

## **Tackling current challenges hindering animal welfare in the EU and beyond**

With the use of animals comes a moral responsibility where the animals' needs as sentient beings must be respected. Good animal husbandry and welfare are not just about avoidance of suffering in the form of stress, fear, frustration, pain, injuries, and illness. They are about exposing animals to positive experiences and making sure they can express behaviours that are normal for them in their natural habitats.

Animals are beings with intrinsic value regardless of the benefit for humans. Furthermore, the question of animal welfare is at the same time broader than that of individual animal welfare. All over the world, we witness the effects of animals being exploited for short-term financial interests.

The fight against poor animal welfare is also a fight against the global agroindustry. As European Greens we support small scale agriculture and regional supply chains. We want less but better animal farming. Only a system change can guarantee good animal husbandry, high food quality and a healthy planet.

### **Antibiotics**

This is most obvious in the area of antibiotics, where more antibiotics are still being used globally on healthy animals than for treating people with illnesses. To a large extent, antibiotics, one of our most valuable medicines, are used pre-emptively rather than when needed, often to compensate for poor animal husbandry.

An improved regulatory framework to address this issue within the EU is in progress but there is no efficient global regulatory framework to limit abuse of antibiotics, as seen in many countries. It is important that there is reliable and available data on the use of antibiotics down to the farm level to enable improved incentives, bold policy decisions and consumer action to reduce the risk of resistance to antibiotics. We support a ban on the non-medicinal use of antibiotics. This will both require and lead to better animal welfare, making it crucial to end high-performance breeding.

### **Zoonoses**

Substandard animal husbandry creates risks to the global health of both animals and people. Many epidemics and pandemics are spread by zoonotic diseases which are often aggravated by poor animal welfare standards. Keeping live animals densely packed and under stress, together with many other species, both wild and domesticated, creates significant risks of different types of viruses being transmitted between animals and humans, which may result in devastating diseases with dire consequences for us humans.

Zoonoses, which are diseases of infectious agents that can spread between animals and humans make up approximately 75% of all new infectious diseases suffered by humans. No one will forget the new coronavirus which has caused the COVID-19 disease. The first outbreaks were linked to a market in the Chinese city of Wuhan that was selling live animals, both wild and domesticated.

The risk of new zoonotic diseases also increases in areas where natural habitats are destroyed by,

for example, cultivation or the expansion of livestock husbandry. Encroachment into wildlife habitats also occurs due to logging activities and illegal international trade in wildlife and exotic animals, despite the international regulations like the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

### **Transport and trade**

Transporting animals for reasons such as production, slaughter, trade, or breeding, often involves a great deal of stress, suffering and death. We believe that both the number of journeys and the time the animals are transported must be minimised.

Animals should be slaughtered at the nearest suitable slaughterhouse, and we need an increase of regional slaughterhouses. We want a development of mobile slaughterhouses and on farm-slaughter. The transport of genetic material instead of live animals for reproduction also offers solutions to concretely reduce long-distance transport.

The upcoming revision of the Animal Transport Regulation should be the occasion for the European Union to adopt a maximum transport time of 8 hours for live animals in Europe for all transport modes, of 4 hours for rabbits and poultry, as well as a transport ban of unweaned animals and pregnant animals in the last third of gestation. In addition, we call on a ban on the export of live animals to third countries who do not respect similar animal welfare standards as in the European Union.

Illegal puppy and other breeding mills and the trade of exotic animals violate animal welfare and create suffering, which should be determinedly addressed and prevented through improved regulation and trade control internationally. The target is to put an end to all illegal trade and transport of animals.

### **End animal testing**

In 2010, the European Union adopted the EU directive on the protection of animals used for scientific purposes 2010/63/EU with the goal to fully replace animal testing with alternative methods, yet, every year, millions of animals are still being used for regulatory testing, research and education.

In order to make the "3Rs" rule (reduce, refine, replace) effective in terms of animal experimentation, it is essential to create impartial and transparent evaluation structures, to produce regular information, to supervise and control both breeders and research projects, and to increase the development and implementation of alternative methods.

We demand the enforcement of the EU ban on animal testing for cosmetic ingredients, which requires national law changes and finances in the first place. This implementation should be reported at the meetings hosted by 3R-centers. It is unnecessary and cruel, and 72% of citizens in the EU wants to put an end to this practice.

### **End the cage age**

Every year, across the European Union alone, around 300 million farmed animals are confined in cages. Unable to pursue many of their natural behaviours, these animals are treated as nothing more than production units, rather than as living beings. Macro-farms which aim at maximising the

economic profit on the basis of the concentration of livestock and saving on the husbandry costs are a severe threat to environment, for the development and spreading of zoonoses, and become an extremely unfair competition to ecological farming.

Over 170 organisations have joined forces with citizens across Europe to spearhead the End the Cage Age European Citizens' Initiative. We must now ensure a total ban on caged farming is delivered, as soon as possible, to secure a cage-free and slatted floor pen-free Europe.

### **Wildlife trafficking**

The illegal wildlife trade is the fourth largest illegal trade behind drugs, people smuggling and counterfeiting. It is devastating for biodiversity and a source of great suffering for animals. It is essential to strengthen the information of citizens and to provide the means, in particular legislative, to suppress trafficking. Animals that are listed on CITES are prohibited from trade. Customs examines these species against those arriving from countries outside the EU. But once the products have entered the EU, or come from within the EU, no strict control takes place. They can only call the police, but they cannot detain the person, and no statistics are kept, which makes it very difficult to know how widespread the problem is. This is due to the protection of the free trade in the EU, and CITES species are not listed as an exception when controls may still take place. We demand that trade with CITES listed species should make an exception from this, just as weapons and drugs. The trade with exotic animals should be regulated through a positive list instead of a negative list.

### **Slaughter**

Protecting animal welfare during slaughter involves minimising the pain, distress or suffering of farm animals at the time of killing. Slaughterhouse personnel must put in place a whole series of specific procedures. For example, they must carry out regular checks to ensure that the animals show no signs of consciousness or sensibility between the end of stunning and killing. If animals have been killed without prior stunning, systematic checks must be carried out to ensure that the animals show no signs of consciousness or sensibility before ending their restraint and show no signs of life before dressing or scalding.

### **Therefore, the European Green Party:**

- Calls on all Member States of the United Nations to intensify work on a global UN declaration on animal welfare and to work for a code that considers use of antibiotics on animals, transport, end of the cage age, wildlife trafficking, slaughter, and animal experimentation;
- Calls on the European Commission to present ambitious legislative proposals for EU animal welfare, including on animal welfare labelling, based on the latest scientific knowledge on the physiological needs of animals to ensure cruel practices in animal farming and fishing are banned and slaughter conditions are improved in the future;
- Calls on the EU Commission to finally put forward the promised 1/2005 regulation on Animal Transport, including the ban on transportation whether on land or at sea beyond eight hours. The policy should aim for the transportation of meat rather than living animals;
- Expresses its full support for the Citizens' Initiatives End the Cage Age and Fur Free Europe,

to phase out and finally prohibit the use of cages and systems that concentrate too many animals at one field, or pen for hens, mother pigs, calves, rabbits, ducks, geese, fish, and other farmed animals, including animals on fur farms;

- Promotes awareness of animal living conditions in cages;
- Promotes awareness of the use of antibiotics in animals;
- Opposes the macro-farming model and demands that concrete measures and regulation are put in place to ensure minimum animal husbandry and welfare standards and effectively promote ecological farming;
- Commits to push for the implementation of the demands of the Citizens' Initiative End the Cage Age on a national and European level;
- Calls on the EU to develop a system of reliable and available data on the use of antibiotics down to the farm level;
- Calls on the implementation of minimum standards across the EU that guarantees good animal welfare in husbandry system;
- Commits to push for the implementation of the demands of the Citizens' Initiative End the Cage Age on a national and European level, as well as a ban on fur farms and fur imports in Europe;
- Calls on the EU to develop a system of reliable and available data on the use of antibiotics down to the farm level and a global regulatory framework against the pre-emptive use of antibiotics in animal husbandry;
- Calls on the EU that harmonised legislation obliges slaughterhouses to follow very strict procedures in terms of taking into account the pain, distress or suffering of farmed animals at the time of their killing;
- Calls on the EU to create impartial and transparent evaluation structures, to produce regular information, to supervise and control both breeders and research projects, and to develop alternative methods;
- Calls on the EU to provide the means, in particular legislative, to suppress trafficking;
- Calls on the EU Commission to ban farmed fur products from the European market, as well as the European Union and its member states to ban fur farming by phasing out the industry, in accordance with the proposals in the European Citizen's Initiative "Fur Free Europe", whilst taking into account the demand for support for farmers and workers in the fur industry to make the change towards green jobs and businesses in order to carry out a fair transition;
- Calls on the EU Commission to create a robust regulatory system to govern all animal trade, and which obliges the protection and prioritization of animal welfare;
- Calls on the EU Commission to oblige its member states to legislate, finance and control a regulatory system in order to enhance high standards in animal welfare and living conditions,

with the intention to also prevent zoonoses.