



ABSTRACT

European Convention for the protection of pet animals (ETS no 125) of the Council of Europe (CoE)

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The 1987 Convention on the protection of pet animals is one of five Conventions of the Council of Europe including transport, slaughter, farmed and animals used for research which together comprise the most comprehensive legalisation available on animal welfare. It contains provisions to protect pet animals, and seeks to establish a basic common standard of attitude and practice towards pet ownership. It introduced for the first time in Europe a duty of care and provisions on the keeping, training, breeding, boarding, trade, humane killing, information and education. The Convention aims at regulating trade and the breeding of pet animals, and prohibits the modification of their natural appearance and aims at reducing the number of stray animals.

The Convention lays down the international legal contractual basis for responsible pet ownership and has been signed by Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Sweden, Switzerland and Turkey. Several of these countries have made reservations with respect to provision on the docking of dog's tails and the age limit of sixteen for the acquisition of pets.

Three non-binding Resolutions were adopted in 1995 which provide guidance on the Surgical operations (Further controls on cropping of ears and tail docking), wild animals (details their needs and keeping). The resolution on breeding requires breed associations of cats and dogs should to take account not only aesthetics but also behaviour. They should avoid extreme characteristics which cause welfare problems. An exemplary list of conditions was provided which was not comprehensive. Subsequently there has been some progress in the revision of breed standards but advances made in understanding of canine and feline genetics (e.g. DNA testing) requires this resolution to be updated.

The Convention has detailed measures to protect the welfare of strays and to encourage the reduction of numbers of stray animals. Stray control must be done as laid down in the Convention in a way which does not cause avoidable pain, suffering or distress. Capture must be done with minimum of force and minimum of mental suffering. Measures should be taken to reduce the number of strays but if animals need to be killed this must be done humanely. The Convention prohibits certain methods such as drowning, suffocation, some poisons and electrocution. It is suggested that dogs and cats are permanently identified with links to details of their owners.



Parties should promote Responsible dog ownership including owner awareness and knowledge and training. Measures to reduce strays include ban on abandonment; a requirement to reduce unplanned breeding by neutering of strays and also to limit unplanned breeding animals should not be given to those under sixteen nor given as prizes. The Convention ETS 125 and its resolutions have made a major contribution to the welfare of pet animals and have been incorporated into the legislation of many member and non-member countries in Europe.

associations. Although the Convention is still current there is a need for revision of resolutions to take account of new knowledge and technologies such as micro chipping and in particular advances made in breeding and genetics of dogs and cats. There is also a need to consider further the actions needed by administrations and stakeholders to develop and embed sustainable strategies including fertility control programme to reduce populations of stray cats and dogs.