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NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Council
Subject: Animal Welfare Package
- Presentation by the Commission

Delegations will find in the Annex a note from the Commission on the above-mentioned subject which will be dealt with under "Any other business" at the Council meeting ("Agriculture and Fisheries") on 11 December 2023.

Commission background note AGRIFISH 11 December 2023

AOB Animal Welfare

As announced by our Farm to Fork Strategy, the European Green Deal's agenda for sustainable agriculture and food production, the Commission proposed the biggest reform of EU animal welfare rules during transport in 20 years. The Commission is also proposing, for the first time ever, new EU rules on the welfare and traceability of dogs and cats, which are bred, kept and traded, as companion animals, for economic purposes.

The package includes an overhaul of the current EU rules for **animals in transport**, which will **improve the wellbeing of the 1.6 billion animals** transported in and from the EU each year. The new rules reflect the latest scientific evidence and insights as well as technological developments.

The new rules on the **welfare and traceability of dogs and cats**, will establish, for the first time, uniform EU standards for the breeding, housing and handling of dogs and cats in breeding establishments and pet shops as well as shelters. The traceability of dogs and cats will also be reinforced through mandatory identification and registration in national databases to fight illegal trade and development of a website for anyone to be able check the identification and registration of a dog or cat supplied on the Union market.

Finally, the Commission is proposing further steps to address the **European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) 'Fur Free Europe'**, which calls for an EU-ban on fur farming and on the sale of products containing such fur in the Single Market.

Better rules for the transport of animals

The existing EU rules for animals in transport are 20 years old. They no longer reflect current realities, latest scientific insights and advice, sustainability goals or legitimate concerns of our citizens when it comes to animal welfare. Today's proposal therefore focusses on 4 key areas, vital to ensure good animal welfare in transport:

- First, **travel times will be shortened** and during long journeys, animals must be unloaded for periods of rest, feeding and watering. Special rules will apply to animals for slaughter, and to vulnerable animals such as unweaned calves and pregnant animals.
- Second, **minimum space for the different animals** during transport will be increased and adapted to each species.
- Third, **transport in extreme temperatures** will be subject to strict conditions, including only transport at night if temperatures exceed 30 °C. Equally so when temperatures are below 0°C, road vehicles will need to be covered and air circulation in the animal compartment controlled to protect animals from exposure to windchill during the journey – and when temperatures are below -5°C, in addition to the above measures the journey time shall not exceed 9 hours;
- Rules for the export of live animals from the Union will be tightened, including better controls to better ensure compliance with EU welfare standards until destination.
- Fourth, make the maximum out of digital tools to reduce the administrative burden and to facilitate the enforcement of transport rules (e.g. positioning of vehicles; central database).

Better welfare for dogs and cats

Around 44% of households in the EU have a pet animal. Trade in dogs and cats has grown considerably in recent years, with an **annual value of EUR 1.3 billion**. However, animal welfare standards for professionals breeding, keeping and selling dogs and cats very much diverge between Member States and there is extensive evidence of sub-standard practices and **abuse**.

In addition, the **illegal trade in dogs and cats has soared**, accelerated by a growing online market which now accounts for 60% of all dog and cat sales in the EU. A new report published today denounces the extent of the illegal trade in dogs and cats, as well as the current loopholes that allow it to happen.

Today's proposal does not present new regulations for citizens and pet owners. It establishes uniform EU rules for the welfare of dogs and cats that are bred or kept in breeding establishments, in pet shops as well as in shelters:

- For the first time ever, minimum standards will apply to the **breeding, housing, care and handling** of these animals across the EU.
- Strict **traceability requirements**, together with a publicly available website to **check the identification and registration of dogs and cats supplied**, will help authorities control the breeding and trade of dogs and cats and buyers to check that rules have been followed.
- Member States will need to offer **training to animal handlers** and anyone buying a dog or cat will be informed about the importance of **responsible ownership**.
- **Imports** of dogs and cats will have to meet equivalent welfare standards.

Reply to the European citizens' initiative 'Fur Free Europe'

The Commission also responded today to a **European Citizens' Initiative**. The initiative "Fur Free Europe" calls on the Commission to take action to prohibit: (i) the keeping and killing of animals for the sole or main purpose of fur production and (ii) the placement of farmed animal fur, and products containing such fur, on the EU market.

As explained in the reply, the initiative raises important issues regarding the protection of human, animal and environmental health, which the Commission will assess following its « **One Health approach** », which has as core principle the recognition that human, animal and environmental health are inextricably linked.

The Commission has also tasked EFSA to provide a scientific opinion on the welfare of animals farmed for fur. Building further on this scientific input, and on an assessment of economic and social impacts, the Commission will then communicate on the most appropriate action by March 2026.
