



Time to Act

**Mandatory Identification and Registration (I&R)
of Dogs and Cats in Germany and Developments
in the European Union**

**Expert Conference – Berlin
November 2019**

**NETWORK
I & R**



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Notes:

For reasons of readability, this brochure does not use male, female and diverse (m/f/d) language forms simultaneously. All references to persons apply equally to all genders.

The following terms and designations are used synonymously in this brochure: “identification and registration”/“I&R”; “pets”/“domestic animals”/“companion animals”; “EU”/“European Union”.

The speeches and presentations of the expert conference of 6 November 2019 are available via the following link:
www.heimtierversorgung.net/english-information/expert-conference/informations

Preface

On 6 November 2019, the conference "Time to Act – Mandatory Identification and Registration (I&R) of Dogs and Cats in Germany and Developments in the European Union" took place in Berlin. During this event, which was organised by the Network I&R, experts discussed with more than 100 participants the advantages of and obstacles to nationwide standardised I&R of companion animals. The conference, held at the Representation of the Saarland to the Federal Government in Berlin, enabled an interdisciplinary exchange on the problems and solutions. The circle of participants consisted of all stakeholders involved in the issue – from the transponder industry and private and public databases in Germany and abroad to representatives of various professional groups of veterinarians, breeders, the pharmaceutical industry, administrative officials, political decision makers from state parliaments, the German Bundestag and the EU, animal protection organisations and the Animal Welfare Officers of the federal states.

This brochure sets out to summarise the presentations and discussions held at this specialist event based on the authors' texts.

The vast majority of EU Member States already implement a legal obligation to identify and register companion animals. Germany, by contrast, is one of the four states in Europe that are lagging behind. Although there are regulations in individual federal states on mandatory I&R, this by no means guarantees nationwide traceability.

For reasons of animal welfare, animal health, consumer protection, fair competition including the internal market, as well as the fight against the organised crime of the illegal puppy trade, the European Parliament, the veterinary profession and animal welfare organisations have been calling for EU-wide and uniform mandatory I&R for companion animals for about 20 years, most recently in February 2020 by the EU Parliament's Environment Committee¹.

The conference showed once again that uniform and legally binding I&R for dogs and cats is long overdue. I&R is urgently needed – not only in the interests of animals but also, with a view to zoonoses and consumer protection, in the interests of the public – and must be uniform and legally binding nationwide and ultimately also across the EU.

Dr Hans-Friedrich Willimzik

Animal Welfare Officer of Saarland and head of the Network I&R



¹European Parliament resolution of 12 February 2020 (P9_TA(2020)0035).



Welcome

Welcome address

Reinhold Jost,

Minister for Environment and Consumer Protection, Saarland,
patron of the conference on 6 November 2019²

Ladies and gentlemen, dear guests,

As patron of today's expert conference of the State Officers for Animal Welfare, together with the associations and organisations involved, I am delighted to welcome you to "Time to act – Mandatory Identification and Registration (I&R) of Dogs and Cats in Germany and Developments in the European Union".

This topic is very important to me personally. As early as 25 June 2014, the state parliament of the Saarland commissioned the Saarland state government to work at the federal level to make the identification of dogs and cats by means of implanted transponders and registration legally binding on a nationwide basis. At the 8th Conference of the Heads of Office of the 12th Conference of the Ministers of Consumer Protection in April 2016, the topic was introduced by the Saarland. At that time, a majority of the consumer protection ministers voted in favour of the Saarland's proposal. So far, however, it has not been possible to secure a majority for our proposal at the federal level.

Animal welfare has been part of our Basic Law as a state objective since 2002. This state objective also has particular implications for legislation and regulations. Section 2a (1b) of the Animal Welfare Act authorises the Federal Ministry of Food

and Agriculture to issue regulations on the identification of animals – in particular dogs and cats – and on the type and implementation of identification by means of a statutory instrument with the approval of the Bundesrat. To date, however, the Federal Ministry has not made use of this authorisation.

Many animal welfare organisations, as well as the German Federal Veterinary Association, have been campaigning for years to make the identification and registration of dogs and cats by means of the implantation of an electronic transponder legally binding. The introduction of mandatory identification and registration would offer considerable potential for improvement in the protection of domestic and companion animals.

It would take us a big step forward on the path towards achieving the national objective of animal welfare.

We need uniform nationwide regulation.

The comprehensive conservation of the life and welfare of animals is our joint responsibility, and I therefore thank you for your willingness to work towards this goal and wish you further success in this endeavour!

²The welcome address by the patron of the event, Reinhold Jost, Saarland's Minister for the Environment and Consumer Protection, was delivered by Pia Döring, a member of the SPD of the Saarland parliament.



Welcome address
Prof. (retired) Dr Kurt Kotrschal,
University of Vienna³

The electronic identification and registration (I&R) of companion animals is an integral and indispensable part of the international principle of Responsible Ownership – i.e. responsible animal husbandry. The term “Responsible Ownership” was coined by the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) and includes both social and ethical aspects of the handling of animals, with reference to the so-called “Five Freedoms” – i.e. freedom from hunger, thirst and malnutrition, from discomfort, from pain, injury and disease, from fear and suffering, and freedom to engage in normal behaviour.

Only a nationwide mandatory combination of identification and registration will ensure that lost dogs and cats can be returned to their owners. Mandatory EU-wide identification and registration would also have an impact on all kinds of possible illegal activities involving companion animals. It could, for example, help to make the illegal trade in puppies more difficult through effective law enforcement, reduce the harm caused to pet owners and animals, and fill legal loopholes that illegal traders have so far been exploiting profitably and with impunity. Even the management of stray animals – e.g. during neutering campaigns in a community – would become efficient and transparent, and I&R would also help to

bring families and their companion animals together in the event of environmental disasters.

Respectful, knowledgeable and appropriate treatment of animals can only be achieved through a commitment to responsibility and liability, coupled with a correspondingly high level of information from the owners about the animals they look after. An obligation to identify and register is an essential part of this.

Fortunately, we have had a solid legal basis in Austria for quite some time now, and I&R is practised effectively nationwide. When I was asked to speak at this conference, I was therefore very surprised that this is not yet an EU-wide standard for companion animals. In the interest of animal welfare – which a) is a general principle in the Treaty of Lisbon and b) reflects the European Union's conception of itself as a political power on a strictly humanitarian basis – it is time for action at least to harmonise such a legal obligation to identify and register throughout the EU and make it compatible so that the EU-wide traceability of a companion animal can be ensured throughout its life. This event is an important step forward on this path towards achieving a standard that should be taken for granted, and I wish you all every success in achieving your goal.

³Written welcome address.





Keynote Speech

Contemporary responsible ownership in Europe – for companion animals too

Petras Auštrevičius, Member of the European Parliament, Vice President, Intergroup on the Welfare and Conservation of Animals⁴

Despite the fact that animals are referred to as sentient beings, which means they are covered by the principle of Article 13 TFEU⁵, there is little targeted support for companion animals as such. It is estimated that there are over 60 million dogs and 64 million cats in Europe, although the exact figures are unknown. This lack of certainty comes mostly from poorly functioning or incomplete identification and registration systems.

It is also linked to a lack of awareness and knowledge of the needs of cats and dogs. This lack of awareness translates into irresponsible ownership, which begins with consumers meeting their demand for animals through illegal sellers.

Responsible pet ownership is the basis of animal welfare. Responsible ownership should ensure that each animal is free from hunger and thirst, from discomfort, from pain, injury or illness, from fear and anxiety, and can express natural behaviours. This is the minimum level of care that should be respected in every home, shelter and local authority throughout the Union.

But how can this be achieved? What does responsible ownership mean in concrete terms? It should be based on several pillars: compulsory identification and registration of individual animals, appropriate levels of information and awareness among private owners and professionals, preventive veterinary care, and sustainable systematic birth-control programmes tailored to the needs of each region or country.

The lack of proper identification and registration has long been on the agenda of the European Parliament. As Vice President of the Intergroup on the Welfare and Conservation

of Animals, I have been working on the problem of identification and registration of pets for years in the European Parliament. The Animal Welfare Intergroup is the focal point for animal welfare in the European Parliament. It is open to all Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) who are interested in debating and promoting this policy issue. The Intergroup currently numbers 92 MEPs. It is the second-oldest Intergroup and one of the best attended. The Intergroup offers an important opportunity for MEPs from different political groups to meet, discuss and reach cross-party consensus. It is often the first place where issues of concern are raised, ideas are launched and initiatives are started.

Historical successes of the EU with regard to animal welfare policy

- 1991: leg-hold traps prohibited in the EU
- 1997: ban on veal crates
- 1999: ban on the use of battery cages
- 2007: inclusion of animal sentience in the Lisbon Treaty
- 2009: ban on trade of seal products
- 2009: ban on animal testing for cosmetics
- 2015: Animal Health Law⁶

During the last legislative term, the Parliament adopted a resolution on the introduction of compatible systems for the registration of pet animals across Member States. MEPs called on the EU Commission, upon the entry into force of the EU Regulation on Transmissible Animal Diseases (Animal Health Law), to adopt a delegated act on detailed, compatible systems for the means and methods of identification and registration

⁴Intergroup on the Welfare and Conservation of Animals: www.animalwelfareintergroup.eu

⁵Treaty on the functioning of the European Union.

⁶Regulation (EU) 2016/429 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 9 March 2016 on transmissible animal diseases and amending and repealing certain acts in the area of animal health ('Animal Health Law').

of dogs and cats. The Parliament stressed that a compatible system for the identification and registration of pets across the EU would have wider benefits than just tackling illegal trade: it would also help in tracing the source of disease outbreaks and in addressing animal abuse and other animal welfare concerns.

More recently

- **2016–2017:** *EP report on minimum standards for the protection of farmed rabbits*
- **2016–2017:** *EP report on the responsible ownership and care of equidae*
- **2018:** *EP resolution on animal welfare, antimicrobial use and the environmental impact of industrial broiler farming*
- **2019:** *EP report on the protection of animals during transport within and outside the EU*

Earlier this week, I was among the MEPs who raised a question to the Commission on the negative implications of the illegal trade in companion animals. We stressed the negative impact of the trafficking of pets on public health, animal welfare and consumer protection. It has become a major source of income for international organised crime and affects the smooth functioning of the EU's internal market through lost taxes and by creating unfair competition. We questioned the Commission on the planned actions to solve this growing problem.

We are going to focus in this event on the very important requested measure

”of compulsory identification and registration of individual animals, which goes hand in hand with the growing problem of the online pet trade.”

The yearly online trade in puppies is estimated to be worth more than one billion euros, with eight million puppies sold annually via the internet. As demand exceeds what legitimate breeders can provide, the illegal dog trade is a booming industry all over Europe. There is also a growing trend towards the online sale of cats. The number of pets being sold illegally online has grown exponentially over the past decade, fed by consumer demand for certain breeds, an increase in online classified advertisements, and a pet-passport system that currently does not work. This online trade has a huge impact not only on the welfare and health of animals but also on the internal market, through unfair competition and tax evasion, and on consumer rights and public health.

With regard to health and welfare, the breeding of cats and dogs for extreme traits is booming across Europe. Unfortunately, these popular aesthetic changes, subject to fashion and supported by the media, can impact heavily on pet health and welfare, and have a high genetic cost. The breeding of cats and dogs for extreme traits is supported by consumer demand, which is actively met by illegal sellers online.

Moreover, the conditions under which pets sold online are bred, sold and transported often fail to meet minimum health and welfare standards. Puppies are bred at the lowest possible cost, mainly in Lithuania, Slovakia, Poland or Serbia (to name just a few). Transported over long distances, newborn puppies and kittens suffer from heat or cold, thirst and stress, and are at high risk of transmissible diseases. Those that survive frequently have difficulties in socialising, which often leads to their being quickly abandoned by their overwhelmed owners. As they are often sold too young to be effectively vaccinated, they are transported with falsified health and identification documents and represent a real public health threat, especially when coming from non-rabies-free countries.

The pets are sold at prices that legitimate breeders cannot match, leading to unfair competition and distortion of the internal market. Moreover, this illegal trade enables tax evasion on a considerable scale, and these unreported profits are used to fund further criminal activities.

In the EU, the online sale of pets is barely regulated at all. The current EU legal framework regulating the movement of dogs and cats across Europe has proved ineffective in addressing the dramatic increase in the illegal pet trade.

This illegal trade is facilitated by fundamental flaws in the Pet Travel Scheme (PETS), the passport system laying down the requirements applicable to the non-commercial movement of pet animals, and by legal loopholes due to the lack of harmonised identification and registration (I&R) systems.

The free movement of pets for non-commercial purposes in the EU is allowed, provided that certain conditions are met – such as the animal being microchipped and given a rabies vaccination, and having a passport proving it has been vaccinated. With the Pet Travel Scheme, there has been a clear rise in the number of people who are using this non-commercial system for purely commercial trade in pet animals. Existing



problems include pets not being properly vaccinated, a number of different animals travelling under the same microchip number, generic paperwork being produced and passports being signed by a veterinarian without even seeing the pet in question.

Moreover, the identification and registration (I&R) of pets is not harmonised at the EU level. Mandatory I&R is essential when it comes to solving problems related not only to the illegal trade but also to traceability, responsible ownership, combating criminal activities, managing stray populations, avoiding public health risks and tackling zoonotic disease outbreaks when they occur. It is also instrumental in improving the rehoming rates, thereby reducing the economic pressure on municipalities.

At present, a number of Member States have made I&R mandatory for all dogs, while in others this is lacking or is limited to certain groups of dogs (e.g. commercially traded dogs). Mandatory I&R for cats is gaining attention, with more and more countries deciding to implement it – such as France, Belgium, Spain, Finland and the UK – as a means to monitor the movement of animals, track illicit breeders and sellers, and improve rehoming rates.

In 2003, the Trade Control Expert System (TRACES) was introduced primarily as a tool to document the transport of farm animals. Increasingly, however, cats, dogs and ferrets crossing borders for trade purposes are also recorded in TRACES as “other animals”.

However, the current electronic identification system is limited by some relevant shortcomings:

- *There is a lack of harmonisation in the EU concerning microchipping. The Member States have developed different identification systems. Moreover, in many countries there is no regulation for the use of the ISO 11784 code, meaning that codes can be falsified or duplicated.*
- *There are 23 different national databases in the EU, as well as numerous private or regional databases. France is the only Member State with a centralised, monitored system and a single official database.*

The EU Commission currently has the opportunity to tackle the growing illegal trade and to adopt a clear and harmonised identification and registration system. Articles 109 and 118 of the EU Animal Health Law allow the European Commission to lay down rules on minimum mandatory requirements both for the means and methods of identification and registration, and for the data exchange methods between different systems . As a follow-up, five EU Member States (Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Sweden and the Netherlands) issued a joint declaration to the former Juncker Commission on 25 October 2017 at the Working Party of the Chief Veterinary Officers of the Council of the EU. The joint declaration led directly to the formation



From left to right: Petras Auštrevičius (MEP), Dr Hans-Friedrich Willimzik (Animal Welfare Officer of Saarland), Philip McCreight (TASSO e.V.), Diana Plange (former Animal Welfare Officer of the State of Berlin) and Dr Andrew Robinson (FVE)

of the EU Platform on Animal Welfare's Voluntary Initiative Subgroup on Health and Welfare of Pets in Trade. The 13 committed Member States (including Germany) are working together to the same ends on identification and registration.

The new EU Animal Health Law offers fresh opportunities to protect dogs and cats that are traded, and to help address the illegal pet trade. The Commission has the power to adopt a delegated act that lays down rules for the establishment of compatible systems for the means and methods of I&R of dogs and cats – a crucial tool in tackling the illegal trade. The new Animal Health Law also mandates that all companion-animal breeders and sellers ("establishments") must be registered by 2021.

A proper up-to-date identification and registration system would have benefits that go beyond fighting the illegal online trade: it would also have an impact on the veterinary care that pets receive. Owners who are required to identify and register their pet must bring their cat or dog to the veterinarian, and thus it is more likely that the animal would continue to receive medical treatment when needed. In essence, it helps to introduce private owners right from the beginning to the routine of good care for their pet. I&R also means that an animal is assigned to

a private owner, and so a pet that goes missing can be returned to its owner via, for example, the authorities or veterinarians. I am therefore calling on my fellow policymakers and the government to continue working together to actively promote I&R and to ensure the interoperability of regional and national databases, as well as to identify and register an animal within a few weeks of birth and at least before ownership of the animal is transferred for the first time. The introduction of mandatory I&R in Germany would be an important contribution to this: the model of a national digital interface, as developed by the Network I&R, could prepare the ground for EU-wide I&R.

The path to eliminating the illegal trade is not a straightforward one, but the time is right for tangible action. Both the registration of all operators and I&R harmonisation fall within the mandate of the AHL, and the EU institutions could take decisive action in this regard. On behalf of the vast majority of the Members of the European Parliament and particularly on behalf of the other Animal Welfare Intergroup members, I can assure you that we will continue to impress on the Commission the necessity of mandatory I&R for dogs, based on articles 108 and 109 of the Animal Health Law, and a proposal for the technical specifications that will facilitate communication between databases and between Member States.

⁷Regulation (EU) 2016/429 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 9 March 2016 on transmissible animal diseases and amending and repealing certain acts in the area of animal health ('Animal Health Law').

The Network I&R

Against the background of the lack of a nationwide legal obligation to identify and register, the Network Identification and Registration (I&R) was founded in 2016, following on from various specialist events. The members of the network are the Animal Welfare Officers of the federal states, the German Federal Association of Practising Veterinarians (Bundesverband Praktizierender Tierärzte e.V.), an expert in transponder technology, an expert in dog law, as well as the German Legal Society for Animal Welfare Law (Deutsche Juristische Gesellschaft für Tierschutzrecht e.V.), the largest companion animal database in Germany TASSO e.V., and a number of professional animal welfare organisations dealing with companion animal welfare and policy.

The Network I&R is supporting the introduction of nationwide obligatory I&R of dogs and cats in the interests of responsible pet ownership and animal welfare. In addition to this call, the experts of the Network I&R have developed a solution model that would allow an efficient and cost-effective implementation of obligatory I&R at the national level. Furthermore, the model developed could contribute to harmonisation at the national level of the EU Member States, which in turn is a basic requirement for the implementation of EU-wide mandatory I&R.

Up-to-date information can be found at: www.heimtierversorgung.net

The member organisations



The partner organisations⁸



⁸ Member organisations and partner organisations of the Network I&R (as of December 2020).

Partner of the Network I&R: Almo Nature and Fondazione Capellino



Why private interest must give back to the public interest
(personal thoughts)

The increase of wealth concentration (with no redistribution and accumulation of huge fortunes in the hands of a few, without a long-term benefit for anyone) through unreasonable exploitation of the planet to the detriment of all the other forms of life, is causing the disappearance of millions of species. Including, perhaps, the extinction (or at least, the regression) of the human species itself, with scenarios that so far have only been told by the Mad Max movies. I think that the time of telling others what to do has passed: it has now become imperative that we take personal initiative, each of us according to our capability. On January 1, 2018, following a long consideration that started way back in 2013, my brother Lorenzo and I donated (in our eyes, gave back) the asset born from our work, the property of our firm, **Almo Nature**, thus dedicating the profits generated, from that day on, to the protection of biodiversity. Without a revolution of the way we think, we humans will forever remain what we are today: a species that is dangerous to others to itself. We must strive to attain that

‘better’ version of ourselves sought by myths, religions, ideologies, and post-ideologies.

Pier Giovanni Capellino

Fondazione Capellino is a non-profit philanthropic organization that acts to contribute to the protection of biodiversity and its habitats, through an ecology of the mind and culture. Following a unique economic model, called **Economy of Restitution**, the Fondazione uses the profit generated by the firm, **Almo Nature**, to independently finance the projects it implements to achieve its goals. Ultimately, it is cats and dogs, with the help of their human companions, who choose **Almo Nature** food, ensuring that profits do not accumulate in private accounts, but instead go to fund projects of general interest. For the benefit of future generations. For the benefit of all living species.



Pier Giovanni Capellino and his beloved Ehoié.

The projects of Fondazione Capellino



Almo Nature Benefit SpA is a firm that produces food for dogs and cats, the property of which has been donated to the Fondazione by Lorenzo and Pier Giovanni Capellino. Its profits, after expenses, taxes, and investments, are entirely destined for the **Fondazione Capellino** projects. **Almo Nature**, which produces high-quality food for cats and dogs, is investing to become a company with zero impact on biodiversity by 2030. Our living and working alongside cats and dogs is not limited to the production of foods, but continues through **Companion Animal for Life**, a project of **Fondazione Capellino**, which **Almo Nature** supports operationally. By taking part in the Economy of Restitution, **Almo Nature** expresses, deeply and lastingly its identity as a company for benefit, making it unique on the world stage.



Companion Animal for Life is a project of **Fondazione Capellino**, aimed at recognizing a new status for our companion animals through three key steps:

- raising awareness of adoption and actively combatting animal abandonment (AdoptMe activity);
- developing a universal registry to connect each animal to a human being (I&R activity);
- promoting the inclusion of dogs and cats in the family status through a European petition (RespectMe action).

The operational part of the project is delegated to **Almo Nature**.



The consciousness that natural spaces have been completely submitted to humankind, resulting in a dramatic drop of living species and biodiversity, is at the origin of **Impact on Biodiversity**. In order to rebuild this merciless imbalance, we believe it is necessary to create the conditions for a world equally divided into areas dedicated to humans and domestic species; areas in which humans coexist in harmony with wildlife; and, finally, areas in which Nature is sovereign and untouchable. The project is made up of three activities:

- developing a simple, universal metric to measure the impact of human activity on biodiversity;
- creating new economic (for example, the Economy of Restitution) and cultural models that are compatible with biodiversity;
- protecting natural habitats.



The consumption of the soil's natural resources, due to intensive farming and concreting, has reduced environmental diversity; the nutritional value of the fruit that gets to our plates is devalued; the beauty and variety of the landscape is jeopardized. **Regenerating Villa Fortuna** is an experimental agricultural project that spreads over hilly land of 20 hectares in San Salvatore Monferrato (Piedmont, Italy); its visionary goal is to make agro-forestry techniques a cost-effective, scalable, and competitive production model, able to protect the air, soil, and water, as well as the surrounding animal and plant biodiversity. Added to the agricultural activity is the renovation of the historical buildings on the estate, with the aim of creating a model of anthropic landscape that respects biodiversity.

The project relies on the collaboration with the Università degli Studi di Milano and of the Istituto Italiano di Tecnologia (IIT).

Discover more about us at: fondazionecapellino.org



Dr Andrew Robinson,
former Vice President of the Federation
of Veterinarians in Europe (FVE)

Companion animals in the European Union and traceability

The position of the Federation of Veterinarians in Europe: Mandatory identification and registration of dogs and cats

The Federation of Veterinarians in Europe (FVE) is the representative body of the veterinary profession in Europe, with over 300,000 veterinarians from 39 countries as members. Animal welfare is one of the cornerstones of the profession, affecting the decision-making processes of veterinarians in all aspects of their work.

With one of its Sections, the Union of European Veterinary Practitioners (UEVP), FVE is active in an Animal Welfare Working Group looking at all aspects of animal welfare and developing position papers either alone or in conjunction with other organisations.⁹

FVE is represented on the EU Platform on Animal Welfare and is involved with most of the sub-committees, including the Voluntary Initiative Group on the Health and Welfare of Pets (Dogs) in Trade.



This group has a wide remit and focuses on, among other things, many aspects affecting the transportation of dogs, including:

- *Exchange of good practices in the enforcement of identification and registration*
- *Improving communication and cooperation between Member States with regard to pet trade*
- *Greater exchangeability of data from identification and registration systems*
- *Development of guidelines on identification and registration, breeding, online pet trade¹⁰, socialisation and transport of pets*
- *Improving the use of the TRACES system*

All these guidelines being developed require compulsory identification and registration in order to be effective.

Almost all European countries have regulations on identification and registration, but they differ in terms of mandatory measures. The FVE's position is that the identification as well as the registration of all dogs is essential and should be compulsory in order to ensure traceability.

Responsible breeding and trade of dogs and cats are impossible without proper identification and registration. Without

⁹ Examples of papers:

1) FVE/FECAVA position paper 'Every dog deserves a caring owner': www.fve.org/cms/wp-content/uploads/004-Stray-dogs-position-paper-adopted.pdf;

2) FVE/FECAVA Questions and Answers – new rules for pet travel and pet passports for EU citizens travelling inside or outside the EU:

www.fve.org/cms/wp-content/uploads/English_pet_travel.pdf

¹⁰ Regarding the online pet trade, a guideline for potential buyers of dogs has been developed and can be found via the following link:

www.fve.org/what-to-check-before-buying-online-a-puppy-dog

I&R, veterinarians cannot validate vaccinations, control and eradicate zoonoses, calculate antimicrobial usage per species or control animal welfare. A passport is the ideal document for keeping track of health information; however, the risk of fraud in connection with the current paper pet passports, which are filled out by hand, can only be significantly reduced by additional central registration.

Having a European system in place organised by the Commission or by Europol would allow the registration and sharing of national data. Moving to a fully electronic passport system

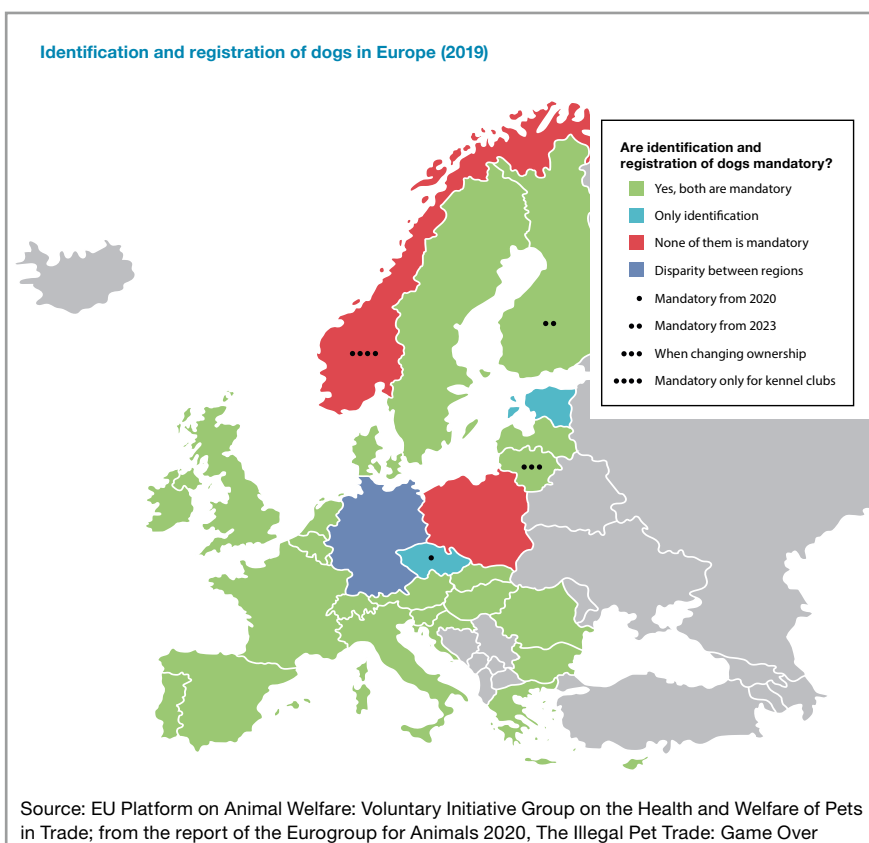
would not only allow identification but also enable data to be stored on vaccinations, clinical conditions, breeding details, owner's details, DNA, etc.

At the national level, we would welcome the establishment of either a central database, as in France, or a network of databases, as recommended by the Network I&R.

Example: United Kingdom

In the UK, identification and registration of dogs became law in February 2014, and the deadline for compliance was April 2016. Since April 2016, all dogs over 8 weeks of age have had to be identified and registered.

The veterinary profession worked successfully with NGOs and instigated their own initiatives to ensure that their clients fulfilled their obligations to the new law. While the cost for registering a change of owner is minimal (approximately £20), the fine for non-compliance is more than 20 times as high.





Sarah Ross,
Companion Animals Lead Expert, **FOUR PAWS International**

Demand determines supply – Puppy trade in Germany

Dogs are part of our families; they are companions and real friends. They keep us fit and healthy and help us to de-stress. Without question, dogs enrich our lives. But unfortunately, some people rashly choose to adopt a four-legged friend on impulse. They are easily influenced in their choice of breed by movies, commercials and celebrities.

There is a strong demand for pedigree puppies in Europe. Based on the statistics on dog ownership in Europe, there is an annual demand for about eight million dogs. In Germany alone, around one million dogs are sold annually. The VDH (German Kennel Club), the umbrella organisation for dog breeding in Germany, publishes puppy statistics every year, showing how many dogs are bred under the umbrella organisation. On average, the VDH breeds around 75,000 puppies annually. This means that, in effect, more than 13 times as many dogs are sold as are born to reputable breeders. But where do the other approximately 900,000 puppies come from? According to an EU study, 50,000 puppies are traded between European countries every month.

FOUR PAWS has been committed to fighting the illegal puppy trade for many years. This includes not only educating the public through effective campaign work but also cooperating with authorities, police, veterinarians, the media and buyers who are affected. The animal welfare organisation also campaigns for stricter laws to end the criminal trade in animals. In the past, FOUR PAWS has uncovered many of the extensive puppy-trade networks of producers, sellers and the veterinarians involved. We know from intensive research that a large proportion of the dogs come from Eastern European countries, where the animals are literally produced under terrible

conditions before they are offered for sale in Germany via online platforms. In puppy factories, the mothers serve solely as birthing machines: when they are no longer able to bear puppies, they are "disposed of". The puppies themselves are separated from their mothers far too early and then taken to different countries and sold anonymously via online classified ad platforms.

Buying dogs over the internet is popular with people looking for a pet. Generally speaking, internet trading saves time, and a large number of "products" can be compared and the best price found. Sadly, this also applies to buying animals. Animals are offered on small ad platforms, and the "best" dog can be chosen from a wide selection. Unfortunately, this wide choice quickly has negative consequences. According to a survey by the UK Kennel Club, people spend very little time researching where their new pet comes from. The search usually takes only 20 minutes – not much time considering that a new dog will spend the next 15 years or so with the family.

Criminal traders take advantage of this preference for convenience shopping and anonymously offer sick and traumatised animals on online platforms. They have little reason to fear prosecution. After the handover – for which dogs are often stimulated with medication – the traders usually go underground.

In 2017, FOUR PAWS investigated the animal market on online platforms. The analysis shows that around 1,350,000 dogs are offered on the German classified ads platform eBay Kleinanzeigen every year, with an estimated sales value of over one billion euros.

In the first half of 2020, FOUR PAWS observed the supply dynamics for dogs on online platforms under the influence of the coronavirus pandemic and saw a dramatic drop in ads following the border closures in April. After borders were re-opened across Europe in June, the trade in puppies increased again. In the case of individual fashionable breeds, such as pugs, there was a 57 per cent increase in small ads just on eBay in June. Looking at advertisements for puppies in general, there was an increase of 14.73 per cent only a few weeks after the opening of the borders.¹¹

Online platforms such as eBay Kleinanzeigen provide the perfect selling conditions for unscrupulous traders. Criminal sellers can act anonymously and hide behind different user accounts. It is easy for such traders to go underground at any time. In addition, controls on the platforms are insufficient. As certain breeds are in high demand but are only available in limited numbers through reputable breeders and animal shelters, many prospective buyers search directly online. Reputable breeders cannot meet the demand for the fashionable dog breeds, because responsible breeding requires time and energy. Questionable traders and "breeders" that are motivated solely by profit exploit this bottleneck. They produce puppies without regard for their welfare. As a result, the dogs are traumatised and often sick. Dogs produced in Eastern European puppy factories also carry a risk of disease. Rabies and more than 30 other diseases can be transmitted from animals to humans. The risk of infection and the spread of disease could be prevented through vaccinations, anti-parasite treatments and good hygiene.

In order to protect both dogs and new owners, a rigorous and comprehensive approach is needed. Mandatory identification and registration (I&R) of all dogs (and also cats) is a crucial element underpinning a Europe-wide harmonised system and

part of the FOUR PAWS model solution to combat the illegal puppy trade. This model solution would deny criminal traders anonymous access to online platforms, thus preventing cruelty to many animals. This is because only identified persons would be able to offer their already chipped and registered dogs for sale on online portals.

With the Network I&R, FOUR PAWS advocates on a political level for identification and registration to be made a legal obligation in Germany and the EU, and furthermore calls for the regulation of the online trade in animals.



¹¹ Update on the presentation given at the conference in November 2019, based on the report: *Illegaler Welpenhandel auf Online-Plattformen in Zeiten von Corona. Eine VIER PFOTEN-Vergleichsanalyse* (as of 17 August 2020).



Dr Sven Hüther,
international expert on animal identification,
ISO/TC23/SC19 representative for Germany

Transponder technology and companion animal databases

Critical facts about the transponder market, ISO¹² standards and ICAR¹³ and approaches needed for the future

Nowadays, more and more data is being collected about companion animals, but its reliability is linked to the unique identification of an animal. In its legal position (Regulation (EU) No 576/2013¹⁴), the EU only refers to the EU pet passport as the legal basis for the non-commercial movement of pets from one Member State to another, but the passport itself is linked to electronic identification, i.e. the transponder with its microchip number. This raises the question of the value of the data collected if the element linking the data to the animal – i.e. the transponder or the transponder number – is unreliable, since in Germany, for example, there is no legal framework that regulates this identification and its use in a binding way.

At first sight, the user may get the impression that the 15-digit number that appears on the display after reading the transponder implanted in the animal is correct and accurate. This is indeed the case if the handling of the coding method for

these 15 digits is regulated by law and if traceability is guaranteed for each number. However, this is not the case in Germany. Furthermore, it is unclear who should bear the necessary ministerial responsibility in the sphere of pet identification. For farm animals, responsibility lies with the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture (BMEL); for such animals, identification is also clear and regulated by law. However, since 1996

A transponder consists of three components:

- microchip
- antenna
- casing material



Different sizes of transponders.

¹²International Organization for Standardization

¹³International Committee on Animal Recording

¹⁴Regulation (EU) No 576/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 June 2013 on the non-commercial movement of pet animals and repealing Regulation (EC) No 998/2003.

the BMEL has refused to take responsibility for companion animals. In view of the fact that there are more than 5 million animal owners in Germany, clear regulation of the responsibilities would be necessary here. This figure is low if we base our estimate on the more than 10 million animals (as of August 2020) registered with TASSO e.V. alone.

Technically, identification for coding has been regulated and organised on an internationally binding basis with the ISO 11784 standard since 1996, but for use at the national level, a legal basis for numbering at the national level is also required for all animal species, especially with regard to the use of Germany's country code 276 for numbering. However, even after four positive revisions of this standard, this is still not the case today.

With regard to the relevant ISO standards in connection with Regulation (EU) No 576/2013, only ISO 11784 and ISO 11785 are referenced at the EU level. At the national level, however, many other ISO standards must be taken into account, e.g. regarding communication with the reader and the implant site of the transponder. For example, standardisation of the implant site in dogs and cats is important for all subsequent controls and applications, to ensure quick and easy access and to prevent possible migration of the transponder.

The lack of harmonised rules and coordination leads to many problems involving incorrect transponder numbers, which ultimately have a particular impact on the animal or owner concerned.^{15,16}

Today many problems can be observed, e.g. with regard to the use of the country code for Germany. As of October 2019, 9.1 million animals are registered in the database of TASSO e.V., 7.5 million of them with ISO 11784 coded transponders. Of these, almost 6 million animals are registered using the country code for Germany (276). In comparison to October 2016, the number of registrations has increased by about 800,000 and is constantly rising, even without a legal basis and regulation of the use of the country code. An analysis of the codes of the animals registered with TASSO e.V. shows that 144 different

manufacturers have produced 7.5 million transponders with the country code 276 during this period, without the use of the country code being permitted or provided for in any regulation. Significant errors in the coding have been found, which could have been avoided by complying with the legal requirements: animal numbers for companion animals are partially coded as for cattle, sheep, goats or horses according to the Viehverkehrsverordnung VVVO (Livestock Movement Order), and even transponders with codes used purely for testing purposes, which are not allowed to be used commercially, are registered.

Against this background, there remains an urgent need for proper regulation of the use of the country code for Germany according to ISO 3166, especially in order to be able to take binding action in the event of an epidemic and to finally put a stop to the illegal trade in puppies. In short, with the Network I&R we are rightly demanding not only nationwide uniform identification and registration but also, by implication, modern and secure implementation of the identification.

Examples of incorrect transponder numbers:

- *Wrong animal bit (0 = dustbins in Germany)*
- *Missing product codes*
- *Misuse of manufacturer codes*
- *Double codes*
- *Incorrect use of the country code*
- *Unauthorised use of the country code*
- *Meaningless codes (no country code according to ISO 3166)*
- *Incorrect allocations in split manufacturer codes 900 (no distinction between manufacturers)*

Problems with incorrect transponder numbers always result in problems for the animals and their owners.

¹⁵Further details can be found in the presentation by Dr med. Sven Hüther at www.heimtierversorgung.net/netzwerk-k-r/fachkonferenz/materialien, including an analysis of the problematic numbers that, after almost 25 years of application, are stored just in TASSO e.V., the largest private European database for companion animals.

¹⁶In the meantime, an option has been developed that addresses how a reboot could be made possible once identification is legally regulated. In addition, a technical proposal for the use of the country code 276 for Germany, including companion animals, has been developed with reference to the new technical standard ISO 14223, in which additional information can be stored in the transponder. A technical proposal was also made for the integration of proper regulation for companion animals into the existing ISO 11784 structure for farm animals. See the presentation for more details on the proposed reboot and technical solution.



Tsang Tsey Chow,
DogID, Policy Advisor at the Animal Welfare Unit
of the Flemish Government

Example of a traceability system:

Identification and registration of dogs in Belgium

Since September 1998, the identification and registration (I&R) of dogs in Belgium has been mandatory. This legislation was part of a series of measures that were taken to reduce the number of dogs in shelters. Other legislative measures were a mandatory licence for breeders when breeding at least three litters a year and a ban on the sale of dogs in pet shops and markets.

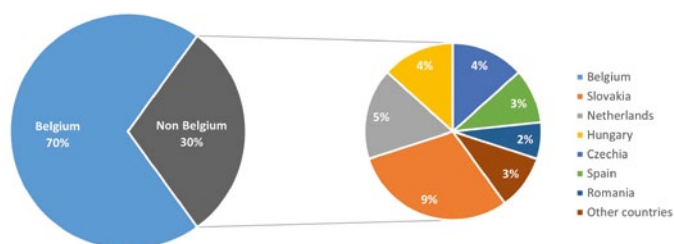
Every dog must be identified and registered before the age of eight weeks. Identification and registration of the dog can only be done by a veterinarian. Identification means the introduction of an ISO-certified microchip. For the registration, the vet fills in a document either online or on paper, which is sent within eight days to the central Belgian database. Over the years, there has been a shift towards online registration, so paper registration will be phased out in the next few years. As proof of registration, the central database sends the owner a unique and protected sticker containing information about the dog and its owner. The sticker must be stuck in the European pet passport, which is mandatory for all dogs in Belgium.

No dog can be sold, adopted or given away (even for free) without identification and registration and an EU pet passport.

Each year, about 160,000 new dogs are registered. All data are registered in one central Belgian database, which is managed by a company that is appointed following a tendering process. From 2021 the National Registration Number of the

person responsible for the dog will be linked to the identification number of the dog. In this way, it will also be easy for owners to correct and update address details, telephone numbers and email addresses themselves. Indeed, up to 20 % of all dog registrations are not up to date, mainly due to changes of address or owner without the database being informed.

The main purpose of the database is to reunite owners and lost dogs, but it also provides an insight into the dog trade in Belgium. About 50 % of registrations in Flanders each year are for dogs from breeders with a licence. While 70 % of the dogs registered in Flanders (in 2019) are originally from Belgium, about 30 % come from other countries, mainly Slovakia, the Netherlands, Czechia and Hungary.



Countries of origin of dogs registered in Flanders.

In order to achieve EU-wide traceability, it is essential that the Member States strive for fundamental harmonisation in this area. A prerequisite for this would also be legally binding I&R in Germany.



The practical relevance of identification and registration

” A nationally legally binding I&R would take into account the dual guarantor status of pet owners, both towards the animal in terms of its welfare and towards the public in the event of damage caused by the animal. I&R is therefore an important legal instrument to establish responsible animal ownership.
(Dr Barbara Felde, DJGT e.V.)

” It is important to us in our work – i. e. when pets are found dead – to return them to their owner. This is why it is so essential that pets are identified and registered. So that no animal is left by the wayside.
(Nancy Solitair, Tierhilfe Team & Totfundhund)

” In our association, we very much welcome obligatory identification and registration, as many of the dogs that are found dead are not chipped, which means searching for the owner is very time-consuming and unfortunately often unsuccessful. Some of the chipped animals are not registered, which means that we have to carry out a very complex chip search. Sadly, this rarely leads us to the owners, in part due to the General Data Protection Regulation. In the case of chipped and registered dogs, we often find that the owner data in the databases are out of date. With obligatory identification and registration, owners would probably be more likely to remember to inform their pet database when moving house or getting a new telephone number.
(Ina-Doreen Hofmeister, Tote Hunde e.V.)

” Veterinarians can register any chipped animal easily and inexpensively from their practice management programs. Ask us about it!
(Dr Petra Sindern)



Dr Marco König,
Animal Welfare Officer of Saxony-Anhalt

Deficiencies in Germany

16 federal states, 16 different I&R regulations – an overview

In Germany there is currently no nationwide uniform obligation to identify and register dogs and cats. Although some federal states have regulations for mandatory I&R, it is not possible to record and trace dogs and cats nationwide. To the extent that regulations concerning I&R have been or are being enacted in Germany, they differ for dogs and cats and with regard to the legal basis.

Cats

For cats, Section 13b of the Animal Welfare Act (TSchG) contains a basis for authorisation that allows the Länder to adopt a regulation for the purpose of cat protection under certain conditions, which may also include the I&R of the animal up to and including neutering – whereby the proportionality of the measure must always be taken into account. The governments of the Länder are also authorised under Paragraph 13b, sentence 5 of the TSchG to transfer their powers to other authorities by means of a statutory instrument.

The current cat protection regulations were not issued by the



federal states, but by authorities at the local level. Due to the lack of proportionality of a nationwide measure, existing regulations have so far also been issued at the level of cities and municipalities on the grounds of public safety, which address the problem of stray cat colonies by means of neutering statutes on a regulatory basis.

If the regulations are based on the Animal Welfare Act, in most cases they also include a requirement to register. By contrast, regulatory ordinances only rarely include an obligation to register and are mostly limited to neutering and identification.

Dogs

Each federal state has its own regulations concerning the obligation to identify and register dogs. However, it is not the Animal Welfare Act that provides a legal basis for this; rather, the obligation to identify dogs is derived from public safety law. Some federal states differentiate between so-called dangerous or listed dogs and less dangerous dogs. Dangerous dogs are those on the so-called breed lists. In this context, a breed list is a list of dog breeds that are considered dangerous due to their breed or that are suspected to be dangerous. Different regulations apply in each federal state. Dangerous dogs, however, also include those that have been assessed as dangerous due to their behaviour. Either they have proved to be biters, have jumped on people or other animals, have been bred or trained to be aggressive, or have previously chased or killed livestock or wild animals.

Legal basis of I&R for dogs

While regulations on the legal basis of public safety and public order can be issued by the federal states, regulations based on the Animal Welfare Act can currently only be issued by the

federal government. Through Section 2a (I) No. 1b of the Animal Welfare Act, the federal government has reserved the legislative competence for I&R of companion animals within the framework of competing legislation. While the current federal government does not make use of this possibility to provide for nationwide I&R by issuing a statutory instrument, the issuing of a repatriation regulation for dogs by the federal states for reasons of animal protection is currently not permitted.



Regulations of the individual federal states

In **Baden-Württemberg**, all dangerous dogs – i. e. certain breeds that are on breed lists or that have proved to be dangerous due to their behaviour – must be marked unalterably and (if possible) legibly without using technical means. The registration of dogs is not mandatory.

In **Bavaria**, dogs are considered dangerous if they belong to certain breeds or have proved to be dangerous due to their behaviour. Permission to keep these dangerous dogs is coupled with an obligation to identify them in an appropriate and unambiguous manner.

In **Berlin**, all dogs older than three months must be identified with an electronically readable transponder and registered centrally. A dog database is currently being set up and will be used from 1 January 2022 for the compulsory registration of all dogs kept in Berlin.

In **Brandenburg**, all dogs that have been shown to be dangerous by their behaviour, belong to particular breeds, or have a height at withers of at least 40 cm or a body weight of at least 20 kg must be permanently marked with a microchip transponder. Proof of identification must be submitted to the local regulatory authority.

In **Bremen**, all dogs that belong to certain breeds of dangerous dogs or have proved to be dangerous due to their behaviour must be permanently and uniquely marked with a microchip.

In **Hamburg**, all dogs older than three months must be marked in a way that is electronically readable and registered with the relevant competent authority.

In **Hesse**, all dogs that are considered to be dangerous – i. e. those that belong to certain breeds or that are suspected of being dangerous due to their previous behaviour, must be permanently marked with an electronically readable chip. Proof of identification must be submitted to the local regulatory authority.

In **Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania**, dogs that are considered dangerous due to their behaviour and those that belong to certain breeds must be permanently marked with an unalterable means of identification – either a tattoo or a microchip. Proof of this must be submitted to the competent authority.

In **Lower Saxony**, all dogs older than six months must be marked with an electronic tag and registered in a central database.

In **North Rhine-Westphalia** it is stipulated that on the one hand dangerous dogs and on the other hand large dogs (with a height at withers of at least 40 cm or body weight of at least 20 kg) must be marked in a tamper-proof manner. In North Rhine-Westphalia, dogs are considered dangerous if they belong to certain breeds or corresponding cross-breeds or can be classified as dangerous based on their behaviour. There is also an obligation to register in the central dog database.

In **Rhineland-Palatinate**, dogs are considered dangerous according to the state dog law if they have proved to be dangerous due to their behaviour. In addition, certain breeds as well as dogs that are descended from one of those breeds or types are assumed to be dangerous. These dogs must be permanently marked with a transponder. Furthermore, registration with a database (e.g. TASSO e.V., FINDEFIX or ifta) is mandatory.

In **Saarland**, dangerous dogs must be permanently marked with an electronically readable chip. Proof of identification must be submitted to the competent authority. Dangerous dogs are those that have proved to be dangerous due to their behaviour or belong to certain breeds.

Saxony is currently the only state in Germany that does not have any regulations on the identification and registration of dogs.

In **Saxony-Anhalt** there is a general obligation to identify and register all dogs older than six months. Registration is carried out centrally for all dogs born after 1 March 2009 in the central dog database of the State Administration Office.

In **Schleswig-Holstein**, all dogs older than three months must be marked with a transponder. There is no obligation to register.

In **Thuringia**, all dogs must be permanently marked with an electronically readable transponder and registered with the competent authority, regardless of their size or dangerousness. A Thuringia dog database is currently being set up. By the end of 2020, the competent authorities must join this database.

There is currently no nationwide mandatory I&R for cats. For the mandatory identification of dogs, different state regulations apply. Only five (six) federal states have regulations for mandatory central registration of dogs. In five other federal states, decentralised registration takes place. Five Länder have no regulations for mandatory registration.

In light of this very heterogeneous regulatory structure, uniform regulation on mandatory I&R of dogs and cats is necessary.



Dr Petra Sindern,
Vice President,
German Veterinary Practitioners Association (bpt e.V.)

Health aspects of as yet non-mandatory identification and registration

So-called “**zoonoses**” are a problem that is greatly underestimated, since every animal can be contagious not only to conspecifics and other animals but also to humans. In order to assess the individual risk of infection, the animal must be clearly assigned to an animal owner and its environment. This only works if the dog or cat has a transponder that is registered to the owner.

What diseases are we talking about?

Tuberculosis, a lung disease that is often fatal, is not visible in animals or humans in its early stages. Increasingly, it is caused by pathogens that are already resistant to all available drugs. Paradoxically, as a result of comprehensive traceability, short-lived cattle can immediately be identified worldwide as the cause of the disease in humans, while dogs and cats, which live much closer to humans and for much longer periods, are not identifiable if they are not registered! In the UK, this almost proved fatal for two cat owners in 2014, when they became infected by their cats.

Dogs that drink from puddles can transmit dangerous **leptospirosis** bacteria. These cause severe kidney failure in humans, non-specific gastrointestinal symptoms and, above all, liver damage and jaundice. Worldwide, 60,000 people die from this disease every year, and 1 million people contract it. In the event of illness, it is important to know where the possibly infectious puppy or adult dog grew up and with whom it had contact. We can only know this with I&R!

Giardia and other internal parasites are particularly common in imported dogs and cats. They also cause severe gastrointestinal diseases in humans or even tumours in the brain and eye muscles. Again, only I&R can ascertain the origin of carriers.

This also applies to **rabies**. If there is no verifiable vaccination protection that can be attributed to the animal, the pathogen can only be detected in the suspected carrier after its death. In the case of suspected rabies, unmarked dogs or cats may face euthanasia.

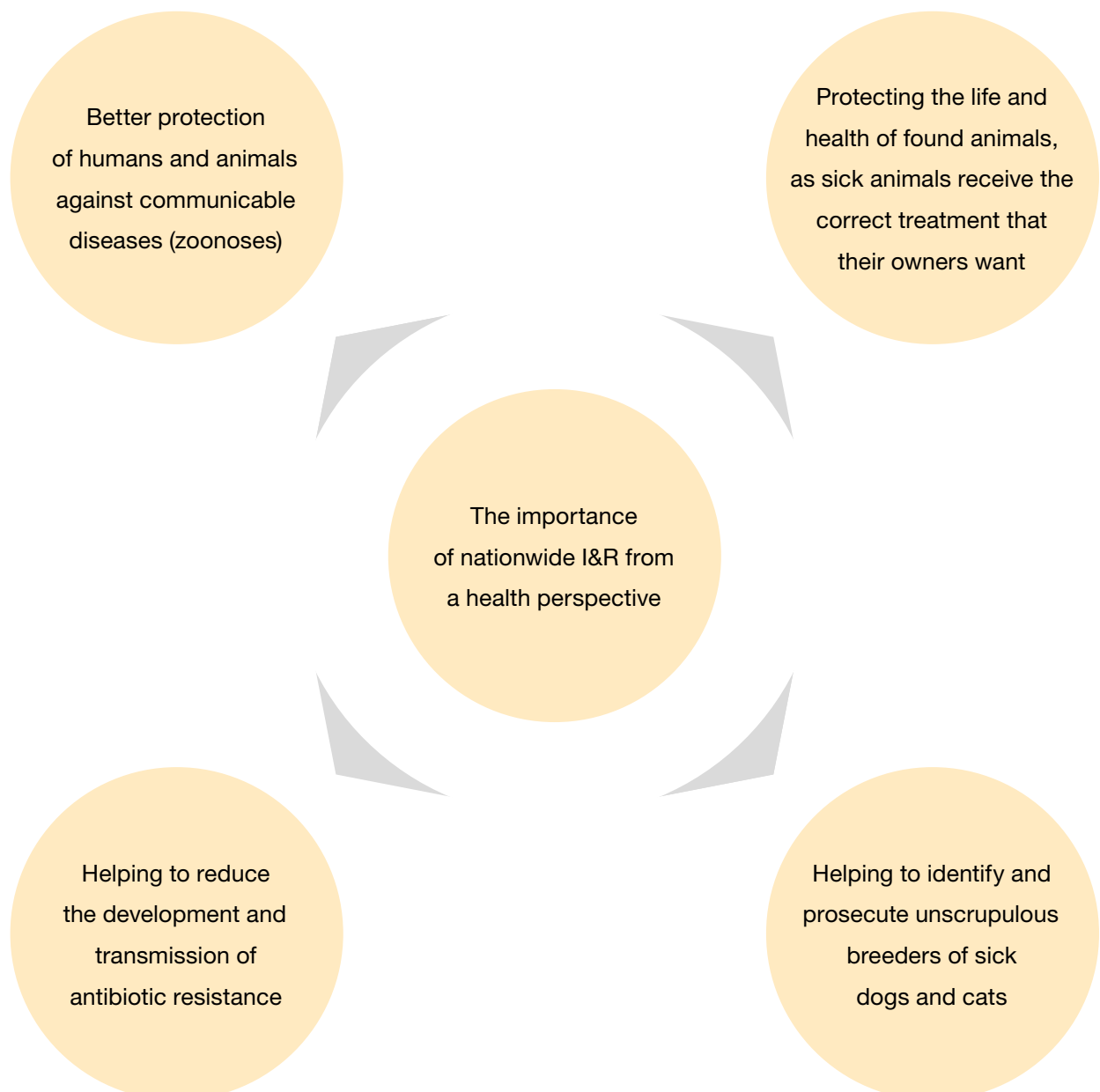
However, I&R in the veterinary practice also creates **therapeutic safety**. This is the only way to identify with certainty patients that might have particular allergies or metabolic disorders that prohibit the use of certain therapies. For example, perhaps black cat X can tolerate penicillin, but black cat Y, which belongs to the same owner, cannot. Only by reading a chip that is unique to each animal can we ensure that all patients receive the right treatment.

I&R in veterinary medicine is always crucial when it comes to the medical care of found animals that are **seriously injured or ill**. If the patient is chipped and registered, an animal shelter can assume that it has a caring owner who will pay for more complex treatment. Not every animal welfare organisation has thousands of euros to spare for uncertain outcomes, so it is more likely that a decision will be made to euthanise an unregistered animal that has been badly injured.

Many supposedly "cute" torture breeds of dogs and cats come from unregistered, illegal breeding farms whose owners unscrupulously market their severely suffering animals via dubious trade routes. Unsuspecting buyers end up suffering emotional stress and are often confronted with very high bills for operations and/or medical care. If identification and first-owner registration are lacking, no official ban on breeding can be imposed or prosecution brought, because the puppy producer cannot be identified!

Since 2018, bacteriological testing with an antibiogram has been mandatory in Germany and some other countries when

critical antibiotics are used in dogs and cats. Only chipping and registering can guarantee clear and forgery-proof identification of the animal being treated (or to be treated) and identification of the laboratory samples. For medical reasons, however, the transponder should be implanted when an animal is healthy, not when it is acutely ill or has a bacterial infection! The lack of obligatory I&R results in incalculable additional health risks for diseased, previously unmarked animals. Under no circumstances should we have to wait until 2030, when the use of antibiotics will be covered by law throughout the EU and I&R will be mandatory anyway, including for all companion animals.





Dipl. biol. Torsten Schmidt,
Alliance Against Misuse
of Animals (bmt e.V.);
Dr Jörg Styrie,
CEO, Federal Association
for Animal Welfare (BVT e.V.)

The animal welfare dimension: legal and financial problems from the point of view of animal welfare

Animal welfare has a high social status in Germany. This is also reflected in various animal welfare regulations. For example, the central provision of the Animal Welfare Act obliges people to protect the life and well-being of animals as fellow creatures on the basis of their responsibility for them. “No one may inflict pain, suffering or harm on an animal without reasonable cause”. According to the German Civil Code, since 1990 animals have not been regarded as “things”. And since August 2002, animal protection has even been enshrined as a state goal in Germany in Article 20a of the Basic Law. In addition, the EU obliges the Community and the Member States to take “full account” of the requirements of the welfare of animals as sentient beings when defining and implementing Community policies in the areas of agriculture, transport, the internal market and research (cf. Treaty of Lisbon, 2009, (TFEU¹⁷), Art. 13). Nevertheless, there are clearly serious shortcomings in many areas of animal welfare. This also applies to the major area of companion animals, in particular dogs and cats.

These problems begin with the breeding of dogs, for example when parent animals are abused as “birthing machines”, animals are neglected and kept apart without adequate social contact, and puppies are separated from their mothers too early or are not given adequate medical care. The result can be serious social, physical and psychological neglect as well as behavioural disorders.

Companion animals are now increasingly traded over the internet. The available online platforms often lack transparency and do not provide the necessary insight into breeding and keeping conditions, which encourages shopping for supposed “bargains” from dubious traders. If, in addition, the future owner lacks knowledge of how to handle the animal or there are doubts

about its reliability, animal welfare problems can multiply. The fact that animals are still being abandoned and that around 300,000 dogs and cats run away every year is evidence of the urgent need for action. Against this background, the Network I&R is calling for mandatory EU-wide identification and registration of dogs and cats as a core demand. The advantages are obvious:

- *Runaway animals can be quickly returned to their owners. This shortens the time that lost animals spend in shelters, which also relieves the financial burden on animal shelters and local authorities*
- *Animals are less likely to be abandoned because their owners know they could be identified and could suffer legal consequences*
- *Better traceability of keeping and breeding conditions*
- *More accurate registration of dogs and cats by the regulatory authorities*



¹⁷Treaty on the functioning of the European Union.



Prof. Dr Peter Friedrich,
President of the German Kennel Club (VDH e.V.)

Identification and registration and the effects of breeding on dog health

Of all the conceivable objectives of breeding, the welfare of the animals reared is of course the most important and is a prerequisite for a breeder's activities to be considered successful. This applies not only to the individual animal but to the entire population of an existing breed, within which there should be no deviation from the norm in the occurrence of many diseases and related health problems. Health is a part of the respective breed type, which is recorded in the breed standards in descriptive form. The member clubs of the VDH decide on a common framework of regulations; however, breeding sovereignty (i.e. the power to make decisions regarding the selection criteria used) lies with the respective clubs responsible for the care of the breed in question. For each breed, special attention must be paid to different areas of anatomy, physiology and behavioural characteristics. At the same time, however, core health-related problems that range across all breeds cannot be overlooked and undoubtedly need to be addressed. Two examples, both associated with incorrect and exaggerated interpretations of agreed breed characteristics, should be briefly mentioned here.

In the case of the brachycephalic (i.e. short-headed) breeds, all of which have a very short muzzle with a small volume in relation to the skull, so-called "Brachycephalic Obstructive Airway Syndrome" (BOAS) – characterised by obstruction of the air flow in the upper airways – is much discussed by experts. According to the current state of information, the discussion is justified and inaction on this issue is irresponsible. So how can BOAS be counteracted? Logically, there are only

two possible outcomes: either the undesirable phenomenon can be influenced positively in the course of a number of generations by allowing suitable animals to be bred and by simultaneously excluding at-risk candidates from breeding, or the existence of the dog breed in question is at stake. In our opinion, a very promising approach is to breed only using those brachycephalic dogs that have passed a scientifically based fitness test and whose anatomical characteristics (width of the nostrils, etc.) have also been expertly assessed. Such measures are target-oriented and can only be carried out according to professional standards in organised dog breeding, because only within their ranks can the necessary information be obtained about the distribution of problem traits across the entirety of a closed breeding population. All this is complex and expensive, but the effort and expense involved are not only justified but also indispensable. Breeders who are not organised in an appropriate way, and especially mass breeders and illegal importers, see things differently: they shy away from such a commitment and do not spare a thought for the fate of their living sources of income. One of the reasons why such breeders have by far the largest share of the market in brachycephalic dogs is that they invest little in breeding, are content with puppies that have poor health prospects and offer them at low prices. The fact that they do not comply with animal welfare legislation is of little concern to them, as controls and sanctions that would strongly discourage them from doing so are rare. The lack of a universal obligation to identify and register dogs plays into the hands of these irresponsible mass breeders, contributes to animal suffering, distorts competition and

weakens consumer protection. This must be changed. With the Network I&R, we are campaigning for a corresponding legal obligation.

Government intervention in dog breeding makes sense if it improves the situation for the dogs. It would be right and proper for breed-specific, health-promoting selection criteria to be a requirement for everyone. A misguided approach would be to impose a ban on dog shows and at the same time to allow the use of at-risk dogs in advertising and self-promotion in social media. The better-bred dogs of the non-profit organisations would thus be held back, because exhibiting at shows is a popular hobby there. At the same time, unscrupulous mass breeding and illegal importation would be encouraged. I cannot imagine that any political party would want such an outcome. The banning of breeds is also unjustifiable. Modern, scientifically supported breeding programmes promise the desired progress. Only if they failed or were not implemented would we have to rethink.

The second at-risk group to be mentioned here by way of example is dogs that show signs of a tendency towards corpulence with unsatisfactory movement patterns and an excess

of skin folds. Here, too, countermeasures are urgently required. A key role is played here by the breeding judges, whose judgements have a major influence on breeders. In cooperation with the breeding judges, tools such as breed-specific assessment notes are being further optimised.

All the breeding measures explained above logically presuppose secure, individual identifiability using microchips as well as a requirement to register. This is already practised in the VDH's area of application. A nationwide approach of this kind also outside organised dog breeding would be beneficial to animal welfare.

Organised dog breeding serves the breed type of each population. The only thing that is even more important is that our four-legged friends' state of health allows them to enjoy life every day. Every organised dog breeder is called upon to keep this statement in mind and to bring such an idea back into the association to which he/she belongs. Every political measure that influences breeding along these lines is to be commended. Every political measure that promotes mass breeding and illegal imports is thoroughly wrong.





Philip McCreight,
CEO of TASSO e.V.
and co-founder of the Network I&R

Solutions for Germany and Europe

Strong together: Database network with query service – an integrated solution for Germany with potential to be a model for the EU

Germany is among those at the bottom of the league table in the area of companion animal welfare in the EU and currently does not have nationwide obligatory identification and registration. With 16 different regulations concerning the identification and registration of dogs and cats, it has a heterogeneous system of different private and public pet databases.

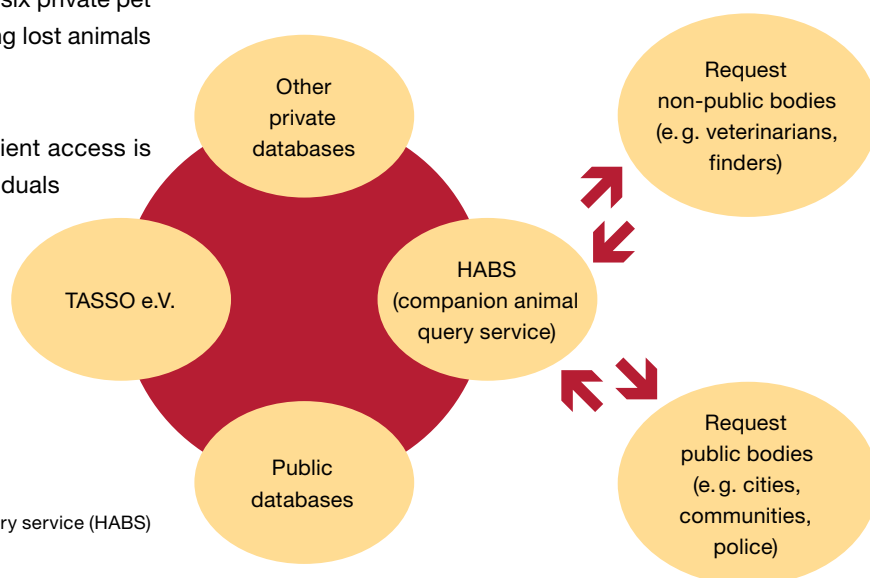
In five of the federal states, there is currently a regulation for a central database owned by the federal state¹⁸ with the function of enabling the authorities of that federal state to carry out searches in the area of public safety and public order. One further federal state is in the process of setting up such a database¹⁹. At the same time, there are at least six private pet databases²⁰, the main focus of which is returning lost animals to their owners.

Under these circumstances, uniform and efficient access is not possible either for authorities, private individuals or private institutions. If the owner of a lost pet needs to be identified and no national database exists, the finder (e.g. shelter,

veterinarian, police) must submit an enquiry to all the existing pet databases. Even if there is a national database, it is usually only used for security purposes: the task of returning pets to their owners based on the idea of animal welfare is reserved for privately managed pet databases.

The solution model – database network with query service

Against this background, the Network I&R has developed a decentralised solution, which provides for a networking of the established private and public databases and includes a central interface – the so-called companion animal query service (HABS) – for returning pets to owners and performing the public tasks of a database.



Database network and companion animal query service (HABS)

¹⁸Hamburg, Lower Saxony, North Rhine-Westphalia, Saxony-Anhalt, Thuringia (as of December 2020).

¹⁹Berlin

²⁰TASSO e.V., FINDEFIX – Das Haustierregister des Deutschen Tierschutzbundes, ifta, registrier mich!! Für Jagd in Deutschland e.V., TierPerso/PetID GmbH, Tierchip Dasmann & myPetpool

The solution, in the form of an interconnected system of existing pet databases with its own central query point, would save the high costs involved in the establishment and operation of a new general database. Moreover, the data of more than ten million already registered companion animals would not be lost. An additional centralised data retrieval facility would be created, but the autonomy of the individual databases would remain.

The basic prerequisite for the effective implementation of the solution model of a databases association with HABS for I&R would be the adoption of a regulation by the federal government on the obligation to identify and register dogs and cats. All dogs and cats aged three months must be registered in this way using a tamper-proof transponder exclusively by a veterinarian and together with the EU pet passport in one of the databases that are part of the network.

The main advantages of a network of databases with a central query point for the following stakeholders/institutions:

- *Federal Länder – saving costs for a database owned by the Länder*
- *Federal government – saving costs for a national database*
- *Animal shelters and local authorities – personnel and the costs involved in accommodating lost animals in shelters by returning pets to owners directly or more quickly*
- *Decision makers and interested parties – reliable data on companion animals*
- *Investigative and regulatory authorities – simplified searches, assisting enforcement*
- *Consumers – better protection against fraud through greater transparency*
- *Finder – easier searches*
- *Pet owners – registration in the database of their choice*
- *Existing databases – maintaining them with full functionality and core competence*
- *Animals – avoiding stressful situations (animal shelter, veterinarian, car transport) by being returned directly to their owners*

The companion animal query service (HABS)

The solution model with HABS enables authorities and public bodies, irrespective of the database in which an animal's data are stored, to address requests for information to HABS, provided that the legal requirements are met. Non-public institutions and private persons such as veterinarians and animal shelters can also enquire about the registration status of an animal by searching with the transponder number, for example if an animal is found. If the result of the query is positive, HABS will inform the user that the animal is registered and in which database, and will forward a report of the found animal to the appropriate database if requested. Authorities are given special access to HABS after registration at the query centre. On stating the reason for the transponder search and the corresponding legal basis, authorities will receive the full data of the animal and owner, insofar as this is legally possible through the connected database.

Example of an enquiry from the authorities: a dog has caused an accident with damage to property and the owner cannot be identified on-site

After reading the transponder number, the investigating police authority, using its password-protected online access and specifying the legal basis for the enquiry, can retrieve the data of the animal's owner from HABS, provided that the animal is registered in a database connected to HABS.

Animal welfare

A nationwide obligation to register dogs and cats, combined with the network of databases and HABS, would save lost dogs and cats considerable suffering and stress because transport, visits to the veterinary clinic, further transport and, if necessary, a stay in an animal shelter would be eliminated if they were returned directly and promptly to their owners.

The introduction of nationwide obligatory identification and registration for all dogs and cats would fill a legal gap and thus also make the illegal trade in puppies much more difficult, especially in combination with stricter requirements for online trade.

The potential of the HABS companion animal query service for Europe

The problem of having different types of pet databases, as seen in Germany, continues at the European level: although most Member States have national laws on the identification and registration of companion animals, these laws vary widely, and very few existing databases are compatible. In France, for example, there is only one officially recognised public database, while in many other Member States, in a similar way to Germany, several databases and types of database coexist and cannot communicate with each other.

The model of a network of databases with HABS described here would enable those Member States that, like Germany,

have several databases to set up a central query point at low cost by having their national databases use the corresponding interface of the network of databases that has already been developed. This would create one point of contact for the EU Commission or Europetnet in each Member State – i.e. either a single central national database or a central query point (HABS model).

This would allow harmonisation at the Member State level (i.e. decentralised) in the field of companion animal ownership, so that EU-wide I&R could be introduced under simpler conditions. It would also respect the two inalienable EU principles for legislation, namely subsidiarity and proportionality of EU-wide rules.





Gudbrand Vatn,
CEO of DyreID,
board member of Europetnet

Additional measure:

The electronic pet passport – secure, verified and authenticated veterinary data for travel with pets in Europe

The increase in travel by pet owners with their animals also increases the risk of transmission and spread of disease. Being able to trace the origin of communicable diseases is of paramount importance for both animal and public health.

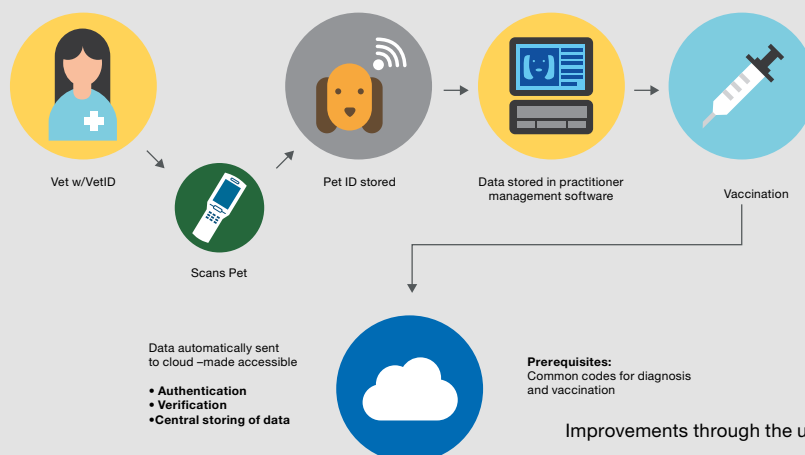
The current passport system

Under current EU legislation, only the EU pet passport – a simple paper document, largely filled in by hand – is required for cross-border travel of pets within the EU. This pet passport contains all the data of an animal, including its identification number or transponder number. To be able to link an animal to a pet passport, the identification number of the animal must match the identification number in the pet passport. When a

vaccination (e. g. against rabies) is administered, this is also recorded in the pet passport and a veterinarian signs and stamps the document. To ensure reliability, the data entered must always be up to date and verifiable. However, the current version of the passport is very prone to errors due to the handwritten entry of data, and forgery is possible. The fact that the current pet passport is in most cases not linked to any registration database contributes to the weakness of the current system.

The electronic pet passport

The electronic pet passport is a digital version of the current pet passport. It is based on information technologies that allow



Source: epetpassport.eu, DyreID.

the installation of a system that enables the authentication and verification of data. This is particularly important in relation to the transmission and spread of diseases.

The basic requirements for issuing an electronic pet passport are essentially the same as those for the paper passport used today: the veterinarian reads the transponder number of an animal, vaccinates the pet in accordance with the rules laid down by the EU and then stores the data in practice management software.

In the case of the paper pet passport currently used, all data must be manually entered into the passport (see above). In the case of the electronic pet passport, however, the data is automatically transferred from the practice management software to the cloud. A basic requirement for the electronic pet passport is that, in addition to other veterinary data, the identification number of the pet and data about vaccinations are also stored centrally. By using this infrastructure, all data can be authenticated, verified and securely stored. The data in the cloud can then be made accessible to end users (e.g. pet owners, police, food authorities and border control) via an electronic interface. The key benefits of this solution are:

- secure storage of veterinary data without the risk of data manipulation
- the possibility of tracing and controlling outbreaks of disease

By storing verifiable data centrally, this system can also help enforce EU regulations. For example, the possibility of traceability can help to reduce the illegal trade in puppies.

A prerequisite for the full effectiveness of this tool is the introduction of EU-wide mandatory I&R.

Since the electronic pet passport will also make it easier to trace zoonoses (e.g. rabies) and will therefore have an impact not only on animal health but also on public health, the electronic pet passport can be considered part of the “One Health” approach²¹.

One Health

“‘One Health’ is an approach to designing and implementing programmes, policies, legislation and research in which multiple sectors communicate and work together to achieve better public health outcomes.

The areas of work in which a One Health approach is particularly relevant include food safety, the control of zoonoses [...], and combating antibiotic resistance [...].” (World Health Organization²²).

²¹ Further information on the electronic pet passport can be found via the following link: epetpassport.eu

²² World Health Organization “One Health”: www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/one-health



Julia Mundl,
Campaign Leader with a focus
on the illegal online puppy trade,
FOUR PAWS International, and
Michel Schoffeniels,
President, Europetnet

Additional measure:

Additional measure: PetSAFE – How pet registration can end the illegal puppy trade

Cruelly bred, illegally imported and often sick animals bring huge profits for illegal puppy dealers, and classified ad sites are their main sales channel. Without consistent and adequate regulation, classified ad sites provide anonymous platforms that are widely used by puppy dealers, who can then simply disappear after a transaction is made. Several EU countries investigated online pet trade ads in 2018²³. This research identified illegal transportation, inadequate trader identification and fake pet identity documents, and concluded that the e-commerce controls needed to be strengthened.

FOUR PAWS International and Europetnet are working together to provide a solution in this area. Our approach aims to make the online pet trade safe for both animals and buyers, and to block market access for unscrupulous dealers. **We want to ensure that only registered dogs from traceable sellers can be advertised.**

Europetnet runs a central European reference database that helps users to identify which database a pet's microchip details are stored in. This is primarily used to reunite animals and owners, for example when a pet goes missing. With 47 pet registration databases from 26 countries (EU and Europe), it covers about 50% of the EU databases, stores over 92 million datafiles on pets, and has over 20 years of experience in monitoring fraudulent activity.

FOUR PAWS is an international animal welfare organisation with 15 offices worldwide, in Europe (Austria, Germany, Switzerland, the Netherlands, United Kingdom, Bulgaria, and a European Policy Office in Brussels), USA, South Africa, Australia and South East Asia. It has been working for over 12 years to end the illegal puppy trade and since 2016 has focused on the regulation of the online trade. To this end, it has developed a comprehensive "model solution for ending the illegal online pet trade".²⁴

In partnership with FOUR PAWS International, Europetnet is working on the implementation of a Europe-wide automated registration validation system for online classified ad sites, which ensures that only dogs registered to the person placing the advertisement can be advertised via online classifieds.

This registration validation system has many benefits: it is a simple solution for classified sites and their users; it ensures that all dogs must be registered before sale; it allows responsible sellers to advertise online but blocks access to illegal and rogue competitors; authorities can trace puppies and sellers in the event of disputes; governments can increase tax revenues; and, most importantly, consumer protection and animal welfare are improved.

The graphic below depicts our **vision** for a fully traceable online puppy trade. All stakeholders involved in the life of a specific

²³ec.europa.eu/food/sites/food/files/animals/docs/aw_other_euccp_dogs-cats-analysis.pdf

²⁴Now renamed "PetSAFE".

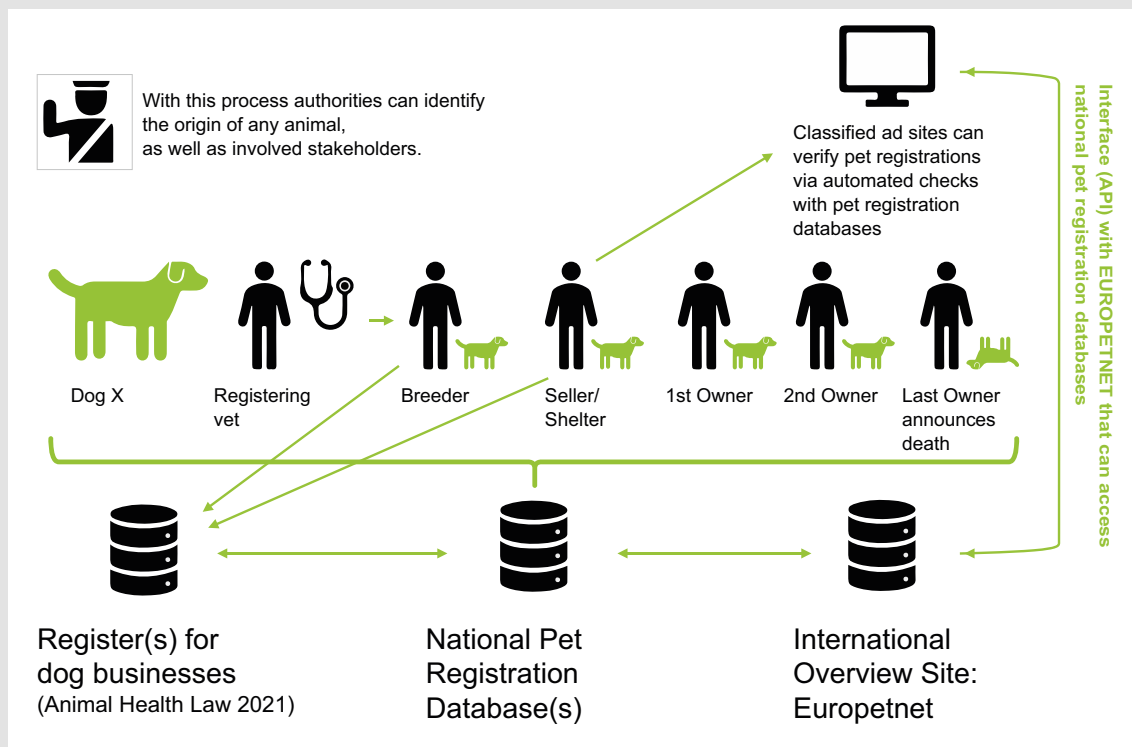
dog should be included in national pet registration databases. In April 2021, when the Animal Health Law (AHL) requires breeders and sellers of dogs to register their establishments, their establishment registration number should be included in the national pet databases. With all the necessary data available in a database, specific GDPR-compliant²⁵ (non-sensitive) information can be provided to Europetnet. An online seller will need to provide the dog's microchip number to the classified site when placing an ad. The microchip information is forwarded to Europetnet's PetSAFE interface, which sends a unique code to the owner's contact details as contained in the pet database. This code is then required in order to place the ad. **Only once a dog's registration has been verified can the ad be placed.** Fraudulent use of microchip numbers (e.g. copying them from other ads) will not be possible. If establishment registration numbers were integrated into pet databases, their validation could be supplied to classified ad sites in order to distinguish commercial sellers from private users.

In order for this system to be effective, the data stored in the pet databases must be reliable. Identity-verified entries in the

pet registries will be a minimum requirement for participation in PetSAFE. Furthermore, **EU-wide identification and registration (I&R)**, in compatible and harmonised systems, and **supplying data to Europetnet** must be made mandatory in order to ensure international traceability. This means that the introduction of a legal obligation to identify and register is also of crucial importance in the Member States that have so far failed to do so, including Germany. A pilot project with volunteer pet databases and classified ad sites will be implemented in 2020 and 2021. This pilot will provide a framework for national legislations to control online advertisements.

Individuals, organisations and the industry can help to ensure effective implementation of this system by calling on the European Commission to legislate for mandatory I&R of companion animals in all EU countries and for their Europe-wide traceability, and to ensure that only registered dogs from traceable sellers can be advertised online.

Learn more about the FOUR PAWS model solution at www.four-paws.org/tracingthetrade



Full traceability and a regulated online market.

²⁵ Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Directive 95/46/EC (General Data Protection Regulation).



Iwona Mertin,
Companion Animals Programme Leader,
Eurogroup for Animals

Towards better pet welfare in the EU

Who are we?

Eurogroup for Animals is a pan-European animal advocacy NGO with 70 member organisations from 26 Member States and beyond. Through its Cats & Dogs programme²⁶, Eurogroup has been advocating for better protection of cats and dogs at the European level across five areas: responsibility of breeders and owners, commercial movement, online sale, tax evasion and strays.

Main concerns

As mentioned in our report *The Illegal Pet Trade: Game Over*²⁷, based on the Croatian Presidency of the Council of the European Union workshop under the same title, published in June 2020, many of the risks that cats and dogs face in Europe – in particular the illegal pet trade and the way stray animals are treated – are connected to poor identification and registration practices. In order to reduce these risks, pets must be micro-chipped and registered in interconnected databases. Micro-chipping alone can still lead to animals dropping off the radar and falling victim to people and networks that do not treat them properly. Hence registration is crucial and should go hand in hand with identification.

Animal Health Law

The new Animal Health Law²⁸, which comes into force on 21 April 2021, will reduce the EU legislation from approximately

40 basic laws to a single legal framework. It will introduce horizontal principles and rules that contribute to better animal husbandry, as well as a new flexibility for disease prevention and control, taking into account the welfare of animals. Furthermore, thanks to several key amendments proposed by Eurogroup for Animals, the Law will also require pet breeders to be registered with competent authorities, providing an important pillar for the improved transparency and traceability of animals.

Registration of breeding establishments

Under the new legal framework, establishments – currently defined as “any premises, structure, or, in the case of open-air farming, any environment or place, where animals [...] are kept, on a temporary or permanent basis, except for households where pet animals are kept and veterinary practices or clinics” – must be registered and approved by the national competent authority. The criteria for approval include having adequate capacity for the number of kept animals, adequate housing of a suitable standard, an appropriate storage area and trained personnel. The legislation also provides for review of the establishments at regular intervals as well as a withdrawal of approval in the event of non-compliance.

Operators – currently defined as “any natural or legal person having animals [...] under their responsibility, including for a

²⁶ Eurogroup for Animals Cats & Dogs Programme: www.eurogroupforanimals.org/what-we-do/policy-areas/cats-dogs

²⁷ Eurogroup for Animals Report June 2020: *The Illegal Pet Trade: Game Over*.

²⁸ Regulation (EU) 2016/429 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 9 March 2016 on transmissible animal diseases and amending and repealing certain acts in the area of animal health ('Animal Health Law').

limited duration of time, but excluding pet keepers and veterinarians” – will be legally required to have a minimum level of knowledge about animal diseases and animal husbandry and to be adequately trained. They also have an obligation to provide basic information to future pet owners about animal health, welfare and husbandry, to register their establishments and to meet record-keeping requirements.

Identification and registration

In terms of identification – defined as “detailed requirements for the identification and registration of kept terrestrial animals” – Eurogroup for Animals believes that some improvements need to be implemented that can be specified in a delegated act. Among these, passport numbers and transponder codes should be linked and common rules should be established for the generation of transponder codes as well as a common minimum level of data. The data should be updated promptly and comprehensively, and appropriate penalties should be set in the event of non-compliance.

EU Platform on Animal Welfare

In 2018, a Voluntary Initiative Group on Health and Welfare of Pets in Trade was created within the EU Platform on Animal Welfare. The Group is composed of nine seats for Member States (currently FR, DK, RO, BE, SK, ES, DE, IT and NL), one seat for a business organisation (FVE), one independent expert (University of Milan) and three NGOs (RSPCA, VIER PFOTEN and Eurogroup for Animals). Its objectives include the following:

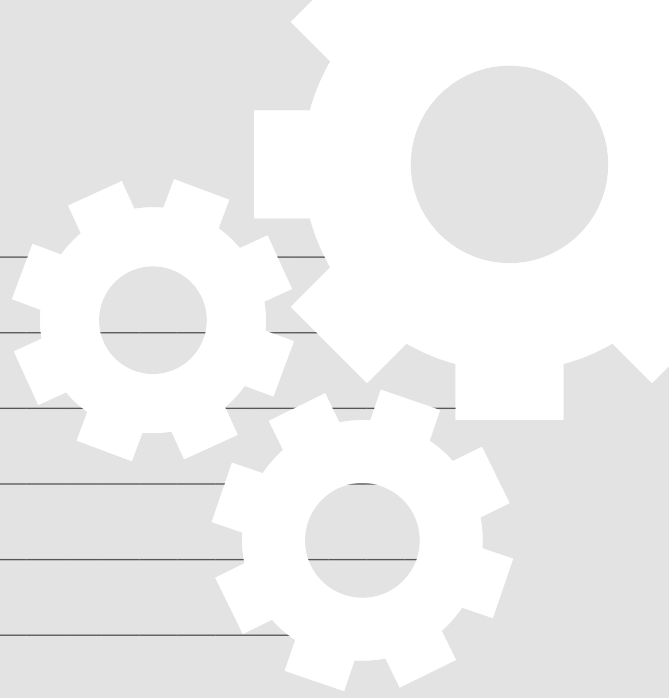
- *Exchange of good practices on enforcement, identification and registration*
- *Improving communication and cooperation between Member States with regard to the pet trade*
- *Greater exchangeability of data between I&R systems*
- *Development of guidelines*
- *Improving the use of the TRACES system*

In two years, the Group has achieved great results, including the mapping of all national legislation relating to I&R, mapping of the breeder categories with respect to the sale of pets, recommendations on improvements to TRACES, guidelines on online trading for both consumers and online platforms, together with a few outputs still to come on I&R recommendations and guidelines on commercial transport, breeding and socialisation.

Conclusion

Our vision for the future of EU legislation regarding cats and dogs begins with mandatory identification and registration for pets, as well as registration of breeders and sellers. This data will then need to be gathered in interconnected databases. Eventually, new rules on platforms will be developed, together with guidelines as a main reference point.

For your notes



For your notes

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Speakers, authors and moderators²⁹

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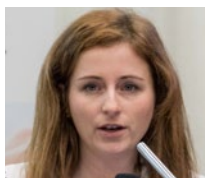


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²⁹The following speakers were also present at the conference: Dr med. vet. Rémi Gellé, Vice President, iCAD; Dr med. vet. Finbarr Heslin, CEO, FIDO; Prof. Dr med. Heinrich Meßler, formerly of the German Kennel Club (VDH e.V.); Valdeko Paavel, Representative, Lemmikoomaregister; Peggy Pleines, Fondazione Capellino.



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