

Executive Summary

The EU Dog & Cat Alliance was established in 2014 and brings together dog and cat welfare organisations from across the EU. The Alliance is calling for EU action to build a better Europe for dogs and cats.

Currently there is no EU legislation protecting cats and dogs in the context of commercial practices, other than rules on transport and health requirements when moved over borders. Legislation to protect the welfare of dogs and cats involved in commercial practices is therefore left to EU Member States. National legislation can vary greatly across the EU, with strict legislation in some countries, and little at all in others. This situation can have serious consequences for animal welfare, but also for animal health, human health, consumer protection and the functioning of the internal market.

To assess the national legislation relating to dogs and cats involved in commercial practices in the EU, the EU Dog & Cat Alliance gathered information on identification and registration, breeding, trade and surgical mutilations from each of the EU's 27 Member States on the basis of a list of questions. The results are summarised in this report.

'National legislation can vary greatly across the EU, with strict legislation in some countries, and little at all in others.'

'This situation can have serious consequences for animal welfare, but also for animal health, human health, consumer protection and the functioning of the internal market.'

Results

The identification and registration of dogs is currently compulsory in 22 Member States. Although most Member States have a national database of registered dogs, the majority of these databases are not linked to an EU database, preventing full traceability when dogs are moved over EU borders. For cats, only seven Member States impose compulsory identification and registration at national level, while in a further five countries, only some regions have rules in place to impose it.

Commercial breeders need to be registered and/or licensed in most Member States but licensing requirements vary widely and the definition of commercial breeders is not at all harmonised across countries. The requirements breeders have to comply with also vary widely between countries for example around:

- Whether breeding establishments must be inspected by the competent authority before they may start breeding
- Licensing and registration of breeders, as not all countries have a national database
- Provisions on the socialisation of puppies and kittens
- Provisions to prevent selective breeding of dogs and cats with genetic problems

Traders of dogs and cats must be licensed in the majority of Member States. The sale of dogs and cats is allowed in pet shops in 20 Member States, and the sale of cats in pet shops in 1 additional Member State; the sale of dogs and cats at markets is allowed in 15 Member States; there is no legal minimum age at which a puppy or kitten can be sold in 10 Member States; where there is a legal minimum age for sale this varies between seven to eight weeks for puppies and seven and twelve weeks for kittens. In some Member States, cat and dog trade is not regulated at all.

Surgical mutilations such as tail docking, ear cropping, declawing and devocalisation are prohibited in most Member States as a rule. However, the tail docking of dogs is still permitted in 5 Member States and exemptions under specific circumstances are also given in an additional 8 Member States.

‘The lack of a system for identification and registration of dogs and cats, which is accessible across the EU, means there is currently little traceability when animals are moved.’

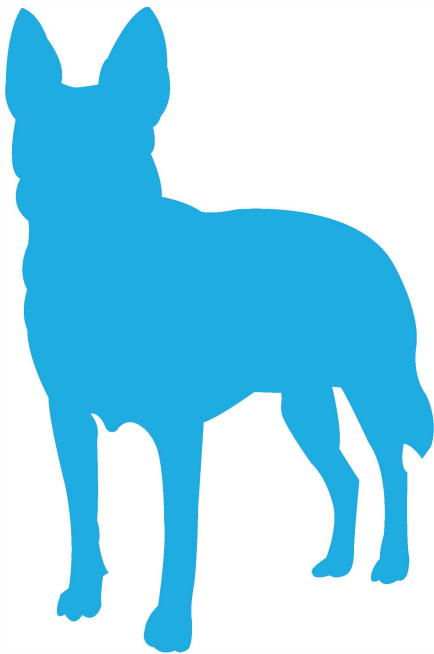


Conclusions

These results confirm the wide variation across countries and highlight substantial gaps in the national legislation protecting cats and dogs involved in commercial practices. Without EU legislation to harmonise the legislation across EU Member States, this is likely to have serious implications not only on dog and cat welfare, but also on key areas in which the EU has competence to legislate: public health, consumer protection and on the functioning of the internal market. The key findings are summarised below and where these relate to an area of EU competence, this is highlighted in bold.

- The lack of a system for identification and registration of dogs and cats, which is accessible across the EU, means there is currently little traceability when animals are moved across borders. This poses a risk to animal and **public health** in the case of a disease outbreak, and to **consumer protection** when purchasers are unable to trace where their new pet has come from.
- Poor standards during breeding can result in serious welfare problems and increased health risks. This poses a risk to **consumer protection** when purchasers are faced with unexpectedly high veterinary bills for their new pet. Poor socialisation of puppies and kittens can also lead to behaviour problems. Behaviour problems are one of the top reasons for animals being handed over to a rehoming organisation by owners. The variation in breeding standards also has an impact on the cost of breeding, resulting in distortion of competition between Member States, undermining the **functioning of the internal market** and presenting a clear incentive for illegal trade.
- The large variations in national legislation on the trade of dogs and cats can result in serious problems. Where puppies and kittens are sold from pet shops, markets, over the internet or through a trader other than the breeder, owners may be unaware of where and how their new pet has been bred and the experiences they have had. This **poses a consumer protection** risk where owners are unknowingly purchasing pets which are likely to have, or to develop, health or behaviour problems. This also impacts the **functioning of the internal market** where traders in some countries are at a competitive disadvantage compared to other countries.

'Where puppies and kittens are sold from pet shops, markets, over the internet or through a trader other than the breeder, owners may be unaware of where and how their new pet has been bred and the experiences they have had.'



The full report, and an overview of key points for each EU country, are available at: www.dogandcatwelfare.eu/national-legislation

Recommendations

The EU Dog & Cat Alliance recommends the adoption of EU legislation which includes the following:

- **Compulsory permanent identification and registration of dogs and cats on an appropriate database, which is linked to an EU database.**
- **Compulsory licensing of dog and cat breeders and harmonised EU standards for dog and cat breeders,** covering the conditions in which dogs and cats are kept, training of breeders, socialisation of puppies and kittens and the prevention of selective breeding of dogs and cats with genetic problems as a minimum.
- **A ban on the sale of dogs and cats in pet shops, at markets, shows and exhibitions as well as in the street.** Dogs and cats should only be sold from their breeder's premises, allowing new owners to see the conditions in which their pet has been raised.
- **Appropriate controls on the internet trade of dogs and cats.**
- **Specific requirements for the transport of cats and dogs in the context of an economic activity** to protect their welfare, as provided for in Council Regulation (EC) No 1/2005.
- **A full ban on all surgical mutilations other than for health reasons.**