Welfare of dogs and cats and their traceability

2023/0447(COD) - 28/04/2026 - Text adopted by Parliament, 1st reading/single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 558 votes to 35, with 52 abstentions, a legislative resolution on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the welfare of dogs and cats and their traceability.

The European Parliament adopted its position at first reading by amending the Commission's proposal as follows:

Material scope

This regulation applies to the breeding, keeping, tracing, placing on the market and entry into the Union of dogs and cats. It does not apply to the breeding, keeping, placing on the market or entry into the Union of dogs or cats intended or used for scientific purposes or for clinical trials required for the marketing authorisation of veterinary medicinal products.

General welfare principles

Among these principles, it is specified that dogs and cats must be kept in an environment that is appropriate and regularly cleaned, that is secure and comfortable, particularly with regard to **space, air quality, temperature, light**, as well as protection against adverse climatic conditions, and that is large enough to prevent overcrowding and facilitate their movement.

Operators will be **responsible for the welfare** of dogs and cats kept in establishments under their responsibility and control. In the case of foster homes, the responsibility should lie with the operator on whose behalf dogs or cats are kept. Such operators should not place more than a combined total of five dogs or cats, or one litter with or without a mother, in a foster home at any given time, should provide the foster family with adequate information on the animal welfare obligations as well as the individual needs of the dogs or cats.

Operators must not commit **any acts of cruelty, abuse, or mistreatment** towards dogs or cats and must not **abandon** the dogs or cats they breed or keep. Before ceasing operations at an establishment, operators should ensure that any dogs or cats kept there are placed either by becoming the owners of the cat or dog themselves or by transferring responsibility or ownership of the dogs and cats to other operators or purchasers.

Operators of breeding establishments that either produce or intend to produce more than five litters per calendar year or that keep more than a combined total of five bitches or queens at any given time should place dogs or cats on the market only after their breeding establishment has been **approved** by the competent authority.

Ban on commercial practices leading to abuses and health risks

Breeding between parents and their offspring, between grandparents and grandchildren, as well as between siblings and half-siblings, will be prohibited.

The inbreeding of dogs and cats between parents and offspring, between siblings, between half-siblings or between grandparents and grandchildren should be prohibited. Breeding dogs or cats to produce exaggerated or excessive characteristics that pose significant health risks will also be prohibited.

Dogs and cats exhibiting **excessive conformational traits** or having undergone **mutilations** that have altered their physical characteristics must be excluded from shows, exhibitions, and beauty contests.

It should also be prohibited to: (i) tying up body parts (tethering), unless required for medical reasons and limited to the minimum period necessary; (ii) using **muzzles**, unless required for medical reasons or animal or human safety reasons, limited to the minimum period necessary and during which the dog or cat is supervised; (iii) using **prong collars or choke collars** without a safety stop.

Identification and registration of dogs and cats

The regulation stipulates that all dogs and cats kept in establishments, placed on the market or owned by pet owners or by any other natural or legal persons shall be individually identified by means of a si**ngle injectable transponder containing a readable microchip**. This identification must be carried out within **three months** of their birth and, in any case, before the date they are placed on the market, and must be performed by a veterinarian or an authorised qualified person.

Operators of selling establishments and shelters, and operators who place and are responsible for dogs and cats in foster homes, should ensure that dogs and cats that enter their establishments or come under their responsibility are individually identified within **30 days** of arrival and in any event before the date of their placing on the market.

Within **two working days** after their identification, the dogs and cats should be registered by a veterinarian in an **interoperable national database**. Member States may grant exemptions for dogs intended for use in military, police and customs services.

The regulation also provides for: (i) the registration in the databases of changes of ownership within 2 weeks, as well as the death of the animal; (ii) the replacement of the transponder if it becomes unreadable, with updating of the data.

Sellers, breeders, and shelters have **four years** from the legislation's entry into force to prepare. For pet owners who do not sell animals, this obligation will apply after 10 years for dogs and after 15 years for cats.

Entry of dogs and cats into the Union

Dogs and cats may be brought into the Union for the purpose of being placed on the Union market only if they have been bred and kept in compliance with any of the requirements mentioned in the regulation, the requirements recognised by the Union as being equivalent or requirements contained in a specific agreement between the Union and the exporting country.

The operator responsible for the import of the dogs or cats into the Union should ensure that they are registered in a national database, by a veterinarian, **within five working days** after they were brought into the Union. The non-commercial movement of a dog or cat from a third country or territory to the Union should be pre-notified by its owner to the Union pet traveller database at least five working days before the dog or cat crosses the Union border, except in exceptional circumstances.

Where the dog or cat stays more than six months in the Union, the owner should ensure that it is registered in the database of the Member State of residence, by a veterinarian, within five working days after the expiry of the sixth month since it entered the Union.