# Welfare of dogs and cats and their traceability

2023/0447(COD) - 07/12/2023 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE: establish minimum harmonised rules that ensure the proper functioning of the internal market while ensuring a high level of welfare of dogs and cats and their traceability.

PROPOSED ACT: Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council.

ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT: the European Parliament decides in accordance with the ordinary legislative procedure and on an equal footing with the Council.

BACKGROUND: 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 professional breeding, keeping and selling dogs and cats very much diverge between Member States. There is also 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.

Currently, there is no EU legislation on the welfare of dogs and cats while the situation within Member States is extremely variable and uneven, both in terms of welfare standards or traceability. In absence of common framework, individual action of Member States has limited effect and cannot address key issues while dogs and cats are traded freely in the EU. In addition, in absence of common rules on traceability, illegal trade from third countries is facilitated.

CONTENT: the objective of this proposal is to **regulate the trade in dogs and cats in the internal market**, including imports from third countries, to ensure the rational development of the sector and avoid barriers to trade and **combat illegal trade** in cats and dogs while ensuring a high level of protection of animal welfare. It lays down minimum animal welfare requirements for the breeding, keeping and placing on the Union market of dogs and cats.

More specifically, the proposal:

- covers the breeding and keeping of dogs and cats in establishments (including pet shops and animal shelters) and their placing on the market or their offer for adoption at no cost. It does not apply to small establishments;

- covers the **traceability** of dogs and cats placed on the market or supplied in the Union. It excludes dogs and cats kept for scientific purposes;

- introduces the principles of animal welfare based on the concept of the “five domains”, i.e. the needs of animals in terms of nutrition, environment, health, behaviour and mental state;

- establishes an obligation for operators to **notify their activities** to the competent authorities as well as to inform customers on responsible ownership.

- sets out requirements for the competence of animal caretakers and requires establishments to have veterinary visits;

- defines technical requirements on feeding and watering, housing, health, behavioural needs and painful practices, for breeding establishments, pet shops and shelters (however a number of provisions are not required for shelters). In addition, it requires breeding establishments to be approved by the competent authorities. Provisions on housing, health and the approval of breeding establishment have a deferred application of 5 years;

- obliges establishments keeping dogs and cats and suppliers of dogs and cats in the Union to identify the concerned animals by **microchip** and to register them in a database;

- requires suppliers of dogs or cats to provide **evidence of identification and registration**. In addition, **online platforms** where dogs or cats are offered for supply are required to enable suppliers to provide **proof of the identification and the registration** of dogs or cats offered on those platforms. It requires the Commission to ensure the development of a system publicly available free of charge verifying the authenticity of the identification and registration of a dog or cat;

- requires competent authorities to offer **training** for animal caretakers on animal welfare and to approve training programmes on animal welfare;

- requires Member States to establish a **database** for dogs and cats identified by microchip;

- contains rules on **stricter national measures**. Member States are allowed to maintain such rules that apply when the Regulation enters into force. Furthermore, Member States are allowed to adopt new legislation which establishes stricter national provisions as regards housing conditions, enrichment, mutilations and breeding strategies, provided that they are consistent with the Union's respective rules and that they do not restrict the free movement and placing on the market of products not complying with the stricter national requirements;

- requires the Commission to publish a monitoring report every 5 years on the welfare of dogs and cats placed on the market. Member States may put in place effective, proportionate and dissuasive penalties, and to notify these to the Commission.

***Budgetary implications***

The proposal will require additional human resources for managing the implementation of the legislation and the development of interoperable databases for the identification and registration of dogs and cats.

In parallel, an operational budget of EUR 1.5 million is estimated to be needed for the development and initial operation of the system of verification of the authenticity of this identification and registration for offerings via online Platforms and ensuring the interoperability of national databases and then, EUR 300 000 per year for its maintenance and operation.