



Briefing Note

**Proposal for a REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT
AND OF THE COUNCIL on the non-commercial movement of pet
animals**

Repealing Regulation (EC) No 998/2003 2000/0221(COD)

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FVE **appreciates** the initiative of the European Commission to propose a new proposal for a draft Regulation on non-commercial movement of companion animals. Especially we also welcome that the European Commission is further developing legislation with regard to companion animals, animals which are cherished and valued by many European citizens.

Nevertheless FVE was very much **disappointed** about the **total absence of stakeholder consultation** before the release of this proposal. FVE is convinced early stakeholder consultation would have been highly beneficial and true to the principle cherished by the European Commission of having an open, two-way, transparent consultation process. Furthermore, it would have resulted in a more technically viable and practically workable proposal. As such, FVE strongly disagrees with the process under which this proposal was developed with no consultation at all with the parties on whom these proposals will have a significant impact; namely the pet owners and veterinarians.

FVE welcomes the fact that the proposal tries to make it easier for companion animals to travel within Europe accompanied by their owner. FVE believes it is of utmost importance **to make the rules insofar as possible readable, understandable and practical; both from the point of view of the citizen travelling with their animal and for the veterinarians who support their clients moving and who are required to ensure the correct application of the rules.** Veterinarians very much promote **responsible ownership** of companion animals in which identification and taking preventive health measures are important components.

FVE welcomes that the proposal aims to **improve controls** (art 35) and that member states will be asked to adopt sanction measures (Art 44).

Nevertheless, FVE is **concerned** by some aspects of the proposal in regard to:

- FVE regrets the proposal does not include any reference to registration of identified animals, and recalls that **'identification without central registration is of little value'**. FVE has called consistently for compulsory identification of animals travelling and that this identification is connected via a reliable system of registration, as already exist in several countries. Compulsory identification and registration is essential to effectively control the risk of disease spread and prevent risks associated with illegal trade. Furthermore, it will encourage companion animals responsible ownership, help to detect cross borders health risks, help to tackle puppy farming and also it can help to reunite lost dogs with their owners

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- Art 3 a: **New definition “non-commercial movement”**-) FVE is afraid that the new definition of ‘non-commercial movement’ will lead to practical problems and legal uncertainty. Often it is difficult to make an unequivocal distinction between movements occurring in the context of trade and those taking place for non-commercial reasons e.g. rescue dogs, show,.... It is important that Member States have the same interpretation and it should be easily understandable for a regular citizen what is considered as non-commercial movement and what is not.
- Art 6: The new proposal does not simplify the **movement of animals less than 3 months**, whereby the rules are different from country to country. It should be ensured that bitches have been vaccinated correctly before the pregnancy and that the young animals did not have any contact with wild animals of susceptible species likely to have been exposed to Rabies. There may also be problems in confirming that an individual animal is under 3 months of age, or that the accompanying vaccinated bitch is the natural mother of the pups. In the case of a bitch and litter it may be necessary to license more than 5 animals.
- Art 6 and Art 25 both requests an **owner declaration** namely in Article 6 for the absence of contact with animals at risk for Rabies and in Article 25 declaration that the movement is for non-commercial reasons. FVE is worried about this auto-certification as they are poorly credible and is an open door for falsification.
- Art 7 and 11: FVE rejects the derogation in these articles which authorises the **movement of unvaccinated animals**, even in case of animals from Rabies-free countries. Taking into account that rabies is still present in many EU surrounding countries, many of which are popular tourist destinations and that within the EU there are almost no control on borders for movement of pets, this derogation could seriously jeopardize animal health and public health. In addition, it will make the rules more complex and more difficult the control. As such, FVE is against the derogation proposed in art 7 and 11.
- FVE believes all companion animals should be identified by microchip, especially when moving. As **microchipping** often goes together with explaining the travel rules and rabies certification which has to be performed by a **veterinarian**, FVE believes the veterinarian is the best placed person to be authorised to do the implantation and as such do not require extra training.
- Art 21 point 2 feels the extra administrative burden put upon veterinarians to **keep the information on issued** identification documents **for 10 years is unjustified**. Rather than obliging every practitioner to keep these documents for 10 years, for reasons of traceability it is much better to keep this information centrally in one database. This would have the advantage of the data being held and accessed at a **single point** rather than someone trying to trace details for at an individual veterinary surgery which may have changed personnel, location and even ownership in a ten year period. If similar systems were adopted in all other countries, it would make checking the validity of passports easier and ensure tracing of animals in the event of a disease outbreak. FVE very much advises that all companion animals identified should be registered in a central database or connected databases in order to guarantee traceability, which is the number 1 reason why companion animal owners want to identify their pet.
- Art 37 killing should only be done as a last resort
- Art 39 Information obligations. The conditions under which animals may enter a member state are quite complex but they should be easy to understand for citizens travelling with their animal. A **clear overview of the total rules**, including the rules

per country for animals less than 3 months, the vaccination validity and the derogations, should be easily accessible, readable and written in multi-lingual format e.g. on a website is essential. Furthermore it is important to make this overview available before any regulations come into force to avoid confusion and to enable veterinary surgeons to advise their clients and comply with the regulations.

- Art 45 add paragraph “The repeal of the Regulation referred to in paragraph 1 shall be without prejudice to the maintenance in force of Commission Delegated Regulation No 1152/2011 adopted on the basis of Article 5(1) of that Regulation.”
- Annex V: **Validity requirements** for anti-rabies vaccinations.
 - How long does the rabies vaccine offer protection? This is an outstanding questions, as in terms of actual *disease protection* it is still debated. The vaccine, the health of the individual, the infection pressure and their immune system, the disease agents, all of these factors come into play. Also one has to realise we are preparing one set of rules to fit a totally immune-naive exposed population of pets in some EU countries and also to fit a largely immunised population of pets in other EU countries. In epidemiological terms, this is very difficult.
 - In order for inspection officers and border controls to simplify checking the validity of the rabies vaccination, FVE proposes to add in the passport the ‘**valid from**’ (which is not the same as the administration date) to ‘**valid until**’ date.