



**INTERGROUP
ON THE WELFARE
& CONSERVATION
OF ANIMALS**

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Established in 1983

Mrs Androulla Vassiliou
Commissioner for Health
European Commission
1049 Brussels
Belgium

Strasbourg, 16 December 2009

Ref. C/09a/2009

Dear Commissioner,

I am writing to you on behalf of the European Parliament's Animal Welfare Intergroup, of which I am President, on the issue of the revision of the Action Plan on the Protection and Welfare of Animals (2006 – 2010), which I understand is currently undergoing an evaluation process to identify the scope and objectives of the Action Plan for the next Commission term (2010 – 2014).

As you will be aware, The European Community adopted the Action Plan on the Protection and Welfare of Animals in 2006¹ to improve the protection given to animals in the European Union and guarantee standards in animal welfare. Despite it being a non-mandatory document, it does set out an aspirational programme of actions to address poor animal welfare and propose regulation or initiatives to protect animals owned by, kept by and managed by European Citizens.

The 2006 -2010 Action Plan has made a valuable contribution to the Community's commitment to uphold high standards in the welfare for animals in Europe, and beyond. The newly proposed European Network of Reference Centres (ENRC) for the protection of animals², for example, is a welcomed initiative which will harmonise animal welfare standards and assist Member States in delivering high quality animal protection.

At the meeting of the Intergroup on the Welfare and Conservation of Animals on the 16 December 2009, all members agreed that work on the next Animal Welfare Action Plan is an urgent priority, and I would like your assurance that you will treat it as such. In particular, we request that the Commission ensures its scope aspires to protect and improve welfare standards of all animals, regardless of their use or circumstance. The previous Action Plan appeared to focus predominantly on animals of economic importance, such as in food production and laboratories and other animals (i.e. in zoos and circuses used for work, in sporting and hunting activities or those kept as pets) appear to have been largely marginalised.

A recent report *Animal Welfare Excellence in Europe*³ by ENDCAP, the European coalition of NGOs that specialise in the protection of wild animals in captivity, has raised significant concerns about the lack of knowledge, skills and experience of many Member States to provide effective welfare measures for such animals. The coalition claims that this is one of the main reasons why EC legislation, such as the Directive 1999/22/EC (relating to the keeping of wild animals in zoos), is not being effectively implemented by some Member States.

¹65. Community Action Plan on the Protection and Welfare of Animals 2006 – 2010.

²584. Options for animal welfare labelling and the establishment of a European Network of Reference Centres for the protection and animals

³*elfare Excellence in Europe*. ENDCAP 2009

There is apparently enormous variation in the standards delivered to wild animals in zoos, circuses and dolphinariums that appears to be largely dependent on the will, knowledge, experience and available resources of each Member State. Indications are that many of these animals are kept in sub-standard conditions. A matter I know is deeply concerning to members of the public. It is evident that wild animals in captivity do not enjoy the same degree of protection as other categories of animals within the Community.

The Intergroup on the Welfare and Conservation of Animals is concerned by these claims made in the ENDCAP report and fully supports their call for the inclusion of wild animals in captivity within EC policy that aspires to raise standards in animal protection and welfare. The EC Action Plan on the Protection and Welfare of Animals and the ENRC does present the opportunity to increase the scope of the Community's commitment to animal protection and welfare without compromising the mandate of the Treaty. The inclusion therefore of impartial expert guidance and actions applicable to wild animals in captivity is possible. This will assist Member States to deliver consistently high quality animal welfare standards in accordance to all relevant legal requirements and further, demonstrate the future direction of the Community policies on animal protection and welfare.

As President of the European Parliament's Intergroup on the Welfare and Conservation of Animals, I feel it is my duty to try and ensure that all animals owned by, managed by and kept by European Citizens are housed in conditions that satisfy their biological and welfare needs. The Community has a responsibility to ensure that animals in our care enjoy a standard of wellbeing that is consistent with the Five Freedoms as an absolute minimum requirement and that this basic right be provided to all animals regardless of their circumstance or use.

I urge you to do all in your power to ensure wild animals in captivity are fully covered in EC policy that aspires to raise standards in animal protection and welfare, including in the 2010 -2014 Action Plan.

I look forward to hearing from you on this important matter at your earliest convenience

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Caroline Lucas', written in a cursive style.

Caroline Lucas

Cc: Commissioner Vassiliou
Marit Paulsen MEP