

**DECLARATION**  
**of the First Conference on Animal Welfare in the Baltic Region**  
**RESPONSIBLE OWNERSHIP**  
**5 to 6 May, 2011, Vilnius, Lithuania**

Animal welfare is a complex and multi-faceted issue with an impact on international and domestic policies, and with important ethical, scientific, economic, cultural and political dimensions; animals are living and sentient beings and their protection and appropriate treatment is one of the challenges for a cultured and civilised Europe in the 21<sup>st</sup> century;

The participants at the First Conference on Animal Welfare in the Baltic Region

- Observe that Article 13 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) expresses the development of the increasing meaning of animals to society and has created an enhanced general legal background, such that “...when formulating and implementing the Union policy in the fields of agriculture, fisheries, transport, internal market, research and technological development and space, the Union and Member States must, since animals are sentient beings, pay full regard to the welfare requirements of all animals, while respecting the legislative or administrative provisions and customs of the Member States relating in particular to religious rites, cultural traditions and regional heritage”;

Europe has enacted a wide range of animal welfare laws and achieved one of the world’s highest levels of animal welfare, but the future development of the European Union’s Animal Welfare Policy should further increase its support of the welfare of companion animals. There is also a need for co-operation to be better co-ordinated and for a horizontally established policy line on companion animal welfare and health issues at the EU and global levels;

- Emphasise that it is scientifically recognised that cruelty to animals increases the potential for violent behaviour to humans, and that not only in the European civil society cruelty to (all) animals has to be defined and classified as a crime, and such crimes should carry inevitable and effective penal sanctions intended to serve as a deterrent for the future;

- Emphasise that wild animals, including exotic animals, cannot have an appropriate way of life when kept in private households;

- Therefore encourage all Member States to ban the keeping of certain, if not all, wild animals, including exotic animals, as companion animals by private individuals, in consideration of the natural needs of wild animals, and in case of the well documented implications for global biodiversity loss, with reference to risks for human health and safety, such as physical injuries, zoonoses and animal health;

- The lack of good animal welfare and good, responsible companion animal ownership is provoking a backlash against companion animals and against their owners, as well as growing legal restrictions that discourage people from keeping dogs and cats;
- Emphasise that mandatory identification of companion animals, only in combination with an effective and reliable system of registration, leads to traceability and is crucial for successful animal health and welfare management helping to promote Responsible Ownership and preserve public health;
- Emphasise that identification and registration of dogs and, if possible, of other companion animals such as cats, should be implemented through a compatible EU-wide system and within an EU network; This is to avoid illegal puppy trade and enable lost dogs to be reunited with their owners; The I&R should also be linked to veterinary prevention, such as vaccination, to protect public health, avoid illegal puppy trade and enable lost dogs to be reunited with their owners;
- Support mandatory registration of commercial dog/cat breeders and dealers/retailers in order to avoid illegal breeding and trading and market distortion;
- Call on the European Union to sign and ratify the European Convention for the Protection of Pet Animals;
- Call on the Contracting Parties of the Council of Europe to sign and ratify the European Convention for the Protection of Pet Animals;
- Call on the Council of Europe to revise the European Convention for the Protection of Pet Animals, taking into account state-of-the-art knowledge, ethical developments, and criteria such as the Animal Welfare Indicators, based on the 'Five Freedoms' already used in other contexts, such as in the Welfare Quality Project for farm animals;
- Emphasise the importance of increasing co-operation on animal welfare issues, including companion animals and animal health, amongst the Member States of the European Union in macro regions such as the European Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, the EU Common Strategy for the Mediterranean and the New Danube Strategy, fostering the sharing of information and experience;
- Call for the European Union to promote co-operation in this field with non-EU countries;
- Call for the European Commission to introduce welfare of companion animals in the upcoming animal welfare strategy, to start the relevant research as requested by the Council Conclusions on the health and welfare of dogs and cats of 29 November 2010; to establish a common basic level of animal welfare and health encompassing companion animals through the future European Animal Welfare Law and other legislation;

To develop a glossary to ensure that terms such as ‘companion animal’, ‘wild animal’, ‘pet’, ‘entertainment purposes’, etc. are clearly defined, to ensure correct interpretation and translation; to establish the planned European Centre of Reference for the welfare of all animals and to provide an appropriate budget for the implementation of animal welfare measures, including education in the Member States;

- Emphasise that Animal Birth Control (ABC) programmes offer a valuable solution to the problem of canine and feline overpopulation;

- Support the establishment of a sustainable approach to stop canine and feline overpopulation in Europe through tailor-made systematic animal birth control in combination with other complementary measures that replace the killing of healthy animals in Europe, taking into consideration the previous experiences of different stakeholders and in the Member States;

- Affirm that euthanasia of animals is based on a veterinary indication, and therefore being a veterinary act, is intended to end the suffering of animals (e.g. seriously ill, injured, or aggressive dogs) and bringing about the animal’s death in the most humane way, without pain and performed by a veterinarian. Ending the life of a healthy animal without a veterinary diagnosis is not euthanasia but killing;

- Call on the Member States to take immediate steps to appropriately ensure that the notions of animal protection and welfare and of responsible ownership of sentient beings are further promoted via education, especially that of children and of veterinary and legal professionals, and to establish adequate information campaigns.

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**ANNEX TO THE DECLARATION**  
**of the First Conference on Animal Welfare in the Baltic Region**  
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**COMPANION ANIMAL LEGISLATION**  
**BEST PRACTICES**

**I GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF ANIMAL WELFARE**

to be proclaimed in the constitution or in the first article of the animal welfare legislation

1. **Respect animals as sentient beings, see Art. 13 TFEU** (Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union) <http://www.carodog.eu/?p=3&s=4&item=353>

2. **Consider the Five Freedoms**

- Freedom from Hunger and Thirst
- Freedom from Discomfort
- Freedom from Pain
- Freedom to Express Normal Behaviour
- Freedom from Fear and Distress

**and by analogy the additional twelve criteria developed by the Welfare Quality Project (elaborated for farm animals)**

- Animals should not suffer prolonged hunger.
- Animals should not suffer prolonged thirst.
- Animals should have comfort when resting.
- Animals should have thermal comfort.
- Animals should have enough space to be able to move around freely.
- Animals should be free of physical injuries.
- Animals should be free of disease.
- Animals should not suffer pain induced by inappropriate management, handling, slaughter, or surgical procedures.
- Animals should be able to express normal, non-harmful, social behaviours.
- Animals should be able to express other normal behaviours.
- Animals should be handled well in all situations.
- Negative emotions such as fear, distress, frustration or apathy should be avoided, whereas positive emotions such as security or contentment should be promoted.

<http://www.welfarequality.net/everyone/41858/5/0/22>

3. **Responsible ownership**

(you will find further information concerning national dog legislation on <http://www.carodog.eu/?p=3&s=5>, regularly updated)

## II BEST PRACTICES IN DETAIL

### 1. Ethical aspects of the use of companion animals

- Classification of cruelty against animals not only as an offence but as a criminal act and its inclusion as a crime in the criminal/penal code;
- Ban on killing dogs and cats; correct use of euthanasia;
- Ban on the use of animals for fights (in particular dog fights);
- Ban on sexual abuse of animals (zoophilia);
- Ban on the sale of cats and dogs in public places;
- Ban on the keeping of wild animals, including exotic animals, as companion animals (best enforcement: positive list).

### 2. Responsible ownership

- Mandatory veterinary preventive measures (vaccination, deworming);
- Mandatory identification and registration of all dogs, and cats if possible; establishment of an EU-compatible system within an EU-wide network; neutering of owned dogs;
- Certification of breeders and if possible of dealers/retailers.

### 3. Social education

- Mandatory establishment of educational programmes targeting the general public (in particular children and students); training in animal welfare for professionals (such as veterinarians, judges, prosecutors, and the police) and dog-owners;
- Development of an EU curriculum on animal welfare for veterinarians; alternatively this could be established at the national level;
- In the case of stray animals: promotion of government and NGO co-operation in the field of animal welfare; establishing long-term policy action plans (ABC).

## III BEST PRACTICES, GOOD GOVERNANCE

- **Legislative issues**

1. Establishment of animal welfare councils at the national and regional level, inclusion of animal welfare NGOs in the decision-making process;
2. Establishment of an Animal Welfare (Inter-)group in the national parliament;
3. International and national co-operation between agricultural, health and educational law enforcement institutions.

- **Enforcement issues**

1. Ombudsman system at national and regional levels;
2. Legal competencies for certified NGOs. Building competencies for a certified animal welfare lawyer at the national or regional level;
3. Class action complaint establishment for registered NGOs.

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