

Study on the welfare of dogs and cats involved in commercial practices

Country: [Belgium](#)

The dog and cat population in the EU is estimated at one hundred million animals, mainly privately owned. The breeding of and trade in the animals present an important economic activity.

Intra-Union trade in dogs and cats is regulated at EU-level due to the potential animal and public health risks. These animals must undergo a clinical examination prior to the time of their dispatch, showing that they are fit to be transported for the intended journey. All in accordance tot EC regulations. Movements are to be notified within the Trade Control and Export System (TRACES).

However, there are reports of fraud under the guise of non-commercial movements of animals accompanying their owners in order to escape from the health and welfare requirements applicable tot intra-Union trade.

Within this context, and in the framework of the EU strategy for the protection and welfare of animals 2012-2015, the Commission decided to perform a study on the welfare of dogs and cats involved in commercial practices.

The study follows up the concerns of the Council and the European Parliament and to determine to what extent the EU should take specific measures in line with the subsidiarity and proportionality principles.

The study collected data from 12 Member States to cover the EU range of dog and cat keeping, in terms of the estimated dog and cat population, quantity of animals exported/imported, subject tot intra-Union trade, sold at national level, traded and bred, geographical distribution and variety of national legal frameworks. The study entailed literature search, set-up of on-line questionnaires and interviews with different stakeholders involved in dog and cat welfare, including a consumer survey.

The main objectives of the study were :

- To collect socio-economic, technical and legal data and experts opinions on the breeding, keeping and trade of dogs and cats in the EU based on case studies in some Member States;
- To analyse the data in order to identify possible EU relevant issues such as risks to the functioning of the internal market, to the protection of consumers, to public health and to animal welfare, and to assess if citizens are appropriately informed about the risks posed to animals and humans due to illegal/inappropriate dog and cat commercial practices;
- To provide options on the possible added value of EU actions regarding the breeding, keeping and trade of dogs and cats. Specific notions on how to maximise information dissemination on appropriate breeding, keeping and trade practices (including transport), will be also developed.

At a workshop in Brussels in November 2015, preliminary results of the study were presented and discussed with stakeholders from across Europe, including animal welfare organisations. The workshop agenda can be accessed [HERE](#) ; the workshop report can be accessed [HERE](#)

The final study report published by DG SANTE can be downloaded [HERE](#)

