

**Conclusions of the Workshop on
“The critical factors for the welfare of dogs and cats involved in commercial practices”
organized by the Lithuanian Presidency of the Council of the European Union,
Eurogroup for Animals, FVE and VIER PFOTEN International
on 29 October 2013**

On 29 October 2013, the Lithuanian Presidency of the Council of the European Union in co-operation with Eurogroup for Animals, FVE and VIER PFOTEN International has organised a Workshop on the critical factors for the welfare of dogs and cats involved in commercial practices. This workshop aimed to proceed with the discussion on the welfare of dogs and cats and the problems common to the Member States, to share experiences and to propose possible ways forward. It was attended by officials from the European Commission-DG SANCO, competent authorities from EU Member States and by representatives of non-governmental organizations dealing with animal welfare.

During the workshop, three roundtable discussions, namely on breeding, pet-trade and identification and registration, were organised and the overall outcome of all three discussions can be summarised into the following conclusions:

Conclusions and recommendations on control of dog and cat breeding in Europe

➤ National legislation on dog and cat breeding varies between Member States and this is likely to have an impact on the common market. There is a clear need for a framework facilitating the registration and licencing of breeders. Setting up minimum standards for the licencing of dogs and cats breeders, would help to achieve a harmonised level of professionalism in the sector. Minimum standards for the training of breeders, husbandry practices, the environment in which animals are bred and the selection of breeding animals are only some of the issues that should be covered by licencing conditions.

➤ There is a need to stop welfare infringements such as the breeding of dogs and cats in unsuitable conditions, the breeding of animals which are likely to suffer from inherited disorders and breeding by unqualified and underage persons). Breeders should be qualified and licenced.

➤ Education is important for changing existing bad practices that lead to animals being bred in a way which increases the risk of them developing health and behaviour problems, which compromise the welfare of animals and have emotional and financial implications for owners.

▪ Education should be available and mandatory to all breeders in Europe.

▪ The public should be informed about how to choose a pet which has been bred responsibly.

▪ Communication initiatives should be promoted from the European and national authorities, in order to raise awareness of pet owners.

➤ A commitment is needed from the Member States to the EU Commission to share information with the European Commission’s study on the welfare of dogs and cats involved in commercial practices. It is important to identify the internal market, consumer protection and animal health and welfare issues that need to be tackled and to demonstrate the need for action at an EU level.

Conclusions and recommendations on the trade control of cats and dogs in Europe

- At the EU level, there is a need of clarification of definitions and proper translation in the Member States, e.g. terms like commercial or non-commercial use, movement, definition of owner/ keeper, change of ownership, etc. should be clearly defined in legislation in order to avoid potential interpretation.
- The limit of five animals to be moved should be discussed.
- At the National level, Member States should carry out efficient controls on pet trade and apply proportional and dissuasive administrative and other measures. Closer collaboration between the EU national competent authorities during transport of animals is indispensable in order to ensure enforcement of law. Strict penalties should be in place in order to be a deterrent.
- Identification and registration of the animals and their owners (private persons, traders or NGO) is necessary. Identification and registration should be managed by the Member States and be linked to the pet passport number.
- Clarification of and compliance with the transportation requirements for intra-community trade and import from third countries are necessary.
- There is a need to look into the development of a (legislative) framework for sales of dogs and cats on the Internet, which will encourage responsible breeding, responsible ownership and confer responsibility on the hosting website.
- Harmonization of health requirements for the trade of dogs and cats in Europe is needed.
- The places where pets are sold should be regulated and open markets existing in certain European countries should be forbidden.
- The different disease status in EU Member States when developing new legislation should be considered.
- Raise awareness through education addressed to all, i.e. people and professionals, including transport companies, breeders, buyers, etc.
- The European Convention for the protection of pet animals should be ratified by the EU and could easily provide the necessary framework for the trade of cats and dogs in Europe.

Conclusions and recommendations on identification and registration of pet animals in Europe

- Responsible breeding and trade of dogs and cats in Europe is not possible without implementation and enforcement of traceability. Efficient traceability of dogs is a crucial tool for the control and eradication of zoonoses, trade, breeding and welfare control, and a key element for responsible ownership.
- This traceability should be implemented as mandatory into the draft EU Animal Health Law starting with the mandatory traceability of all dogs in Europe (wish list cats and ferrets in a mid-term)
- Only identification in combination with registration of pet animal gives traceability. Therefore, the EU legislative framework should make both mandatory. In order to make it possible the following measures are proposed for inclusion in the legislation:
 - ◆ Only one national system per Member State, incorporating diverse public and private systems in one country should be in place.
 - ◆ The national competent authority for companion animals is the responsible institution for the identification and registration of pets, as well as, for the pet-passport registration.

- ◆ The qualified person for the identification and registration of the companion animals should be designated by the national competent authority.
- ◆ The registration should include both the transponder (microchip) and the pet passport and re-use of both of them should be prohibited.
- ◆ There is a need for unique ISO code. The manufacturer, as well as, the country should be recognised in the microchip code.
- ◆ Having a European system (e.g. Europetnet) in place that would facilitate cross check of national data through TRACES.
 - The identification and registration can be implemented by delegated acts, at the national level, provided that EU-wide compatible system (such as Europetnet) is in place. EU Member States could regulate identification and registration in their country, considering the respective national data rules and privacy.
 - The framework should be clearly defined under which the veterinarian or the designated qualified person will be authorized for the identification and registration of the animals in the Members States and the issuing of each pet-passport.
 - Organise Europe-wide communication strategies should be organised in order to raise awareness of public on responsible ownership of companion animals. Campaigns should explain how identification and registration is part of the responsible ownership attitude.

IMPORTANT. These conclusions are made only in the light of discussions that took place during the above mentioned workshop and based on the individual contribution of the participants. The views of individual participants and conclusions of the workshop does not necessary reflect the views of the European Commission, competent authorities of the Member States, Lithuanian Presidency, etc.