



ABSTRACT

Belgian programme for a national companion animal action plan

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The Pet animals are the animals that live closest to humans and, according to several surveys, enjoy a very favourable image in the eyes of the public. Article 13 of the new Lisbon Treaty that explicitly considers animals as sentient beings has raised considerable expectations, mainly among animal welfare activists, who now expect the EU to bring out animal welfare legislation.

For these reasons and as the European Commission shall draw up its multi-annual plan for animal welfare this year, Belgium considered it appropriate to place the pet animals' welfare issue on the agenda of the EU during its Presidency during the last six months of 2010. Four major themes (identification and registration of dogs and cats, non-curative surgical interventions in pets; stray dogs and cats and animal shelters; licensing of pet shops and pet breeders) were identified and, two working parties with veterinary experts in animal welfare were held.

This resulted in the adoption by the Council of Ministers of November 2010 of Conclusions containing proposals for a theme-wise approach by the Commission.

Belgium itself has developed since the Animal Welfare Act of 1986 an on-going policy in order to better protect pets by banning the sale of dogs and cats on markets(1996), by the introduction of a licensing system for pet shops, -shelters and -breeders(1997), by a mandatory I&R for dogs (1998), by a ban on non-curative surgical interventions (2001), by a limited list of mammals than can be sold and kept (2001) and by a ban on the sale of dogs and cats in pet shops (2007). Actually, Belgium is developing a multi-annual plan for the sterilisation of cats.