



DOG IMPORTING NATION **SWITZERLAND**

EXPLOITATION, GREED FOR PROFIT, CRIMINALITY



SWISS ANIMAL PROTECTION SAP

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The full report, containing further details and overview tables, is available at
www.tierschutz.com/hunde/import



Summary

When people want to get a dog these days, they usually go online first to find out about the various different options open to them. Every day, several hundred adverts for puppies and dogs from animal rescue organisations from all over the world appear on the internet, and it's extremely difficult for anyone who is not specifically searching for a particular pedigree breed of dog to resist all the heart-rending stories about the fates of dogs from countries such as Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Spain and Italy. In addition, people believe that they are doing good by taking a dog from a foreign animal protection organisation, and actively undertaking positive animal protection work. In many cases, however, this proves to be an illusion.

Animal protection, animal support and animal placement organisations pop up all over Europe, like mushrooms out of the ground – in fact, many organisations of this type exist here in Switzerland too. SAP has carried out in-depth research in an attempt to show the ways in which valuable animal protection work being undertaken on site in these countries can be differentiated from unscrupulous profiteering activities. The result, summarised in brief: despite political endeavours to develop uniformity across Europe, animal protection problems vary a great deal across the various European countries. They depend upon factors that can only be controlled in the individual countries and regions themselves. These include the local economic circumstances as well as the (availability or lack of) statutory regulations and the associated provision of resources, as well as the specific national sensibilities of the population in their dealings with animals. It is therefore impossible to prepare a generally-applicable recipe for the best way to deal with the adverts for dogs or the acquisition of dogs from foreign animal protection organisations.

Nevertheless, the «Buying a dog? Keep your eyes open!» commandment will always apply ¹: Anyone who wants a dog must take the trouble to find out for themselves where that animal has come from, and what kind of life it must have lived there – even if that means going on a journey of several hundred kilometres. This is the only possible way for us to look behind the scenes at animal protection activities locally so that we can assess the level of seriousness of an organisation developed on the basis of a different concept. In fact, good animal protection can also sometimes mean not taking on an animal.

I. Introduction

About 500 dogs are imported into Switzerland from other countries every week. Only a portion of these come from serious foreign breeders. The majority are dogs originating from uncontrolled and often illegal puppy production sites. However, there has also been an increase in the importing of dogs from foreign dogs homes and rescue centres, mainly from Spain, Italy, Hungary and Romania. The breeding, rearing and transportation of such dogs is often associated with a great deal of suffering for the animals.

¹ «Buying a dog? Keep your eyes open!», an information brochure from the Swiss Federal Food Safety and Veterinary Office FSV and Swiss Animal Protection SAP about buying dogs, obtainable from www.hundekauf.ch. You should also check the backgrounds and facts about the illegal trade in dogs: www.tierschutz.com/hunde/docs/hundehandel.html

This uncontrolled form of puppy production often hides a broad range of evil, from simple exploitation and financial greed to criminality. From the animal protection viewpoint, it is also absolutely incomprehensible that killing centres for unwanted dogs are still operating within Europe in the 21st century. The barbarous scenarios played out on the streets and in animal shelters in crowded conurbations when the authorities and their contractors attempt to reduce or eradicate the population of stray or street dogs in the most brutal of ways are morally and socially indefensible.

At the same time, this barbaric, heartless handling of unwanted dogs also encourages the emergence of large numbers of animal protection, animal support and animal rescue organisations, as well as collection and care centres. However, their self-declared (animal protection) activities are not always transparent, and they too may include a number of black sheep, whose only motive is financial gain. Could animal protection have been put forward here as a pretext for a lucrative business? What should we bear in mind when we buy a dog from abroad so that we don't become the victim of criminal schemes, or involuntarily add to the suffering of animals abroad? What should be done to solve the problem of strays and street dogs in the various EU nations? This report examines these and other questions. It sheds light on the current situation, including by means of a broad survey undertaken in Switzerland and abroad, and provides information about the backgrounds, interconnections and consequences for animals and their keepers². An estimated 100 million dogs, strays and streets dogs exist across Europe. According to a statistic from CAROdog.eu (2014)³, between 60 and 80 million of these dogs actually have an owner – which means that about 20 to 40 million dogs still live alone and off their own wits as strays on the streets of Europe.

The «dog's breakfast» of the law

Despite the fact that the statutes of the Council of the European Convention (in which non-EU states such as Switzerland also participate) act as international treaties that affect animal protection throughout Europe, only a small number of specific EU regulations currently exist for animal protection in relation to commercial enterprises involving dogs and cats. It is left to the 28 member states to implement nationally-applicable provisions – or even to do very little or nothing at all for the protection of dogs. As a result, the actual provisions vary a great deal from nation to nation. In some cases, for example, the rules are extremely strict, while they are very loose in others – and in some states they are completely absent. The sale of dogs through pet shops or in markets continues to be permitted in many European countries, just as it always has been – and only three EU nations (France, Austria and Luxembourg)⁴ impose control measures on internet trade / internet offers; recently these have also been imposed in Switzerland. Nevertheless, even when animal-friendly legislation does exist, it is completely useless if it isn't strictly and consistently enforced.

Another key area for the protection of foreign animals is the legality of the killing of healthy animals. Estonia, Finland, France, Ireland, Croatia, Latvia, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia and Hungary all explicitly permit the killing of healthy stray dogs and dogs sheltering in animal centres. The regulations also lack clarity in Belgium, Denmark, the UK, Luxembourg, Poland, Slovenia and Spain, which is why healthy animals continue to be killed in these countries on a regular basis. The practice is forbidden in Bulgaria, Germany, Greece, the Netherlands, Italy, Lithuania, Austria, Sweden, the Czech Republic and the Spanish province of Catalonia. The conditions under which killing is allowed also differs among the EU nations; while some restrict the practice to veterinary surgeons, others also allow it to be carried out by police officers, butchers or others – and in some countries there are no legal provisions on this at all. In most of the countries where healthy dogs may be killed, an average of 14 days have to elapse after the dog has arrived in the animal shelter before it can be killed, but four of the EU nations do not even legislate on this. The animal shelters set the time limit themselves.

² SAP Report on "Canine Import Nation: Switzerland". The full report with all the background information, survey results and overview tables is available from www.tierschutz.com/hunde/import.

³ CAROdog.eu, www.carodog.eu/statistics-on-cats-and-dogs/

⁴ SAP Report on "Gone to the dogs": The illegal dog trade and importation promote animal suffering and criminality, overview in the form of tables P. 20 f., www.tierschutz.com/hunde/docs/pdf/report_hundehandel.pdf.

II. The evaluation of SAP's survey

Sections of Swiss Animal Protection SAP

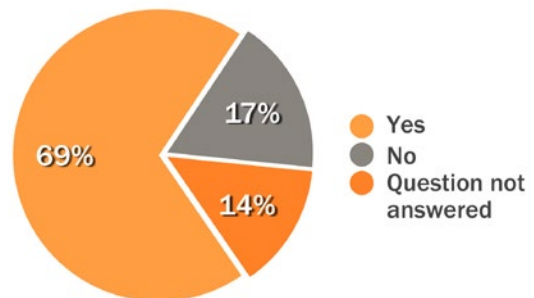
A total of 62 sections were surveyed, and 29 of these returned the survey form to us.

Are you aware of any animal protection problems that cause suffering to dogs imported from abroad? What are these problems?

The sections address many animal protection problems involving dogs that originate from mass production establishments in other countries, on the one hand. They also tackle those that affect dogs originating from foreign animal rescue facilities. Puppies from mass breeding stations grow up in an extremely low-stimulus environment, are barely socialised and are often separated from their mothers too early. Animals from foreign animal rescue facilities have often lived on the streets for many years, and have learned

to scavenge for their own food and defend their territory. These types of living conditions can result in serious health and behavioural problems. For example, many of these dogs suffer from endoparasites and ectoparasites, infectious illnesses and injuries that have, to some extent, been caused by abuse. As a result of their past experience, dogs like this are often overanxious, somewhat aggressive or demonstrate marked territorial behaviour traits. The sections point out that some organisations that import animals into Switzerland from animal rescue centres abroad fail to provide the owners of those animals with enough preparation for the task ahead of them. For example, they do not organise a «getting to know you» stage between the dog and the new owner, or any follow-up support. Complaints are also often made about a lack of expert knowledge.

On the question of the import of puppies from mass breeding stations, many sections regard buyers from Switzerland as sharing the blame. In most cases, they assume a certain «don't want to know» attitude about the circumstances in which these dogs are reared. Many people want a fashionable dog or a particular breed of dog, but are unwilling to pay more than the minimum possible amount for them, or to accept a long wait for their arrival. The sections believe that stricter controls and tougher punishments might lead to improvements. For example, municipalities could demand proof of origin for a dog when people are paying their dog tax, or when a new dog is being registered with a veterinary surgery or animal protection organisation.



How can we recognise a reputable animal rescue/animal assistance organisation that brings dogs into Switzerland, or procures dogs for Switzerland?

The main problem associated with this question is that a disreputable nature is not immediately obvious to a private individual, particularly as the deception is often executed perfectly on the internet or in brochures. Even visits to see them on site and discussions with representatives of these organisations may sometimes not be enough to assess their integrity and credibility beyond doubt.

A reputable animal rescue or animal assistance organisation is characterised by transparent structures. It must possess the necessary permits and have trained staff and people to contact within Switzerland. Importantly, it is impossible for animal rescue alone to address the problem, and the organisation must also be en-

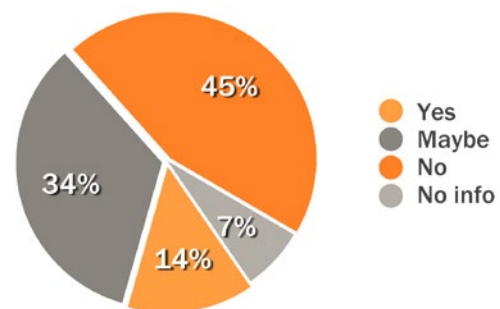


gaged in improving the situation on site. It must be able to illustrate this clearly. No procurement activities should take place over the internet; the dogs should arrive in a care shelter within Switzerland first, where the initial stage of settling in and assessment by the staff can take place. Finding a suitable owner should be left to a second step, while any handover should only take place after an exhaustive familiarisation stage. The sections also believe it is important that checks on the new home should be carried out before and after the placement, and that an explicit offer should be made to take back any dogs whose placements fail. Ideally, external quality checks on the organisations could also lead to the creation of lists of reputable organisations to which people could apply if they were interested.

Are these kinds of rescue/assistance campaigns sensible from your point of view?

Ten sections clearly reject these kinds of campaigns. Thirteen sections express ambivalent opinions about them. Two sections in each case are clearly in favour of such campaigns or only have minor misgivings. Two sections did not answer this question.

Most of the sections demonstrate some ambivalence when it comes to the question of whether such rescue operations are helpful and sensible for dogs from abroad. This is the classic dilemma between heart and head. On the one hand, they stress that sustainable animal protection can only be realised on site, and that Switzerland has enough dogs of its own who are in need of help, and who are also waiting in animal centres for new homes. On the other hand, they still take pleasure in every dog that finds a good new owner in Switzerland.



Veterinary authorities (Switzerland and Liechtenstein), the Swiss Federal Food Safety and Veterinary Office (FSVO) and the Schweizerische Kynologische Gesellschaft (Swiss Kennel Club)

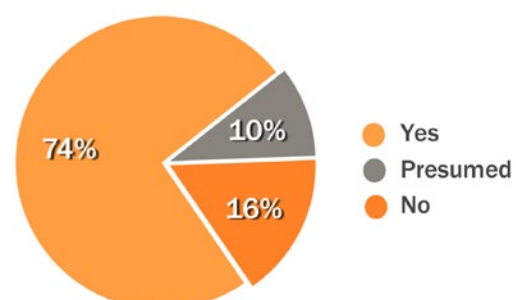
Twenty-four veterinary authorities were approached and seventeen replied.

In addition, the returns of the FSVO and the SKG were also integrated into the evaluation. A total of 19 answers were evaluated.

Are you aware of any animal protection problems that cause suffering to dogs imported from abroad? What are these problems?

Yes: 14; Presumed: 3; No: 2

A large proportion of the animal protection problems addressed in this case relate to the state of health of foreign dogs, which is often poor. In addition to infections, parasites and malnutrition, they also mention a very poor general condition and the problem of rabies. The terrible past of these animals often leaves them traumatised, which makes them anxious or even aggressive, and they find it hard to adjust to the conditions presented by their new surroundings. The catastrophic conditions in foreign animal centres are named as a cause, as is the fact that the buyers of this type of dog are often



unsuited to the difficult task they face, and that they have too little information about the previous history of the dog.

When it comes to the internet trade in dogs from mass breeding stations, they refer to the fact that there is an over-supply and that it is therefore very easy to find «pure breed» dogs. Breeding organisations such as these are directed purely by profit; the sellers remain unidentified and they lead to illegal imports. In addition, many of these dogs suffer from genetic problems because they are inbred.

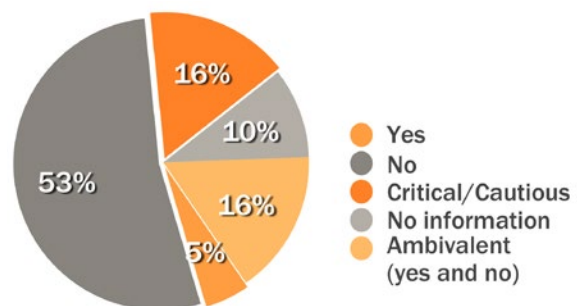
How can we recognise a reputable animal rescue/animal assistance organisation that brings dogs into Switzerland, or procures dogs for Switzerland?

Some participants in the survey believe that a reputable animal assistance or animal rescue organisation can be recognised by the fact that they only work locally on site and actively undertake animal protection. On the other hand, others go rather less far, making reputability dependent upon the conditions under which the procurement has to take place. One important feature here is that all the statutory aspects must be observed and that the procurement is undertaken professionally (no procurement via photos alone, trial handovers must be possible, precise investigations of suitability must be undertaken on both the dog and the owner).

Are these kinds of rescue/assistance campaigns sensible from your point of view?

No: 10; Yes: 1; Critical/cautious: 3; Ambivalent: 3; No information: 2

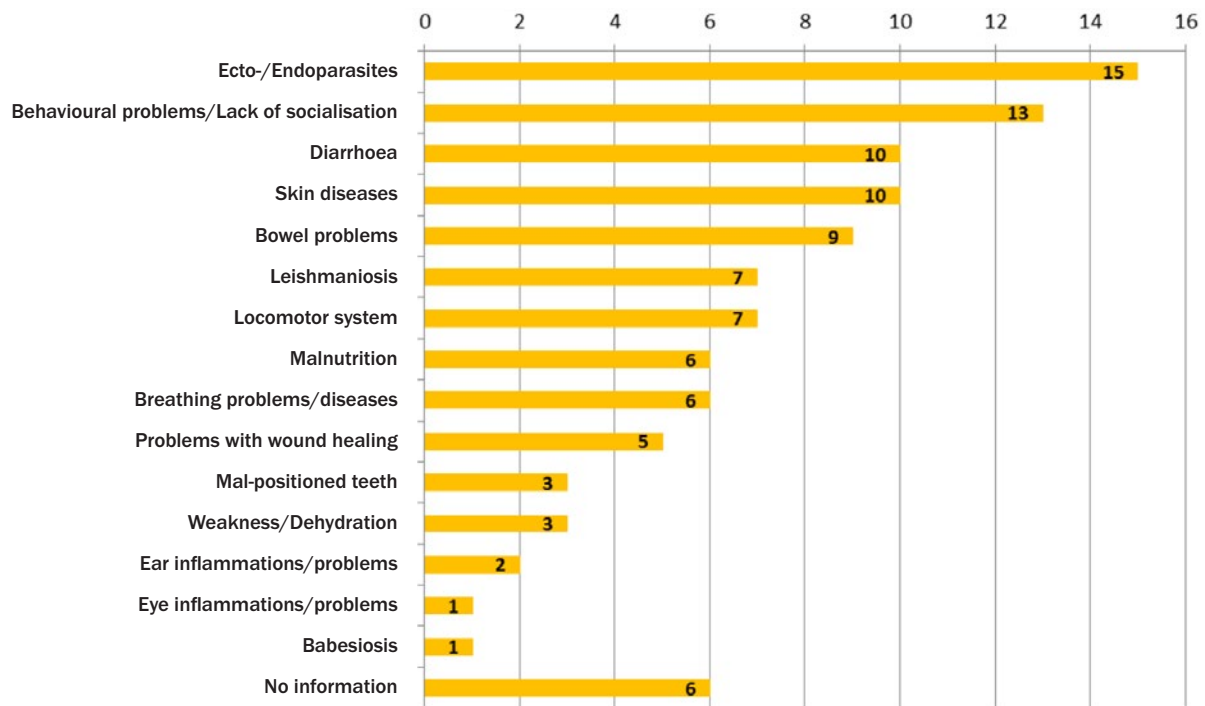
By far the majority of the replies (Cantonal vets, FSVO and SKG) are against them, or are at least sceptical. They put on record that conditions for many dogs in the countries of origin are completely deplorable, which means that life would certainly often be better for an individual dog after procurement, but many of those who replied doubt that the dog will really feel content in Switzerland. In this context, they mention that about half of all biting incidents are blamed on dogs with foreign microchips, and are often blamed on those who originated from foreign organisations. It has also been established that this type of dog is repeatedly handed over to people who would have no hope of obtaining a dog from a Swiss animal centre – e.g. older people or people whose living conditions would not permit a dog to be kept in circumstances that are appropriate for its species. One frequently-expressed objection is that such rescue campaigns of this type fail to lead to any improvement, and that, on the contrary, they actually drive a dubious market still further.



Veterinary surgeons from Switzerland

The survey was addressed to 813 veterinary surgeons. Only 39 replies were received.

What are the clinical pictures and/or diagnoses and symptoms with which you are often faced in imported dogs/puppies (list in the order of decreasing frequency)?



Infections involving Giardia, Sarcopites, distemper, parvovirus and genetically-determined diseases such as patella luxation, elbow/hip joint dysplasia, deformities, old fractures and traumatic injuries (physical and psychological).

How often have the dogs/puppies presented to you had to be euthanised because of their state of health or extremely poor prognosis?

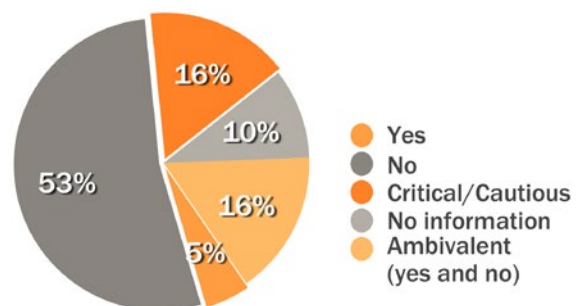
Never: 12

Rarely: 25

In 2 of 10 cases: 1

No information: 1

Cases of euthanasia as the result of serious behavioural problems were mentioned in particular.

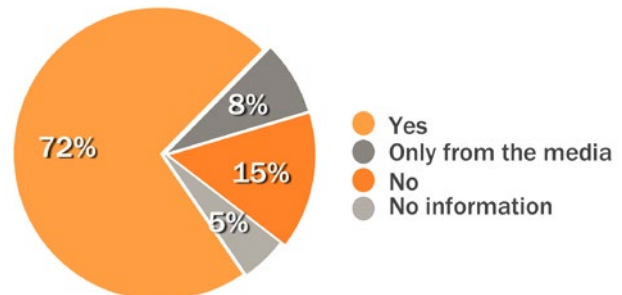


Are you aware of any animal protection problems that cause suffering to dogs imported from abroad? What are these problems?

Yes: 28; Only from the media: 3; No: 6; No information: 2

A majority of the replies stated that they knew of animal protection problems in the aforementioned countries. The problem with street dogs is that they either poorly attach with humans or not at all, and they are used to operating in packs. Therefore, they do not often get used to the life of a domestic animal in Switzerland, and they react to it with behavioural problems. In addition, these types of dogs often suffer the consequences of deficient or defective nourishment.

In the case of puppies from mass breeding stations, they mentioned the catastrophic rearing conditions as the primary cause of concern: excessively early separation from the mother, a lack of socialisation, animals kept in crates that were too small for them, low-quality food and a lack of veterinary care. Cultural reasons and poor economic conditions were both mentioned as causes for these conditions. One participant in the survey believed that the animals acted as a mirror to the conditions suffered by the people in these countries.



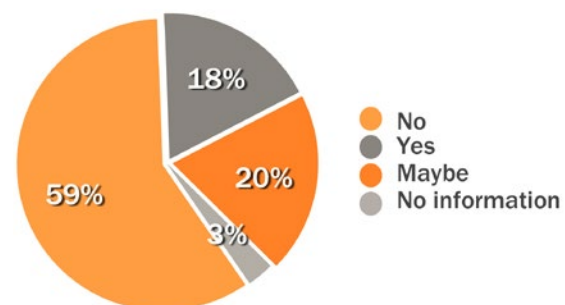
How can we recognise a reputable animal rescue/animal assistance organisation that brings dogs into Switzerland, or procures dogs for Switzerland?

Many of the veterinary surgeons who replied agree that this question is extremely difficult to answer. Some of them believe that truly reputable organisations only work locally. They regard the importing of dogs as counterproductive because it removes the opportunity for the local authorities to improve the situation. According to some of the participants, reputable organisations are characterised by the fact they have been established in the locality for a long time, have a high level of recognition, are recognised by the authorities as NGOs and have well-trained employees. The organisations must be transparent and must have a website that provides precise information and publishes all its contact information. A reputable procurement procedure, veterinary checks on the dogs and the fulfilment of all the statutory provisions naturally also belong to the characteristics of a reputable organisation.

Are these kinds of rescue/assistance campaigns sensible from your point of view?

No: 23; Yes: 7; Undecided: 8; No information: 1

In a similar way to the sections, the veterinary surgeons are also rather torn when it comes to the sense involved in rescue and assistance campaigns. For example, they emphasise that assistance provided on site must take precedence and that importation will not solve the problem. We also discovered that a great deal of money has been earned under the cloak of animal protection. Once they have been neutered, street dogs belong back on the streets, where they act as «placeholders». There is some disagreement about whether street dogs are suitable as domestic animals. Some find that many of these dogs are «too set in their ways», while others believe that stray dogs are often extremely sociable.



Authorities in the import and transit nations of Germany and Austria

Circulation/Addressees: 19

Returns: 4 (2 x Federal Ministries (Austria and Germany), 2 x Federal states in Germany (Hessen and Saarland))

Are you aware of any animal protection problems that cause suffering to dogs imported into Germany or Austria or transiting through those countries?

Yes: 3; No: 0; Presumed: 1

The problems most frequently mentioned by German and Austrian authorities are of a health-related nature (diseases, parasites and genetic illnesses) as well as behavioural problems suffered by such dogs. In the case of the mass breeding problem, they talk about the lack of hygiene, inbreeding, breeding for unhealthy traits and the lack of social contact and environmental stimuli, as well as about premature separation from the mother. The participants in the survey also mentioned the killing centres in animal shelters, and the fact that hardly any neutering campaigns took place and very little action was taken to sensitise the population to this problem. Different attitudes towards animals exist in these types of countries, for cultural reasons. Many people are also afraid of dogs because they are regarded as carriers of disease and because people are afraid of being bitten in an attack by a pack of dogs.

How can we recognise a reputable animal rescue/animal assistance organisation that brings dogs into Germany and Austria, or procures dogs for Germany and Austria?

The German authorities stress that a reputable organisation only takes up its duties once it has obtained a permit from the responsible veterinary authorities. It must be officially registered and is subject to inspection by the veterinary authorities. Furthermore, the people responsible for any such organisations must possess evidence of their specialist competence. A reputable organisation is characterised by the fact that it fulfils all the statutory aspects with regard to animal diseases and has been in operation over many years. It is important that investments should also be made locally (e.g. in neutering campaigns) and that animals are only imported if they have a fixed place of destination.

Are these kinds of rescue/assistance campaigns sensible from your point of view?

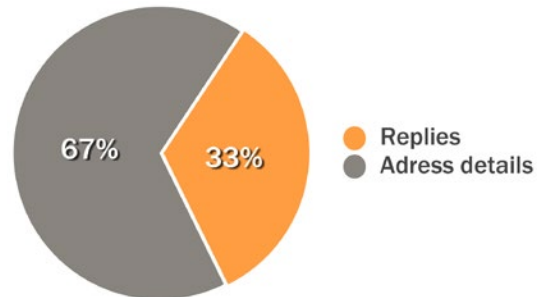
In contrast with the Swiss authorities, the authorities surveyed in Germany and Austria tend to regard such rescue campaigns as sensible, as long as they are being carried out by a reputable organisation. However, they also emphasised that they only represent an improvement for the individual animal and that they do not change anything in the deplorable conditions in their countries of origin.



European authorities and federal agencies

Addressees: 12, Returns: 7 (France, SK, Spain (the Basque country), B, H, SLO, CZ).

Evaluated: 6 (SK, E, B, H, SLO, CZ; France sent us a flyer in reply but this was not included in the evaluation of the survey).



Are there animal protection problems causing dogs to suffer in your country (in connection with stray dogs, the puppy trade and puppy production)?

Yes: 5; No: 1

How can we recognise a reputable animal rescue/animal assistance organisation that procures dogs for Switzerland from your country?

The authorities provide extremely variable replies to this question. The Slovenian authorities apparently had no knowledge of how NGOs sold dogs from Slovenia to Switzerland, and the practice was also extremely rare in the Basque country according to the authorities there. While this type of organisation needs a permit in Slovakia and is checked by the state, the authorities say that it is mostly private individuals who operate in the Czech Republic, and their activities do not come under the authorities' obligations to carry out checks.

Are these kinds of rescue/assistance campaigns sensible from your point of view?

Yes: 4; No: 2

A majority of the authorities regard such assistance campaigns as helpful and support them. Former stray dogs will thus be provided with a new and improved life. However, the problem as a whole is also viewed critically, and it is emphasised that this does not in any way improve the overall situation of dogs locally. In the case of the illegal trade in puppies, according to the foreign authorities the NGOs are important because they inform the public about this problem and sensitise them to it.



Foreign animal protection associations, animal rescue centres and animal assistance organisations

Distribution/Addressees: 43.

Returns: 19 (15 items of feedback about the survey and 4 clarifications by phone). We visited the websites of all the participating organisations. Of all these participants, 13 were based in Switzerland, 2 in Austria and 4 in Germany.

In which countries do you operate?

Italy (Apulia), Spain (mainly Andalusia), Serbia, Greece, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, Poland.
The importing nations are: Switzerland, Germany, Austria and Luxembourg.



What are the main animal protection problems suffered by the dogs in your country of origin, and what are the causes responsible for this suffering?

Italy: In Italy (e.g. Apulia), the people who run the «Caniles» (animal shelters) receive money from the community. Animals often live through pure hell in these Caniles. No medical care and too little food. In some Caniles, however, the assistants do care for the dogs: they let them out, take them out for a walk, put them on line and search for suitable owners. Nevertheless, daily life for most of the dogs locked in these shelters is unfortunately not like this. They also fail to put terminally ill dogs to sleep – because every living dog is a source of income.

Spain: Dogs are not valued in Spain. Dogs are hardly ever neutered and the government has no programme for neutering. Unwanted dogs are simply abandoned and killed; puppies are thrown away. People involved in animal protection regularly search through containers and well shafts, where they repeatedly find dogs that have been thrown in them while still alive. In Spain, a dog is still usually a means to an end (hunting, guarding or racing) and it will be fed to an extent while it continues to fulfil this purpose. Once it loses its purpose, it is abandoned, killed, etc. One major problem relates to the use of greyhounds (Galgos) in the sport of hunting. Every year, thousands of dogs are «disposed of» at the end of the hunting season. An animal protection law does exist, but nobody takes any notice of it. Many police officers and politicians are organised into hunting groups

and are not interested in having restrictions imposed upon their own hobby for the sake of animal protection.

Hungary: Hungary is currently balanced on a threshold where it is impossible for anybody to predict how the economy is going to develop in this country. Unemployment continues to rise and the associated level of hardship is growing. While humans are finding life hard, there is hardly any money left over for animals. We repeatedly hear about animals that have been abandoned or given away because there is no cash to pay for the required microchips or the annual vaccination against rabies. Too many people buy dogs without sufficient forethought and then allow them to breed. Consistent neutering would, however, be important to contain this uncontrolled reproduction. The current process of poisoning, slaying or shooting street dogs in large-scale culling campaigns is the wrong way of going about things, and is inefficient – and the number of dogs continues to rise regardless!

Greece: The big problem here is uncontrolled reproduction and a lack of understanding of animals and their distress...and when money is short and unemployment high, animals are first to go. They are abandoned, drowned and thrown out with the rubbish. Puppies are flung over the fences of animal protection associations – and this is meant to be regarded as an animal-friendly action. The Greeks hate the Germans, so they will not support those German animal protection associations / animal shelters that are directed or supported by German people! In addition, the suffering of animals also represents a good source of income – many dubious deals certainly involve the procurement and sale of dogs.

Romania: Dogs suffer unimaginable horrors in Romania. Many people fail to allow their dog to be neutered. The puppies and sick dogs are simply disposed of. The employees at the animal shelters are paid by the state for every dog delivered to them. The dogs are dumped indiscriminately into any old crate and are often involved in biting contests that injure them in order to establish the pecking order and access scarce food resources. Many die of their injuries, or they starve or die of thirst, because the staff make no effort to feed the dogs in such a way that they can continue to live.

Slovakia: The care of animals without owners is left in the hands of the community. On the whole, they run «quarantine centres», where these animals are killed at the end of a certain period of time (which varies from operator to operator). Neutering is not commonly undertaken. This often results in unwanted litters who are either thrown out (frequently along with their mothers) or taken to quarantine centres. At the same time, pedigree dogs are also bred here for the European «market». No account at all is taken of the needs of mother dogs or their puppies. Puppies are smuggled abroad in huge numbers, while «worn out» female dogs are thrown out on the street or «disposed of» in the quarantine centres. The main reason for this behaviour is the low value placed upon the animals: they are either used for profit-making purposes (breeding), which is undertaken without any regard for the needs of the animal, or they are procured as housemates for a particular purpose (mainly as guard dogs) and must spend their lives at the end of a chain or out in the open air, often without any opportunity for suitable shelter.

Poland: The big problem here is the over-population of dogs. Within just one hour's drive around Lodz, there are five animal shelters, each of which houses over 100 dogs. Lodz itself has about 800 dogs in animal shelters. 99% of all dogs in dogs homes have been abandoned. A dog has no value to the rural population – puppies are given away and dogs are not neutered.

Serbia: Animal protection is mostly practised by private individuals, many of whom don't actually know anything about animal protection. No training opportunities are available for people who protect animals, or for people who work in animal shelters. Most dogs live under the grimmest of conditions – tied up, locked away, in the smallest and dirtiest conceivable space, exposed mercilessly without any protection from the cold in winter. The dog's food often comprises nothing other

than bread, and is much too sparse. The groups are much too big and the dogs are left to fend for themselves. These animals are often not neutered – female dogs in season are frequently killed. The death rate is extremely high. Over the past few years, attempts have been made to limit the number of stray dogs – attempts that have mainly originated from private initiatives, animal protection associations and, in part, from the state. However, these campaigns lasted only for a short time so that their effect was practically zero. People could have their animals neutered for no charge in a few cities, but this happened in too few places by far. Many microchipped dogs are caught on the streets but the owners are not prosecuted. This means that anybody can still set dogs free without having to deal with the legal consequences. In practice, there is barely any programme available to educate the population.

How can we recognise a reputable animal rescue/animal assistance centre that procures dogs for Switzerland from these countries?

Most organisations follow the motto that «We cannot save them all, but we can give a better life to each one that we do save».

Happily, the organisations replied to the question about how we can recognise their reputability in a very similar way to all the other participants in the survey. They referred to the fact that laws had to be obeyed both locally and in the importing country. It was also important that the dogs should be procured responsibly (the new owners should be checked, people should be available to contact, even after the dog has been handed over, it should be possible for the dog to be returned, the dog should only be handed over after a period of familiarisation in a care centre, dogs should only be handed over after they have been treated by a vet, neutered and vaccinated). A reputable organisation would also have to have a website containing a large volume of information and a high degree of transparency. The animal assistance/animal rescue organisations also believe that the focus of their work must be local.

Foreign animal protection organisations and animal protection in the Spanish provinces

Returns and distribution/addressees: Foreign animal protection organisations 16 (of 56) and 3 (of 50) Animal protection organisations/associations from Spanish provinces. Of the total of 19 returns, we were able to evaluate 12: from Spain (3) and the Spanish provinces (3, Burgos, Granada, Madrid), France (1), Italy (1), Serbia (1), Finland (1), The Netherlands (1) and the UK (1).

The replies from the foreign animal protection organisations illustrate a broad range of problems and causes in the area of stray and street dogs, and in relation to the collection centres and animal shelters. It is clear that the poor economic position of a country makes the problem worse in general. However, they also demonstrate that structural, consistent measures in the countries themselves, such as neutering programmes, the education and sensitising of the population regarding animal protection topics and the implementation of applicable provisions and sanctions in the event of contraventions would probably be the most efficient approaches to a solution. The exporting of dogs is described by the majority as an illusory solution. A real solution to the problem would require a much broader, more sustainable and more consistent use of a wide variety of measures, particularly by politicians, the authorities and the sentencing and control bodies in the various countries, according to the prevailing opinion.

The reputability of the organisations is often regarded critically: hidden business dealings and fraud often come into contact with a fleeting «motivation to help» and are no basis for a sustainable solution. When it comes to the breeding and illegal import of puppies and dogs, the economic circumstances in the producing nations and the demand in the importing countries seem to play

an important role, as do the failures in sentencing by the authorities in certain EU states. In general, the local animal protection organisations promote a more consistent approach to animal protection by the state.

III. The position and solution approaches adopted abroad

The position of street dogs in Romania

Sources: Carmen Arsene, President of the FNPA (National Federation for Animal Protection); Case study on the population management of dogs in Cernavoda by WAP (World Animal Protection); «A dog's life», a film by Stefanie Fink

Romania has a very large population of stray dogs. These include dogs who have owners as well as ownerless dogs. According to the national veterinary authorities, there are about four million dogs who belong to somebody in Romania. Estimates of the number of ownerless dogs range from 500,000 to three million. Carmen Arsene, President of the FNPA (National Federation for Animal Protection), assumes that there are about six million stray dogs in Romania, of which about 500 000 are ownerless.

Even though the law states that the city administrations are responsible for the management of stray dogs, these administrations may in fact pay for private businesses to do the work. Furthermore, the law states that dogs must be captured humanely, that good conditions must be maintained in the kennels and that the dogs will be euthanised. The reality is, however, rather different; the dogs are hunted, tormented, beaten to death, strangled and dragged across the streets. According to the contracts that the city administrations have concluded with private companies, these companies receive a relatively high amount of money for every dog they catch. In Bucharest, for example, the amount per dog received by a dog catcher may be up to 50 euro! Given that the statutory minimum wage is 2.50 euro/hour and the average salary is 400 euro/month in Romania, these are impressive additional earnings.

The public kennelling facilities are, in reality, extermination centres. The dogs housed there are frequently given neither food nor water. The kennels are hardly ever cleaned and the dogs are given no medical treatment. For street dogs, «euthanasia» not only means starvation and dehydration, it also stands for poisoning, strangulation or the injection of prohibited substances. However, even the methods used to kill dogs that were established in accordance with the instructions of the Romanian veterinary authorities and the University of Veterinary Medicine allow excruciating methods of «euthanasia» for dogs, such as gassing with carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide or nitrogen, injecting with potassium chloride and the use of equipment to deliver electric shocks or fire bolts.

In Romania, the national veterinary authority (ANSVSA) is responsible for monitoring and im-



plementing the animal protection laws. The few checks that are carried out as the result of many complaints by private individuals or NGOs do nothing to change the situation. The most consistent reply from the authorities states that their checks have shown that all the animal protection standards and applicable laws have been fulfilled. It is particularly shocking to note that a lucrative business has developed in Romania under the cover of the regulation of the street dog populations. According to Carmen Arsene from the National Federation for Animal Protection, city mayors often employ companies who have not had anything at all to do with animals (such as construction companies, dental technologists or management accountants) to manage the dogs. The owners of companies like this are usually related to the mayor, or at least belong to the same political party. The finance released for this task is then divided between all those involved.



The outlook is very different in those cities where those responsible have decided to follow a new path, and to work with animal protection organisations. For example, a case study carried out by World Animal Protection (WAP) uses Cernavoda, a city with a population of about 17,000 inhabitants, to show how such a development might work. When «Save the Dogs» (a partner organisation of the WAP) started working in Cernavoda in 2002, the city was home to an estimated 3000 stray dogs. The main method of controlling the dog population was through poisoning by the local authorities. The authorities undertook a count of the dogs for the first time in 2013 and found that about 1600 dogs lived on the streets, but that somebody not only owned them, but fed them too. The estimated 250 dogs without owners mainly lived on the edges of the community. These were mostly dogs who had been abandoned from the surrounding towns and villages.

«Save the dogs» began its work by educating and training the population about the correct way to deal with dogs. The «Save the Dogs» campaign in 2011 then focussed on a Catch-Neuter-Release programme for the stray dogs. A law passed two years later prohibited the re-release of dogs to run free on the streets.

Since then, therefore, the work has concentrated on those stray dogs that have owners. Their puppies are often given away by their owners and eventually land on the streets. Every year, «Save the Dogs» sterilises up to 1000 dogs free of charge in Cernavoda. «Save the Dogs» also offers free-of-charge medical care for the dogs of poor families. Primary health care (birth control, vaccinations and parasite control) is available free of charge within the community for all dog owners. Of the three private animal shelters, two are run by «Save the Dogs» (there are no state-run animal shelters in Cernavoda). About 40 dogs are taken into these collection centres every month on average, while about 500 dogs are adopted abroad through partner organisations every year. Local adoptions within Romania are increasing.

The efforts made by «Save the Dogs» over many years have led to a significant improvement in the situation. For example, the number of stray dogs has fallen by 90%. The offer of free veterinary care and the information programme in particular have led to the management programme being supported by both the authorities and the local population. The local population has changed its behaviour towards the dogs and is now conscious of the problem of cruelty to animals. This is also demonstrated by the increase of 50% in the reports of neglected, injured or abandoned dogs noted by «Save the Dogs».

The position of street dogs in Spain

Dogs are given very little value in Spain, particularly in the rural areas and in the south of the country. They are usually kept in order to carry out particular tasks, such as those of a guard dog or a hunting dog. Because the people who own dogs regard them as «working equipment» and not as a living being that can experience suffering, they have no emotional attachment to their animals. Surplus young stock and dogs who have no further value for their owners are abandoned or killed. Dogs are seldom neutered, particularly in the south of Spain. This is partly because dog owners either do not want to make this financial investment in their animal, or because they cannot do so. For patriarchal and machismo reasons, it is also unthinkable for many men to keep a neutered dog. Nor have any neutering campaigns been initiated or financed by the government in Spain, so the vast majority of dogs remain un-neutered.

Dog catchers gather up street dogs when they become too numerous, and take them to «Perreras». Private individuals can also hand their dogs in there if they no longer want to look after them. They are partly run by private investors who receive a «per capita payment» from the community for every dog. The conditions under which the animals are kept are often catastrophically poor and any dogs that have not been collected after about three weeks are killed. Some Perreras do extend this «period of mercy», but once they are over their capacity, the mass extermination of dogs goes on here too.

The problematic areas in Spain are similar to those in other countries. From the point of view of animal protection, however, Spain presents a further, extremely large and very specific problem with regard to dogs. This involves the treatment of hunting dogs, mainly Galgos and Podencos, which are used in Spain to hunt rabbits and hares. According to the Spanish animal protection organisation «Scooby» (Sociedad Protectora de Animales y Medioambiente), real «puppy factories» exist in Spain, where Galgos are raised under atrocious mass-production conditions. Dogs bred in this way are cheaply available, and it is therefore much easier for hunters to get rid of their dogs once the hunting season is over, rather than feed the «old» dogs for months until the next hunt. The hunters can then get themselves some «fresh» new hunting dogs from the breeder for the next season. As a result, large numbers of Galgos who are still young appear on the streets and in front of the animal shelters at the end of the hunting season in January. It is estimated that up to 50,000 Galgos are abandoned or killed every year.

In Spain, the mass abandonment of mostly un-neutered dogs has led to the existence of a gigantic population of dogs with no owners. The government is doing nothing to change any aspect of this situation. On the other hand, a large number of privately-run Spanish and foreign animal protection organisations are trying to reduce this suffering. Many dogs are sent to countries like Germany, Austria and Switzerland as part of this effort. This frees up some urgently-required space in the local animal shelters, because the flow of dogs who depend upon help from the animal protection workers never lets up. When they are asked about the problem of stray dogs, politicians often point to the well-functioning network of private animal protection organisations and are of the opinion that it isn't the duty of politicians to take on animal protection problems.

Paradoxically, therefore, the activities of the animal protection organisations make it possible for the government to sidle out of its responsibility, and nothing fundamentally changes in these disastrous circumstances. If any long term improvement is to happen to the situation in Spain, animal protection workers will have to force the government to take its obligations seriously and use joint projects locally to ensure a sustainable change in the attitude towards dogs. These projects could include neutering campaigns or neuter and release programmes, as well as information events.

The position of street dogs in Italy



In Italy, the situation with regard to dogs is again similar to that in other southern states. In the south of the country in particular, many dogs live on the streets. These include both those who are strays and those who actually have owners. Estimates assume that there are about 1.2 million stray dogs in Italy and approx. 650,000 dogs in animal shelters. In addition, about 50,000 puppies are also born on the street every year, and about 130,000 dogs are abandoned. Since the majority of strays are not neutered, the size of the street dog populations increases very quickly. Previously, street dogs were usually captured in Italy, and in many cases, they were then killed after a brief wait. After a new animal protection

law came into effect in 1991, the abandonment and killing of stray dogs was prohibited. Since this time dog owners have had a duty to microchip their dogs and to register them in the national register of domestic animals. It is also prescribed by law that the state must control the populations of stray dogs, and must control breeding. Unfortunately, this animal protection law only exists on paper; it has nothing to do with actual reality in Italy.

As far as strays are concerned, the situation has got even worse since then. Dogs are now removed from the streets in a big way and put into «Canile». These are not animal shelters in the conventional sense, but rather buildings (often in an industrial area or a former slaughterhouse) where up to 1000 dogs are forced to live in a very small space. The dogs have nothing in these Canile. There is no medical care, hardly any food and water, catastrophic hygiene conditions, no protection against the weather and no human attention. The operators of this type of Canile receive an average of 4 – 5 euro per day for each dog from the Italian state. Because they earn their money from each live dog, not even seriously sick and injured dogs are put out of their suffering and the dogs are not neutered. Adoption is hardly ever possible for these dogs (because this is not what the Canile operator wants) and the public is not usually allowed to enter these premises.

In 2010 alone, the Canile in Italy were subsidised with money raised by taxation to the tune of 730 million euro. However, most operators only really use a fraction of this money for the dogs. This so-called «System Canile» is actually an extremely lucrative, corrupt business in which the Mafia has now become involved. The interest of these people lies in maintaining large populations of street dogs so that their fountain of cash does not dry up. It is therefore very difficult, or even impossible, for animal protection organisations to carry out neutering operations. Some Canile operators even abandon female dogs that are pregnant or on heat together with male dogs in order to ensure the constant flow of dogs to their facilities. Estimates assume that a Canile containing 1000 dogs will receive a subsidy of about 150,000 to 200,000 euros every month. Of this total, an average of a maximum of 10,000 is actually spent on the dogs. The vast majority of the money lands at the feet of the operators of the Canile, corrupt city mayors, veterinary surgeons and others who are involved.

IV. Conclusions and recommendations

Even though many active animal protection organisations have worked on the local problem of street dogs in European countries, for decades in some cases, nothing significant seems to have changed in the situation so far. Even the existence and/or further development of various animal protection laws has only had a marginal effect on the improvement of conditions on site in many cases (ref the situation in Italy, for example). The crucial factor is enforcement – and this, once again, is dependent on the resources available and the underlying mentality, particularly when it comes to the politicians (municipal, regional and national). Animal protection stands or falls upon this factor.

The nations and the problems and causes encountered within them really cannot be compared on a one-to-one basis. The position regarding stray dogs in Spain is significantly different from that in Romania or in Ukraine, and is not even comparable with that in Italy. In addition, the causes and effects also seem to be heavily dependent upon the local social, political and financial circumstances. The poor economic position of a country/locally can make the problem still worse. This is evident in the regional or communal differences in the way in which animals are treated, which may be considerable, in the support given to animal protection, in the will to collaborate and in the provision of resources. Even though this research has been undertaken in great depth, it is still not possible to issue a generally-applicable recipe for how to deal with the offers for sale of dogs on the internet or the acquisition of dogs from animal protection organisations abroad.

On the other hand, we are absolutely certain of the following: without the training and education of the general population and the decision-makers, animal carers and veterinary surgeons on the ground locally, particularly with respect to programmes for neutering or neuter & release, and minimum requirements in relation to hygiene and health, nothing will change in the catastrophic conditions for animals or their traumatic fates. Every animal lover must therefore be absolutely clear – taking an animal from a foreign animal protection organisation or making a donation is just half the task. It would be much more important and more sustainable for us to go and make up our minds for ourselves at the location itself and provide support (financial and/or with (wo)manpower) for the animal protection organisations. This would enable local collaboration with the population, the authorities and the decision makers to be improved/extended and solidified. It would then also be possible to judge whether the chosen animal protection organisation really did provide active animal protection on site and whether it can be regarded as reputable.

Scenario 1 (Neuter&Release Programme): Street dogs belong back on the street after they have been neutered, in order that they can act as a placeholder there. Eventually, this would keep the dog population on an even keel. However, the population and the local political decision makers will have to accept this solution and leave the dogs alone once they have been released. This calls for sufficient information, expert advice and training for all those involved, good collaboration in an environment open to solutions and (of course) sufficient resources. All the neutered animals must also be registered, marked and vaccinated.

Scenario 2 (Neuter&Local Adoption Programme): The street dogs are captured, neutered, registered, marked and vaccinated, provided with veterinary care and then housed in good animal-friendly shelters that are suitable for their species until they are found a new home in which they will be domestic pets. They will only be handed over to private individuals from the same country and will remain in their current country. In the same way as for Scenario 1, this will naturally require the appropriate information, advice, training, etc. It is vital for the success of this scenario that the population is prepared to keep dogs as domestic pets and to look after them. This depends upon an animal-friendly attitude and a certain financial framework, and is therefore perhaps (as yet) not yet possible in all the affected countries / regions or communities.

As a result, SAP considers that it is mainly worth supporting the type of animal protection organisation that is operating abroad but that has worked out a sustainably effective concept for its activities, will have the necessary resources in the longer term and is therefore implementing or attempting to implement one of the scenarios set out above.

Alternatives

Direct local collection of a dog: Anyone who still definitely wants to get a dog from abroad should avoid ordering it over the internet. They should collect it themselves (e.g. during a trip on holiday) or travel deliberately to collect it from abroad and then import it legally into Switzerland. Here too, of course, it is important to allow enough time for the future owner and the dog to get to know each other so that they can at least judge to some extent whether that person and that dog suit each other and whether that dog would be suitable for a «civilised» life in Switzerland at all.

Finding a dog through an animal protection organisation: one other option (though this is sometimes bound with certain risks) would be to adopt a dog from an animal protection organisation that has been judged as reputable. For the adoption to take place, it would have to credibly demonstrate that all the laws had been obeyed, both locally and in the importing country. It would also be essential for the dog to undergo a responsible handover procedure (including checks on the new owner, the availability of people to contact, even after the dog has been handed over, the ability to return the dog, handover of the dog only after a period of familiarisation at a care centre, handover only of dogs that have received treatment from a veterinary surgeon, been neutered and been vaccinated). A reputable organisation must also have a website containing a large amount of information and a high level of transparency. The focus of the activities of these organisations must demonstrably be in the foreign country.



You can find the full report, with further details and tables to provide an overview, on www.tierschutz.com/hunde/import

