



ABSTRACT

Situation of companion animals in Denmark

Sanne Rosbøg

Chairperson, Dyrværnnet – Society for Defenseless Animals in Denmark

Among Denmark's 5,5 million people lives approximately 550.000 dogs and 650.000 owned cats. There are no official numbers for companion rabbits, but it is the third most popular companion animal in Denmark. Danish animal owners spend more money than ever on vets, accessories and animal behaviour therapists.

There are no official numbers of animals in shelters (all shelters are run privately by animal welfare organisations) but an estimate is 5000 dogs per year and the same for cats. In addition, thousands of dogs and cats find new homes on Facebook and similar sites.

The animal protection law in Denmark (since 1916) is to protect all animal species from 'pain, suffering and major disadvantage as far as possible'. That formulation makes it difficult to sanction in cases of animal abuse or neglect. Dogs and cats only have to be looked after once a day. The penalty for animal abuse or neglect is often a fine of 50 £. If you steal or abuse someone else's animal it is by law compared to if you steal and destroy a bike.

Denmark has since 1937 had a separate dog law. In 2010 the dog law was revised and 13 breeds are now prohibited. Another 12 is on an 'observation list' and may be prohibited in 2013. Puppies born after the law was enforced are killed and adult individuals have to be neutralised and muzzled. More than 300 dogs, most puppies, are killed since the law was enforced. Animal protection groups, vet associations, breed societies and all other experts are now working to get the ban cancelled. They all agree that the ban hits the wrong dogs: nice, friendly family dogs. And there is no evidence that a ban like this reduces the number of biting episodes. Rather the contrary.

Dyrværnnet as an NGO works for better public awareness about all dog breeds and their needs. We try to convince the authorities and the public that we have to educate people and to make them understand what a great responsibility it is to own a dog.

Many Danes are afraid of the banned breeds now, and the new law sends a signal that the dogs are dangerous and evil. Our goal is to make the politicians and the public understand that the owner is responsible, not the dog. We suggest not only mandatory courses before you are allowed to buy a dog, but also a mandatory training with your young dog of any breed.

The dog law requires registration of all dogs.

A separate law for cats is finally under preparation after years of hard work from the NGO's. Today cats are not protected of their own law and it is legal to kill a cat – owned or stray – if it bothers you. The law will hopefully require registration of all owned cats. That is not required by law today. NGO's encourage cat owners to get their cat registered and private organisations have made a register for cats.



The goal for Dyreværnet is to have a public register for all companion animals, dogs, cats, rabbits, birds etc. We believe it will make animal owners understand that it is a big responsibility to have an animal. Many animal owners buy and throw away. 15000 dogs are killed each year in Denmark because humans don't know how to treat them or just don't want them anymore. There are no similar numbers for cats but the number might be the same.

In Denmark sodomy is legal. That makes Denmark a large producer of sodomy film and foreigners travel to Denmark because of the legal animal brothels. Most people want a ban but for some reason the politicians hesitates. All Danish animal protection groups are working together to get the ban as soon as possible.