Responsible ownership and care of equidae

2016/2078(INI) - 14/03/2017 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 656 votes to 10, with 27 abstentions, a resolution 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.

Recognition of the sector: 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, Parliament 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. It 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.

Member States are urged to establish **voluntary labour guidelines** including daily working hours and rest periods to protect working equidae from overwork and economic exploitation.

Sustainable tourism: Parliament called on the Commission to recommit to the development of a **European charter for sustainable and responsible tourism** and to issue guidance on welfare-friendly tourism models with regard to working equidae.

Protection of animals and responsible ownership: Members stressed that equid owners should have a **minimum level of knowledge** of equid husbandry, and that with ownership comes a personal responsibility for the standard of health and welfare of the animals in their care. Parliament underlined the importance of Animal Welfare **Reference Centres** for the protection and welfare of the animals and called on the Commission to:

- encourage and collect exchanges of good practices and educational programmes of different Member States in terms of animal welfare;
- conduct regular audits of the slaughterhouses on their territory that are licensed to take equidae and increase the number of inspections on donkey and horse milk farms;

- ensure the proper application and effective and uniform enforcement of existing EU legislation on animal transport and propose a shortened maximum journey limit for all movements of horses for slaughter;
- promote exchanges of good practices to facilitate rational use of medicines for equidae;
- 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 resolution 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. It also called on the Commission and the Member States to support the work of the European Horse Network and the European State Stud Association, as they play an important role in the development of the European horse sector.