the EU*".

The competence for pet animals lies almost exclusively in the hands of the Member States and their local municipalities who are not always willing to attach the adequate importance. This is also the case in Poland where the conditions of pet animals are far from being acceptable.

The European Union should take up competences in this field and should not limit its scope to animal husbandry and animals used for commercial and research purposes. In a number of documents the European Parliament has already raised the idea of widening the scope of EU competence to all animals. Hence the proposition of the written declaration which contains the following requests:

- *Calls on the Member States to adopt comprehensive dog population management strategies which include measures such as dog control and anti-cruelty laws, support for veterinary procedures including rabies vaccination and sterilisation as necessary to control the number of unwanted dogs, and the promotion of responsible pet ownership;*
- *Ask the Commission to encourage the Member States to introduce the mandatory identification and registration of every dog, by means of EU-wide compatible systems, in order to avoid the spread of diseases;*

He encouraged all his Member colleagues to actively support the declaration and to convince also other Members to sign. If adopted, the written declaration would mark an important step towards a better protection of pet animals in the EU.

III. Adequate Guardianship: ensuring the health and welfare of pets and communities

Kate Natrass Atema, Programme Director for Companion Animals at IFAW informed that the International Fund for Animal Welfare runs dog and cat management projects in ten countries around the world.

Bureau Members

President:

Carl Schlyter MEP

Vice-Presidents:

Kriton Arsenis MEP

Jacqueline Foster MEP

Nadja Hirsch MEP

Elisabeth Jeggel MEP

Dan Jørgensen MEP

Jörg Leichtfried MEP

Kartika Liotard MEP

David Martin MEP

Cristiana Muscardini MEP

Sirpa Pietikäinen MEP

Raül Romeva i Rueda MEP

Daciana Sârbu MEP

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Established in 1983

When talking about a comprehensive dog population management IFAW brings a perspective that comes from communities which are more or less developed and that have a wide range of causes and problems.

An effective dog population management is important to the whole European Union and not just to the countries that have significant stray dog problems.

The written declaration N°26 is an opportunity to make progress on this issue. It has two parts: one part focuses on comprehensive dog population management and the other part emphasises on identification and registration.

The EU has a long history with regard to animal welfare:

- **1995:** the Treaty of Amsterdam introduces a Protocol which regards animals as – sentient beings
- **2003:** introduction of the European Pet Passport for the movement of dogs and cats
- **2007:** an EU wide ban on the trade in dog and cat fur
- **2009:** the Lisbon Treaty offers an opportunity to link the animal welfare aspects to key issues as public health and safety. This is a good reason why it is time to take considered action.
- **2011:** the next 5-year Animal Welfare Strategy, currently under consideration, is likely to include companion animals as a result of the Belgian Presidency's recommendations.

There are an estimated 120 million dogs and cats in the EU and a Eurobarometer survey has found out that 64% of EU citizens are concerned with animal welfare. Given these facts and figures there is a real reason to deal with dog population management on a European level.

Uncontrolled dog populations

Uncontrolled dog populations include not only stray animals but also owned dogs which are badly treated and cared for. Such problems are common for the whole European Union and can raise serious social and health problems. Municipalities, NGOs and European citizens spend every year about 470 million Euros to address problems related to uncontrolled dog populations. This is a direct consequence of the lack of common welfare laws in the European Union.

Western European Member States have usually excellent spay and neuter rates for dogs but many of them have serious problems with **illegal puppy trade**. There is a large demand for puppies. IFAW studies have shown that up to 95 % of imported puppies in the Netherlands come from Eastern Europe where usually poor animal welfare laws are in place or where the existing laws are badly enforced. The movements of these animals across borders with little or no control of enforcement represent a huge health threat. The puppies are often bred in poor conditions and are hardly socialized which fosters dog aggressions and often their subsequent abandonment. IFAW has as well documented evidence of falsified vaccination certificates which means that despite controls in place unvaccinated and possibly ill dogs are trafficked throughout the Union.

There is a growing body of evidence showing that healthy societies live in conjunction with healthy animals. In addition, it has been recognized internationally that dog control on a broad level is of benefit for public health and the environment.

The **OIE - dog population control objectives** include goals which are considered of EU competence such as the creation of rabies free dog populations, the strict control of zoonotic diseases and the management of other risks to human health. Preventing harm to the environment and to local animal populations is another issue coming to light when fighting against illegal pet animal trade and trafficking

Furthermore, the **Council of Europe's Pet Convention** which many EU countries have ratified determines that a standard practice which results in responsible pet ownership is not only a desirable but a realistic goal.

Adequate Guardianship Checklist

An Adequate Guardianship Checklist focusing on resources, environmental conditions and social interactions can concretely help meeting each animal's physiological and psychological needs and can maintain an acceptable level of health and well-being. It involves that every animal has to have access to food, water and basic veterinary care including vaccinations which are essential for public health.

Those animals that have the possibility to avoid extreme heat and cold are healthier animals and are less likely to become diseased. Therefore it has to be avoided to expose dogs and cats to extreme heat or cold.

Animals need to be avoided injuries and cruelties. This should be a general ethical and social value in education.

Dogs need to have appropriate exercise and they need to have social interactions with other dogs. They need somebody looking after them, whether it is a responsible owner, a community or the municipality. Taking responsibility for each animal ensures that it remains healthy and does not become a public health risk.

As an example Western European Member States seem at first glance a dog paradise but when taking the adequate guardianship check list shortcomings can be found. In most of these countries there are people who depend on social security. Sometimes their animals lack food and basic veterinary care. Other animals lack a guardian so that they cannot have basic veterinary care. This represents not only a massive health problem but is also an ethical and social concern.

Setting the strategy goals

IFAW believes that for a comprehensive dog management programme a strategy and the goals need to be identified at local, regional country and community level, using the adequate guardianship checklist. As next step the tools have to be determined and proper resources have to be allocated to ensure an effective enforcement. The strategy selected to solve a problem is going to be dependent on what is missing. This is obviously not a one size fits all approach. Setting the strategy goals should always lead to improving public health and safety and improve welfare for the animals.

The tools selected are usually a combination of the following:

- Policy refinement and enforcement
- Training for veterinary and enforcement professionals
- Sheltering and/or rooming centers
- Education and targeted outreach adult and children
- Vaccination and sterilization campaigns
- Identification and registration, including stray animals for which the municipalities need to take responsibility for each of these animals and need to identify and register those animals

The role of the European Union

The European Union can provide framework guidelines that define the baseline. Communities need to have an adequate guardianship approach for all animals. The European Union is required to ensure public health and research funds can be allocated to identify best practices.

IV. Identification and registration: a pillar of companion animal health and welfare

Dr. Paolo Dalla Villa, Head of Unit for Human Animal Relationship at the Istituto G. Caporale, in Teramo, Italy spoke about the importance of the identification and registration of dogs.

The Istituto Caporale (ICT) is a public health institution, which was founded in 1941 and belongs to the National Public Health Service. It is a technical-scientific body of the Ministry of Health and the Regions of Abruzzi & Molise. The ICT works also internationally for a global strategy as diseases and other animal health and welfare related issues do not have borders

Human-animal interaction research projects started in 1990 with the promotion of public health in schools and have included later also dog population control programs and shelter management activities. In 2004, the **Animal Welfare Research Centre** was set up, in order to support:

- The **community**, by increasing the awareness on AW issues through humane education;
- The **official veterinarians**, through study, innovation and training;
- The **farmers/breeders**, through the development of new management systems;
- The **competent authorities**, for the improvement and enforcement of the AW policies.

The **World Animal Health Organization (OIE)** recognised the ICT since 2004 as a collaborating Centre for veterinary training, epidemiology, food safety and animal welfare. Not at least the ICT host as well National Register information system for cattle, equines, small ruminants, pigs and poultry.

Traceability

Stray dogs are just the top of an iceberg; they are a part of the whole dog population. Italy has done a lot of work, mainly during the last years, to strengthen the system dedicated to the full protection of dogs and cats. Since more than 20 years abandoned dog killings are banned. The local municipalities and the local veterinary service take care of the animals and in case they cannot be reunited with their owner they are kept in long term shelters. In 2008 the Health Ministry reminded the importance of the normalisation for the canine identification and registration. This is the only good measure to control animal populations, to engage the communities, to educate people and to make them part of the system.

The concept of traceability is defined by the US environmental protection agency as the ability to trace the application of an entity by means of recording the identification. It is important to register the premises, to identify the animals and to record their movements.

Some systems are recording dog movements both for commercial as for sanitary reasons. The **TRACES system** is dedicated to follow the commercial movement of animals. EU Regulation 998 establishes the **EU Pet Passport** dedicated to the non-commercial movement of dogs.

On top of this, many EU countries have national databases that are fully working.

The main identification methods

There are several identification methods but no one is 100% reliable. The most reliable one is the **microchip**. It is a passive device which is implanted under the skin of an animal and which can be read by a reader. It contains a number which is composed by 15 letters that are partly related to the country and partly directly linked to the individual animal. Each dog has its unique number. This is the only way to accomplish the full principle of traceability. The implantation of the microchip is unfortunately not standardised in the EU which can make it difficult to retrieve them in case of control.

A **uniform database** makes only sense if it is a living system that anybody intended to provide information to the authorities can update according to the change of the owner, change of the address, when puppies are born or when an animal dies. If these updates are not made the system becomes useless. The entities and stakeholders involved in this process are public and private veterinarians, pet owners and the competent authorities.

In Italy, there are systems fully dedicated to lost and found dogs. However, there is a lack of implementation and there is little help in case of emergency as no health information is yet available.

In 2009 the ICT was appointed to deal with the emergency management in the aftermath of the earthquake in L'Aquila. This gave the opportunity to learn a good lesson. It showed that very few animals were identified and registered. The regional legislation of the Abruzzi foresees even a picture for each animal in the identification system but due to poor implementation it was very difficult for the officers involved to reunite rescued animals with their owners.

The take on message is that only identification and registration ensure traceability. This is fundamental for companion population management. The focus is usually put on dogs but the problems relating to the registration of cats are even bigger. There is an urgent need to take action and to consider as well the identification and registration of cats.

Traceability will be guaranteed only if a national database is interconnected to a central EU compatible information system. **Europetnet** www.europetnet.com/home.aspx, a non-profit organisation is trying to promote such a system.

The conclusions of the Council under the Belgian Presidency already proposed to facilitate the creation of an EU compatible system for identification and registration. The political commitment to achieve this will be essential.

The European Union has to consider this issue as a transboundary concern that goes beyond national dimensions.

The ICT is very proud of being in partnership with the European Commission, with the FVE and with Four Paws International in the **Carodog project** www.carodog.eu. This is a website intended to provide all professionals with the most updated information on companion animal population management and related issues. Paolo Dalla Villa announced that an expert meeting on identification and registration would be held the week after the Intergroup meeting.

V. Questions and debate

Carl Schlyter (Greens/EFA, SE) asked if data chips have been of benefit in the aftermath of the earthquake in L'Aquila. **Paolo Dalla Villa** replied that as consequence of the earthquake an estimation of L'Aquila's dog population was carried out. The authorities are fully aware that data chips are a very important tool that has to be consistently applied. It is impossible to control a dog population without knowing their composition, number and structure. A dog population is variable. It is not possible to speak about owned dogs and stray dogs as their condition can change during their lives. Focus has to be placed on all populations and for this reason mandatory registration is needed for all dogs - owned and stray ones. To implement this is very difficult. NGOs are of tremendous help and are a very positive driver in this regard. They have to be convinced as well about the importance of data chipping. So far all their attention was focused on spaying and neutering.

Anna Rosbach (ECR, DK) wanted to have some information about stray animal populations in the Balkan States.

Paolo Dalla Villa replied that **TAIEX**, the Technical Assistance and Information Exchange instrument managed by the Directorate-General Enlargement of the European Commission has organised several workshops and

initiatives in these countries to promote mainly OIE standards. There are several initiatives which rely very much on local NGOs. Croatia is currently doing a good job in this regard.

Roza Thun und Hohenstein (EPP, PL) stated that it has been possible to systematically register farm animals. It should be therefore feasible to introduce a consistent identification and registration system for dogs on EU level. Legislative proposals in this regard would be of help.

Marit Paulsen (ALDE, SE) agreed with Roza Thun and stressed that in the context of the future Animal Welfare Strategy she has been promoting a common animal welfare law which should consider also pets. An identification and registration system should be also extended to cats. The most important task to do is to fight for a common animal welfare law which would harmonise rules throughout the Union.

Jacqueline Foster (ECR, UK) stressed that it would be ideal to make sure that all dogs and other pets animals are chipped. She called on her colleagues to sign the written declaration 26 on dog population management in the EU. This would be a good start to get the message across.

Elisabeth Jeggle (EPP, DE) said that the European Union has no real competence for companion animals but progress to change this has been made. In her report on the animal welfare action plan of 2006 it was difficult to use the word companion animals. A lot of work has been done since, especially by Janusz Wojciechowski to give more impulse to the cause and to incite the Commission to react. The Written declaration 26 has to be seen as part of a broader process toward EU competence for pet animals.

Marlene Wartenberg (Director of the Four Paws European Policy Office) referred to the recent *Vilnius declaration on responsible ownership*¹ which states that an EU wide identification and registration system is feasible. She informed that concerning illegal puppy trade the Commission is carrying out a research on identification and registration. The Commission will also send a letter to the competent authorities in the Member States calling on them to do proper inspections in this regard.

Sara Turetta (President of Save the Dogs) spoke about the current situation of dog populations in Romania. This country is known for its problems with free roaming dogs. No identification and registration system is in place even for owned animals. Currently an amendment to the Romanian animal welfare law is being discussed at the national Parliament where it was rejected twice and sent back to the competent Committee. The amendment foresees to give municipalities the choice to decide whether to kill stray dogs or to apply a neuter and release policy. Should this law be approved it will create a very confusing situation in Romania, having towns and cities where stray dogs are put down and other municipalities where they are neutered and released. The written declaration 26 is an extremely important message to countries like Romania underlining the importance of identification and registration.

Kate Nattrass Atema reiterated that the European Union should make sure to set out baselines for dog population management that countries can aspire to. The goals can be implemented in different ways according to the specific needs of the Member States and communities. A comprehensive management that includes identification and registration will need as well the allocation of sufficient resources.

Paolo Dalla Villa underlined that the political will to change things will be fundamental.

VI. Closing remarks

The next Intergroup meeting will be held on Thursday 7th July, 10.00-11.00 hrs, room LOW R3.1 in Strasbourg. Lesley O'Donnell from IFAW will present footage of the 2011 seal hunt in Canada and Jo Swabe from HSI will speak about the challenges to the EU ban on seal products at the WTO.

¹<http://www.vier-pfoten.eu/website/output.php?idfile=3044>

ATTENDANCE**Members of the European Parliament (9)**

Foster Jacqueline (Vice-President)	ECR	UK
Hirsch Nadja (Vice-President)	ALDE	DE
Jeggle, Elisabeth (Vice-President)	EPP	DE
Paulsen, Marit (Honorary Secretary)	ALDE	SE
Rosbach, Anna	EFD	DK
Schlyter, Carl (President)	Greens/EFA	SE
Striffler, Michele	EPP	FR
Thun und Hohenstein, Roza	EPP	PL
Wojciechowski, Janusz(Vice-President)	ECR	PL

Assistants and Trainees to Members of the European Parliament (8)

Klemczyk, Klaudia	Intern
Jenkins, Cassandra	Intern
Breneke, Eric	Intern
Gidoni Michele	Intern to Mr Vattimo (ALDE, IT)
Frowein, Benjamin	Intern
Perman, Jeanette	Assistant to Mr Schlyter (Greens/EFA, SE)
Skoda, Ansgar	Intern
Gijssels, Thomas	Assistant to Mrs Liotard (EUL/NGL, NL)

Guest Speakers and Observers (13)

Mayerczyck Magda	ECR Group
Von Kohl, Peter	Editor
Miczki, Tamara	EP staff
Atema, Kate	IFAW-International Fund for Animal Welfare
Sales, Tiphaine	Dods Europe
Swabe, Joanna	HSI-Humane Society International
Wartenberg, Marlene	Vier Pfoten International
Moser, Eleonora	Pet behaviourist
Turetta, Sara	Save the Dogs and other Animals
Dalla Villa, Paolo	Istituto Caporale, Teramo, Italy
Timofte, Alina	Commission official
Empereur, Amelie	Consultant/ Europetnet
Schoch, Liliane	Schuman

Intergroup Secretariat (1)

Erlar, Andreas	Eurogroup for Animals, Political Officer,
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