

Companion animal health and welfare

The EU Commission has no intention of regulating responsible online pet trade

Concern about pet health and welfare due to unregulated online trade was at the heart of a joint letter sent early June to EU Commissioners Andriukaitis (DG SANTE) and Ansip (Vice-President of the EU Commission and in charge of the EU Digital Single Market) by the Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE), the Union of European Veterinary Practitioners (UEVP), Federation of European Companion Animal Veterinary Associations (FECAVA) and FOUR PAWS International.

In particular, the letter called upon the EU Commission to regulate the selling and buying of animals online, and to improve the traceability of pet sellers.

In reply, the Commissioners recalled the existence of current relevant legislation, in particular those covering the commercial and non-commercial movement legislation, the (new) Animal Health Law and the E-Commerce Directive.

National enforcement “not enough”

Pierre Sultan, Director of European Policy Office commented: *“We appreciate that EU Commissioner Andriukaitis made clear that under the Animal Health Law, any keeper of dogs and cats for commercial purposes should register his establishment, even if he is not the owner and keeps the animals only on a temporary basis.”*

“However, it is disappointing that the EU Commission doesn’t intend to go further and will be relying on the Member States for proper enforcement. Research into 42 classified ad sites in 10 countries carried out by FOUR PAWS has clearly revealed that this is not enough.”

Indeed, several loopholes in EU legislation and its enforcement have been identified by FOUR PAWS’ Pet Deception Campaign (www.petdeception.org) and by the joint FVE, UEVP and FECAVA report “Working towards responsible dog trade.”

FECAVA President Jerzy Gawor stressed: *“Profit should never take priority over animal health and welfare or public health and should never harm the consumer. Therefore, FECAVA urges EU legislators to regulate standards of dog breeding and trade, including over the internet. To facilitate enforcement and to protect consumers, public health as well as animal health and welfare, we furthermore ask to render the identification and registration of dogs mandatory throughout Europe.”*

Organisations call for “seller registration”

Julie Sanders, Director of Companion Animals Programme added: *“With the switch from newspaper ads to the internet, sellers have been able to reach a much wider audience of potential buyers, on both a national and international level.”*

“Furthermore, sellers do not have to register with classified ad sites which means that they can remain anonymous this has led to a big increase in illegal activities such as the selling of illegally imported puppies and exotics animals.”

FVE, FECAVA, UEVP and FOUR PAWS International are therefore calling for classified ad sites to introduce seller registration on their sites to protect both the public and the animals being sold.

Protection animals and buyers

The organisations are furthermore lobbying for a mandatory registration system as part of the new Animal Health law, where breeders and sellers are not only registered but are also legally obliged to show their registration number when selling an animal online.

To improve consumer protection, these registration details should be publicly accessible, so that buyers can check if the breeder or seller they are buying from is registered.

Notes

- FOUR PAWS International is an international animal welfare organisation, www.vier-pfoten.org/en/

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- The Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE) is an umbrella organisation of 44 veterinary organisations from 38 European countries, representing a total of around 240 000 veterinarians. The FVE strives to promote animal health, animal welfare and public health across Europe. www.fve.org
- The Federation of European Companion Animal Veterinary Associations (FECAVA) is the platform for the promotion of the professional development and representation of companion animal veterinarians in Europe. Founded in 1990, it currently has 40 national member associations and 7 associate member associations. FECAVA represents over 30,000 companion animal practitioners throughout Europe. www.fecava.org
- The Union European Veterinary Practitioners (UEVP) is the European umbrella organization of national veterinary practitioners' associations from 26 European countries. It is a section of the FVE. www.fve.org/about_fve/sections/UEVP.php

