Welfare of dogs and cats and their traceability

2023/0447(COD) - 19/06/2025 - Text adopted by Parliament, partial vote at 1st reading/single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 457 votes to 17, with 86 abstentions, **amendments** to the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the welfare of dogs and cats and their traceability.

The matter was referred back to the relevant committee for interinstitutional negotiations.

Purpose and scope of application

The regulation will apply to the breeding, keeping, placing on the market and entry into the Union of dogs and cats. It will not apply to natural persons who keep dogs or cats for personal or family pet purposes and who allow these animals to reproduce, up to a maximum of one litter per species and per household, per period of eighteen months, without placing them on the market.

In order to exclude from the scope of the regulation **occasional and irregular donations** of small numbers of dogs and cats by natural persons, Members clarified the definition of ‘placing on the market’, which only operators responsible for a breeding establishment, selling establishment or a shelter will be able to carry out.

Regarding exemptions from the obligations, Members proposed distinguishing between establishments based on their size. A breeding establishment in which a **maximum of two litters per calendar year** are produced for marketing would only be subject to certain obligations.

Obligations of establishment operators

Animal operators and carers would be **responsible for the welfare of dogs or cats** kept in their establishments and under their control and for minimising risks to their welfare. In the case of **foster homes**, the responsibility would lie with the operator on whose behalf the dogs or cats are kept. Operators must not commit any acts of cruelty, abuse, or mistreatment of dogs or cats and must not abandon dogs or cats.

Obligations regarding breeding strategies

Members insisted on **banning crossbreeding** between cats or dogs from the same family, to avoid inbreeding. They also call for a ban on breeding dogs or cats with **excessive conformational traits** that could have a negative impact on their welfare. Members specified that such practices could be allowed in exceptional and duly justified cases to preserve local breeds with limited genetic heritage. The Commission will be empowered to adopt delegated acts regarding extreme conformations by 2030.

It would also be prohibited to use animals with extreme conformational traits - as well as mutilated animals - in **shows**, **exhibitions and competitions**.

Approval of breeding establishments

Operators of breeding establishments should place dogs or cats on the market only after obtaining approval for their establishment from the competent authority. The competent authorities will carry out **on-site inspections** to verify that the establishment meets the requirements of the regulation.

Obligation to provide information on responsible possession

Operators should provide the purchaser of a dog or cat with information on responsible ownership and the specific needs of the dog or cat in terms of diet, care, health, housing conditions and behavioural needs, as well as information on its health, including its vaccination status. Where the relinquishment of dogs and cats is advertised online, **the warning** should specify that caring for an animal requires financial resources and that abandoning the animal once it is in the care of the owner is forbidden.

Accommodation, health, painful practices

Operators and keepers should ensure that **feeding and drinking facilities** are clean and constructed and installed to ensure equal access for all dogs and cats. It is specified that the keeping or sale of dogs or cats in **pet stores** will be prohibited. Euthanasia of a dog or cat in animal shelters as a population control measure would also be prohibited.

Mutilation practices, such as ear cropping, tail docking, claw removal, or any other partial or total amputation of digits, would be prohibited unless medically indicated. **Sterilisation** should only be performed under anesthesia and prolonged analgesia by a veterinarian. The veterinarian may consider non-surgical sterilisation instead of castration.

Also prohibited would be the prolonged use of muzzles, except if necessary for health reasons, the use of **prong collars** and the use of **choke collars** without a safety top.

To prevent pregnancy-related complications and avoid compromising their welfare, Members proposed allowing up to **three litters within a two-year period**, followed by an adequate recovery period, which should not be less than one year for bitches and queens that have had three litters. Dogs and cats should be **exposed to light** for at least 7 hours a day and dogs should be walked daily for at least one hour a day in total.

Identification and registration of dogs and cats

Members called for all dogs and cats kept in the European Union to be identified by means of a **subcutaneous transponder containing a microchip**, implanted under the supervision of a veterinarian. Operators of establishments should ensure that dogs and cats born in their establishments are individually identified within **three months** of their birth and, in any case, before the date of their placing on the market.

Members also called for microchipped dogs and cats to be registered in **interoperable national databases** . The microchip identification number and information relating to the relevant national database should be centralised in an index database managed by the Commission.

Imports from third countries

The amended text distinguishes between the importation of dogs and cats for the purpose of placing them on the Union market and non-commercial movements, with a view to preventing fraud and improving the traceability of dogs and cats.

Dogs and cats entering the Union for the purpose of being **placed on the Union market** must be identified, prior to entry, by a veterinarian and registered in a national database within two working days of their entry into the Union. The entry of dogs and cats into the Union in the form of a **non-commercial movement** must be notified in advance by their owners in an online Union database of moving pet animals at least five working days before their arrival in the Union.

Data protection

Members have introduced data protection provisions to ensure the protection of personal data contained, for example, in dog and cat databases or in information transmitted by establishments.