

Presentation to
Mr. Alain Hutchinson MEP

SUMMARY: CURRENT SITUATION IN SERBIA



April 2009

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The Republic of Serbia is currently aiming for European Union (EU) membership. Serbian National legislation regarding animal welfare is already established. Unfortunately, experience has shown that implementation of this National legislation by the Government and Regional Authorities is non-existent. Commercial organisations are employed throughout Serbia to undertake stray/roaming animal control. These organisations are not specialists in any form of animal welfare – they are at best, simply ‘pest’ controllers, utilising ‘Shinters’ (Authority Stray Control Teams) for clearing towns and cities of stray and roaming animals on behalf of Regional authorities.

Roaming animal – one that is not under direct control or restricted by a physical barrier. A roaming animal may have an owner, but is allowed to roam public property for all or part of the day. Very often, these are animals which are not sterilised and contribute hugely to ‘stray’ animal population numbers production.

Owned animal – an animal that someone declares is their property or they have some right over. Does not mean an animal that is responsibly owned. Can range from loose ownership and irregular feeding by an ‘owner’ on the streets to confined, fed and medically treated animals with a specific very responsible owner ensuring their welfare.

Causing suffering and/or death to any animal under existing Serbian law can result in custodial sentences for those involved. And yet, with apparent local/National Authorities’ approval, these commercial organisations undertake vile acts of animal cruelty each and every day without any form of prosecution. Despite National animal welfare legislation already existing in Serbia, all those concerned with its implementation appear to be turning a blind eye, ignoring the suffering and inherent cruelty caused. Consequently, Serbia is consistently failing to implement its existing National animal welfare legislation.

Every single day animal welfare organisations across many EU member states receive cries of help relating to the massacres perpetrated on both stray/roaming and domestic animals. It is all too common to witness the aggressive capture and subsequent food and water deprived incarceration of stray animals, which is then regularly followed by a long-lasting and agonising death. These images are shocking. The methods utilised for capture and extermination, especially those applied to stray/roaming animals, are of great concern - particularly in regions of Europe such as the Republic of Serbia.

Existing EU animal welfare organisations consider that essential changes in many animal welfare issues within Serbia have to be implemented nationally prior to any Serbian EU Accession. Three EU parliamentarians (MEP’s) ALAIN HUTCHINSON, DAVID HAMMERSTEIN and NEIL PARISH, have produced a written declaration on the welfare of pets and stray animals. The declaration claims hard punishment for abandoning and mistreating both pets and Europe’s stray animals. EU approval and the subsequent implementation of this Euro-wide legislation is essential in witnessing the European union leading the way forward and establishing both new and more stringent animal welfare standards for both existing member and future accession states, including Serbia.

Until the EU has a full community-wide policy on the protection of pets and stray animals, it is considered by the majority of EU animal welfare organisations that nations currently applying for EU Accession will never raise or change their current standards or practices of welfare to give all animals the very basics in international respect and treatment they are entitled to. Europe cannot wait years again to set this standard; it has to be done now, in the shortest time possible. Rather than continue with its current national attitude / policy of ‘seek and destroy’ (slaughter) towards stray / roaming animals, Serbia needs to understand that the only way to reduce stray animal numbers is to adopt a National “No-Kill” (Sterilisation, Vaccination and Microchipping) program which, over a relatively short period of time, will drastically reduce the numbers of stray and roaming animals on the streets of Serbia. Similar programs are the only way forward for stray / roaming animal number reductions in many parts of Europe, including member states such as Greece and Romania. Turkey, another EU accession seeking nation with a large stray and roaming animal population, needs to change its attitude to population controls, just like Serbia.

Serbian national legislation already exists for the protection of stray and street animals. Implementation of this same legislation is being routinely ignored and / or flouted by national and regional authorities and politicians throughout Serbia.

Serbian National Legislation for animals includes:

from 1st January 2006, the **Criminal Code of Serbia, article 269,**

- *Paragraph 1:* anyone who is cruel to, inflicts violence or kills an animal as defined by this law, must be punished by up to 6 months imprisonment;
- *Paragraph 2:* if suffering or death is carried out on more than one animal, the person who inflicted this suffering can be sentenced with up to 3 years imprisonment.
- any person who is cruel, violent or inflicts death on any animal making up the ‘special protection’ group of animals (as for example, the badger or the brown bear) can again be sentenced to up to 3 years imprisonment.

In addition, **Article 46 of the Serbian Veterinary Law** declares:

- that animals have a right to life. There is no law declaring euthanasia has to be undertaken as a means of stray/street animal control;
- each local community in Serbia has an obligation to provide care for abandoned dogs and cats;
- each community has an obligation to finance stray animal care, including the building of shelters;
- each community has an obligation to finance sterilisation, medical care and food for the (stray) animals. Volunteer prizes can be given as an alternative for payment to people who volunteer and are directly involved with jobs that include the care and protection of abandoned / stray dogs and cats.

As Serbian Veterinary law does NOT ALLOW the killing of stray animals, money which is currently being used by authorities for illegal animal killings in the communities, should actually be re-directed into providing care and 'No Kill' sterilisation, vaccination and microchipping programs for those same animals.

The price paid to 'Shinters' (Authority Stray Control Teams) for catching and killing is 5000 to 10 000 Dinar per (stray/roaming) dog or cat. In contrast, current Serbian prices for animal medical procedures for both Feline and Canine are:

Sterilisation - female:	2,800 to 3000 dinar,
Sterilisation - male:	1200 to 1800 dinar,
Microchipping:	100 dinar.

The approximate total cost (maximum) to sterilise and microchip one animal = 3,100 dinar.

(Note – this figure is for females; males would cost less)

In Serbia at the present time, approximately three (3) female animals, or alternatively approximately five (5) male animals could be sterilised and microchipped for the cost of one current stray / roaming animal being captured and killed.

Money spent by authorities on stray and roaming animal numbers management must focus on effective public education aimed at highlighting responsible animal ownership in addition to disease controls (vaccination) and identification marking of animals which have been sterilised and vaccinated. Commercial 'pest control' organisations also need to be educated that animals which are easily identified as having been treated, are not rounded up and caught again at local taxpayers expense. Changing local attitudes towards stray and roaming animals can be addressed by education and presenting sterilised animals to the community, so encouraging owners of roaming animals to seek sterilisation for 'their' animals. Religious and cultural beliefs towards animals may also need to be addressed.

Positive Human attitude and behaviour towards stray and roaming animals - be it the citizen in their house or the politician in government - is the key factor to success in animal population management. Until this is achieved, the currently politically led, very blinkered, never ending mass animal abusing taxpayer money wasting cycle of rounding up and killing stray animals will continue with NO overall reduction in the numbers of stray and roaming animals on the streets of Serbia. Responsibly owned and sterilised animals do not produce yet more offspring, irresponsibly owned and non-sterilised animals continue to produce yet more offspring in a never-ending cycle. With the EU elections this June (2009), we feel it is the responsibility of our elected members of the European Parliament to immediately pass and implement EU-wide legislation for the protection and welfare of all European stray and roaming animals. Europe cannot wait another ten years for action.

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<http://serbiananimalsvoice.wordpress.com/>



Official information obtained by NGO “Serbian Animals Voice” in relation to stray animal controls for the period 01.01.2007 to 15.06.2008 in eight (8) selected Serbian cities is shown in the following Table:

Location	No. of Animals Killed	Type	No. of <u>Sterilisations</u> undertaken	- on Dogs	- on Cats
Belgrade (1)	2,541	Dogs	3192	2477	715
Novi Sad (2)	3,771	Dogs	Zero 0	Zero 0	Zero 0
Nish (3)	2,551	Dogs	Zero 0	Zero 0	Zero 0
Subotica (4)	1,890	Dogs	Zero 0	Zero 0	Zero 0
Bor (5)	473	Dogs	Zero 0	Zero 0	Zero 0
Zrenjanin (6)	1,187	Dogs	Zero 0	Zero 0	Zero 0
Sombor (7)	1,125	Dogs	Zero 0	Zero 0	Zero 0
Kragujevac (8)	1,500	Dogs	Zero 0	Zero 0	Zero 0
TOTALS	15,038	Dogs	3192	2477 Dogs	715 Cats

(1) – Number in brackets refers to location on map

The price paid to ‘shinters’ (authority stray control teams) for catching/killing is **5000 to 10 000 Dinar per dog or cat**, and so it is immediately obvious how much money the ‘poor’ Serbian communities are giving to authorities and public (municipal) organisations who undertake this work; organisations usually linked to political parties.



