



# *ABSTRACT*

## *The Role of Veterinarians promoting responsible ownership of dogs in Europe*

*Dr. Walter Winding*

President of the Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE), Belgium

Promotion and protection of Animal Welfare is one of the core competences of veterinarians. Veterinarians occasionally experience conflicting responsibilities in the sense that they “serve their human clients, their animal clients and society”. Veterinarians have to bridge these different responsibilities on a daily basis. The veterinarian’s responsibilities have moved beyond the individual clients and the healing of individual’s animals to dealing with public health, animal welfare, prevention and education as well as many other areas in which the knowledge and experience of veterinarians can be applied. Veterinarians strive to deal with these inherent dilemmas by using their knowledge, expertise and veterinary ethics. However this cannot be done without good cooperation and communication with the public, the governmental administration and relevant NGOs such as those of farmers, pet breeders and animal welfare.

Through their daily work with animals and their owners, veterinarians are important communicators and promoters of responsible ownership of pets and of respecting the animals as sentient beings and all its needs including veterinary care. The close contact of Veterinarians to animals and simultaneously to people creates a bridging role and is the key for a holistic approach of problems.

Mandatory identification of animals and an effective and reliable system of registration are crucial for successful animal health and welfare management and are indispensable tools to reunite stray animals with their owners, to prevent illegal puppy trade and over all promote responsible ownership.

Health monitoring and checks and vaccination programs are not only essential for animals but equally important for Public Health (Zoonoses!).

Notification of relevant diseases and health reports are as well important for preventive health of people and animals as also enormously helpful to make the public and politicians aware of public responsibility for animals!

The start of every birth control program is the basic information that breeding dogs is not just a sign for love of animals or pure nature. Everybody breeding animals takes on a new responsibility! Even feeding stray dogs to alleviate their suffering must be seen as support for breeding them! Such information and education concern private dog holders, animal- lovers and even dog breeders.



Veterinarians with all their knowledge and skills need to be part of all birth control programs. Stray dog problems cannot be solved by medical measures alone, but need to include capture of animals, registration, health checks, treatment if necessary or even euthanasia as ultima ratio, if a veterinarian sees no chance for restoration, vaccination, birth control and controlled release back to the environment where they have been picked up.

Veterinary science is called on to develop appropriate vaccination and health programs!

Good cooperation between veterinarians, animal owners, animal welfare organisations and governmental administration is essential for the success.