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## **MEPs PAUSE TO DISCUSS EU DOG AND CAT WELFARE IN BREEDING AND TRADE**

Parliamentary reception calls for plan to tackle illegal trade in dogs and cats in the EU

Yesterday (27<sup>th</sup> September) MEPs, the European Commissioner for Health & Food Safety Vytenis Andriukaitis and key figures from the animal welfare world united at the European Parliament to highlight the important developments to companion welfare in the EU. Organised by the EU Dog & Cat Alliance, key speakers included President of the Intergroup on the Welfare and Conservation of Animals Sirpa Pietikäinen MEP who also hosted the event.

The EU Dog & Cat Alliance is calling for an Action Plan to tackle the illegal trade in dogs and cats in the EU. With a worrying number of pets being illegally brought into countries across the EU, often with falsified pet passports and having endured poor travelling and living conditions, the Alliance and its members are calling for changes to be made to improve this worrying situation.

Says Adrian Burder, EU Dog & Cat Alliance:

“This illegal trade can only be addressed through a comprehensive approach, involving the European Commission, European Parliament and Member States, including agencies, border and veterinary authorities. The Alliance believes that in order for improvements to be seen steps need to be taken sooner rather than later and the issue addressed in a coordinated way at the root of the problem.”

Sirpa Pietikäinen MEP, President of the Intergroup on the Welfare and Conservation of Animals said:

“The European Parliament has arguably been the most supportive of the EU institutions for EU action to protect dogs and cats. We need to treat this illegal trade as a serious trafficking offence and increase the efforts of the EU customs and police co-operation in this field. As a member of this House, I believe that the Parliament will have a crucial role to play in making this happen. I call upon my colleagues in the EP to support this initiative.”

The illegal trade in dogs and cats in the EU stretches far beyond simply animal welfare concerns, and also has implications for public health, consumer protection and the smooth functioning of the EU internal market, as well as anti-trafficking efforts. Numerous steps will be needed in order to solve this problem. These include consumer education and protection, information sharing between agencies and a common approach to the issue across the EU as whole. All of this has been factored into the proposed EU Action Plan the Alliance members are united in supporting.

Adrian continues:

“Today’s event is aimed at highlighting one of the biggest issues affecting companion animals in Europe today. Hundreds of thousands of young dogs and cats in the EU are bred for illegal sale in absolutely terrible conditions, transported long distances in cramped cages, often without food or water, unvaccinated and neglected. This can frequently result in life-long behavioural issues for the pet as well as health problems – both genetic and in terms of communicable diseases. This is why today we have launched a campaign for an EU Action Plan to tackle the illegal trade in dogs and cats and it is hoped that with all of the points from the plan in place an end to the



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illegal trafficking of cats and dogs could be within our grasp. But first it needs to be escalated and seen as a priority within the EU.”

Full details of the plan can be found via [www.dogandcatwelfare.eu](http://www.dogandcatwelfare.eu). To follow the campaign on Twitter search #EUpetwelfare.

**ENDS**

For more information please contact:

Simona Lipstaite  
European Policy Advisor  
EU Dog & Cat Alliance  
E : [Simona.Lipstaite@dogstrust.org](mailto:Simona.Lipstaite@dogstrust.org)  
Office: +44 207 8335145  
Mobile: +44 7920 658685

Website: <http://www.dogstrust.org.uk> / <http://www.dogandcatwelfare.eu>  
Twitter: [@DT\\_Pawlitical](https://twitter.com/DT_Pawlitical) / [@EUdogsandcats](https://twitter.com/EUdogsandcats)