

Brussels, 10/3.2006
D(2006)313

Dear Ms Lucas,

Thank you for your letter dated 20th January 2006 concerning EU subsidies in the fur sector.

I have taken serious note about the concerns you have expressed about the possible ill treatment of fur animals in any breeding husbandry or trading activity. Such ill treatment – were it to be confirmed – would indeed be unacceptable.

On the basis of the provision of clear evidence and within its limits of the competencies the Commission would have the following possibilities to act: Where the EU legislation has been correctly transposed into national law the Member States are primarily responsible for checking whether this legislation is properly implemented within their territories by the different economic operators. Therefore, if you possess clear evidence of illegal behaviour of particulars with respect to fur animal hygiene and welfare and environmental protection legislation you can contact the competent authorities in the Member State.

The Commission can intervene if a Member State is not correctly implementing the EU legislation by initiating infringement procedures in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Treaty. If you possess such evidence with regard to fur animal breeding, husbandry and trading you can address it to the Commission. I would like to reassure you that the Commission will not hesitate to take all appropriate measures to ensure the correct application of the relevant EU legislation.

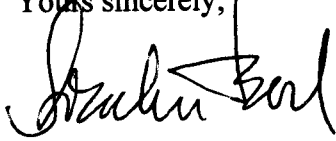
The above considerations hold irrespective of whether the activities concerned are subsidised by the EU budget or not.

On the other hand, I would like to inform you that the Community Regulations on rural development (Regulation No 1257/99 for the programming period up to 2006 and Regulation No 1698/2005 for the 2007-2013 programming period) offer considerable possibilities for

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measures promoting animal welfare by granting support to farmers to improve animal welfare beyond mandatory Community and national standards, e.g. in the fields of water and feed, housing conditions (bedding, natural light, etc.), outdoor access, absence of systematic mutilations, isolation or permanent tethering and prevention of diseases mainly determined by farming practices or/and keeping conditions. Member States can voluntarily use this possibility by proposing animal welfare measures in their rural development programmes.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Borrell". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J' and a distinct 'B'.