Responsible ownership and care of equidae

2016/2078(INI) - 01/02/2017 - Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading

The Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development adopted an own-initiative report by Julie GIRLING (ECR, UK) on the responsible ownership and care of equidae.

Members recognised the considerable **economic, environmental and social contribution** equidae make throughout the EU. The equid sector within the EU is worth over EUR 100 billion per annum and created approximately 900 000 jobs.

The estimated **7 million equidae** in the European Union perform varied roles: sources of milk and meat, they are also competition and recreational animals to working animals in transport, tourism, rehabilitation and education therapies, research animals, and wild and semi-feral animals.

Against this background, Members called for **greater EU-level acknowledgement of the equid sector**, and its benefits for the rural economy, and for it to be incorporated to a greater extent into the various CAP components.

They encouraged Member States to create an environment in which on-farm businesses are viable.

European guidelines: the Commission is called upon to develop European guidelines on **good practice** in the equid sector for various users and specialists.

These guidelines should:

- **consider the multifunctional role of equidae** by including guidance on responsible breeding, animal health and welfare and the benefits of equid sterilisation, work in tourism, agriculture and forestry, species-appropriate transport and slaughter and protection against fraudulent practices, including doping;
- **be accessible** in a variety of formats and languages to breeders, equid societies, farms, stables, sanctuaries, transporters and slaughterhouses.

Sustainable tourism: Members called on the Commission to recommit to the development of a **European charter for sustainable and responsible tourism**, with the dissemination of clear information to help tourists and stakeholders make welfare-friendly choices when deciding whether or not to use the services of working equidae.

Protection of animals and responsible ownership: the Commission is called upon to establish new **reference centres** for the protection of animals and to improve levels of full compliance with, and consistent enforcement of, legislation, along with the dissemination of information and best practice relating to animal welfare.

The Commission is called upon to :

- propose a shortened maximum journey limit for all movements of horses for slaughter;
- enhance scientific research in order to develop humane methods of slaughter better suited to equidae.

Members recalled the principle that any cruel, abusive treatment by any owner, trainer, groom or other person **must not be tolerated anywhere**, under any circumstances. Members States are called upon to apply stricter legislation regarding the mistreatment and to properly investigate reports of inhumane practices and welfare violations vis-à-vis equidae.

Lastly, the report stressed the need to **clarify the VAT law** applying to the equine sector in order to foster the development of a growth- and jobs-oriented equine sector.