



ABSTRACT

Situation of companion animals in Estonia

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First animal protection organization in Estonia was formed at 1869. As follows several other and also local organizations were formed; they were run until the occupation time. In 1988, after many long Soviet years those kinds of activities were started again. The year 2000, especially the second half of the tenth became very fruitful as most of the present 12 animal shelters and seven NGOs helping cats were established.

NGO of animal friends ESPA (Estonian Society for the Protection of Animals) started to operate since spring 2000. Its mission is to assure and improve animal welfare and prevent animal abuse - helping the animals directly, raising public awareness, educating people on the subject, animal protection control and being engaged in legislative drafting. At the moment it has more than 600 members, several partners and cooperation with NGOs and other interested parties.

Animal Protection Act in Estonia was created in 2000 and has been amended several times after that. It states that if the owner cannot be identified and a new owner cannot be found, euthanasia can be performed after 14 days. During these days animal should be kept regarding the requirements and when necessary, the medical treatment of the animal shall be guaranteed. Local governments should organize the capture, keeping and killing of stray animals. Since January 2009, there is in force a Ministerial Degree which states the minimum conditions of keeping certain pet animals.

According to Estonian Infectious Animal Disease Control Act owners of animals are required to guarantee the identifiability of their domestic animals. This shall be issued at the expense of the keeper of animals. There is no statewide and comprehensive registration and identification system and supervision do not function in Estonia - therefore there is no objective statistics or overview for number of pets in Estonia, or percentage of people who comply with the requirements. Also there is no statistical data for number of stray dogs and cats in Estonia. Few local governments have recently started to make obligatory micro shipping, registration of the dogs and partly cats.

In 2009 ESPA's contact phone received 3817 calls. 318 notifications were about abused animals – pets, industrial animals and others, who are kept in not suitable conditions. 491 calls were taken about stray dogs and cats. Regarding the information received from citizens ESPA turned to authorities 390 times – Veterinary- and Food Board (233), Police (70), local governments (40) and other institutions (26). Majority of complaints were about pets (mostly cats and dogs) kept in not



good conditions. About 1400 animals' (mostly cats) received medical treatments, got neutered, were supported with food or were offered a foster home or supported finding old or a new home.

To decrease the number of animals in the street in a long run and prevent animal mistreatment ESPA organized a campaign for pet owners in 2010 and in 2011 about neutering their cats and dogs. Many clinics reduced prizes of the procedure or made some other additional offers. More than 4000 cats and dog were neutered during the campaign.

CNR (catch–neuter-release) method is not adopted widely in Estonia. CNR for dogs is not needed, while it has been used for cats, based upon an agreement with the land owners. It is usually done only with the support of the ESPA in places where there are volunteers for taking the cats to the doctor and in case of available funds.