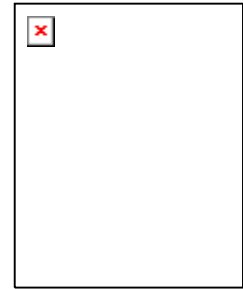


DR. CAROLINE LUCAS

Green Party

for the South East of England



Commissioner Markos Kyprianou
DG Health and Consumer Protection
The European Commission
B1049 Brussels
Belgium

September 29th 2005

Dear Commissioner,

I am writing to bring to your attention 2 cases involving the welfare of stray cats and dogs.

Animal Welfare charities from across the EU, including Germany, the UK and Denmark are facing obstacles in their work to rescue stray cats and dogs in Greece because of claims that they are selling the animals for vivisections purposes or for their skins to be used in clothing manufacture. I believe these claims are unfounded and I would respectfully ask that you investigate their source, and the resulting threat to animal welfare.

Traditionally, large numbers of foreign vets have volunteered for Greek animal welfare charities, bringing much needed skills and experience to what is a severe stray cat and dog problem. Over the last year, however, I am advised that the number of volunteers has dropped dramatically and there seems to be 2 main causes. The first is a tightening of regulations by the Panhellenic Veterinary Association (PVA) regarding Dog Passports. Whilst I recognise that this may be in response to changes in the law, it appears that the PVA are being over zealous in their application, accusing animal welfare charities of smuggling dogs out of the country illegally by not securing the relevant passports. The PVA have been unable to provide evidence to support these claims and I believe that, unless there is co-operation between the authorities and the animal welfare charities, the situation will degenerate. Perhaps there are channels that the Commission can use to facilitate communication and understanding of the Dog Passport application process for all involved?

In addition, on at least two occasions this year, of which I am aware, volunteers working for animal welfare charities have been taken into custody whilst the dogs they were bringing to new homes in Northern Europe have been impounded. The legal departments of the charities worked hard to secure the release of the volunteers and all charges against them were dropped. Some, but not all, of the dogs were released. Crucially, the claims made about illegal paperwork and sales to animal laboratories - the grounds for detaining the volunteers and animals - were completely unsubstantiated. In one case the animal welfare charity was forced to pay the equivalent of £10,000 in boarding fees for the time that the dogs were held by the authorities. I am advised that one individual is behind many of the claims made against animal welfare charities but I do not feel it is appropriate to pass on this information, as it is heresay.

Suite 58, The Hop Exchange, 24 Southwark Street, London SE1 1TY, UK
Tel: 020 7407 6281 Fax: 020 7234 0183 E-mail: carolinelucas@greenmeps.org.uk
Web: www.carolinelucasmep.org.uk

This apparent culture of suspicion and allegations has led to a reduction in the number of volunteer vets working in Greece. Animal welfare charities are suffering from the lack of skilled volunteers and the financial burden of legal fees and boarding fees - and of course it is the stray animals that bear the costs of this situation. Of equal concern to me is that EU citizens are being detained with no evidence and with no subsequent charges brought against them.

I am sure I do not need to spell out for you the long-term implications for animal welfare in Greece, and I hope you are able to look into this matter on my behalf. I would also appreciate receiving information about the Commission's monitoring of animal laboratories vis a vis licensing and accreditation of the animals used, as I believe this may help those animal welfare organisation who are being accused of selling strays for experiments.

Moving on to another matter, I would like to draw your attention to the use of stray cats and dogs as shark bait in a number of French territories which are part of the EU. This use of live stray animals to lure sharks is just one example of inhumane treatment that contravenes both national French laws and EU animal welfare standards. Those few cases in which the perpetrators of these crimes against animals are brought to court, have never resulted in anything more than minimal fines.

As in Greece, there are huge stray animal populations in many of these territories - Guadeloupe alone has between 40,000 and 70,000 stray dogs. As well as raising the question of shark baiting and similar practices with the French government, I would, therefore, ask that EU funding is made available for sterilisation and vaccination programmes so that the stray populations can be brought under control humanely.

As ever, I look forward to your response on both these matters.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Caroline Lucas'.

Caroline Lucas - Green Party MEP