

Story about catching dogs in Minsk district.

Stories about catching animals in the small towns around Minsk

Current situation

There is no shelter for animals in any town of Belarus. There are only few drop-off stations for dogs and cats caught or brought by owners in our country. These institutions are obliged to keep the animals for at least 5 days in order to find new owners. If no new owner is found the animals are killed. The killing has to be done by a veterinarian in the most humane way. According procedures are established by the «Rules on operating of the organization dealing with capture, shooting, maintenance and euthanasia of stray animals».

The attitude of the state towards stray animals became clear after a scandalous case in Bobruisk (Mogilev district) in 2008 when a young woman was bitten by dogs. Afterwards the General Prosecutor's Office of Belarus initiated an inspection of organisations dealing with "catching and killing of stray animals". Important aspects such as keeping these animals escaped the attorneys' attention. Furthermore, the fact that in many towns animals are killed immediately after capture because "there are no equipped facilities for keeping them" didn't occur as an infringement of law for state officials whose main duty, from our point of view, is actually to supervise the implementation of Belarusian legislation. As a consequence of the lack of supervision, in regional towns of Belarus there is hardly any control over catching and killing stray animals.

Story One - Borovlany

In regions of Belarus different methods of catching and killing animals are employed. In this text we will look into the procedures of catching animals utilized in Minsk district on the example of the village of Borovlany. The place is situated 10 km outside of Minsk. Important medical institutions are located there, including a hospital for oncology, a tuberculosis dispenser, a clinical hospital etc. However, there is no veterinarian who would be able to put caught animals to sleep following all required procedures.

We were informed about the case of three dogs: Jack, Umka and Rada - which live on the open-air market in the village of Borovlany.



We note that the dogs have lived there until not long time ago on a permanent basis. There are people, sellers and other workers of the market, who have taken care of them. In return the dogs have served to them by watching the territory of the market at night. They are trusting and not aggressive.

One dog (Jack) has lived on the market for seven years.



Umka - for one year and a half.



Rada - for one year.



However, in November 2009 a new person appeared in the administration of the market. Her name is Mrs Svetlana Eremenkova. She works as an controller and partly - as a cleaner of the premises.



It was possible to take a picture of the back of this woman only.

Before this she was selling flowers. This was her work place.

In cold and windy evenings dogs were hiding there when the market was empty. In the morning when the work-days start they always disappeared. Svetlana never liked it, she dislikes animals.

After Mrs Eremenkova was designated to the new position a team of catchers was called. Maybe this was a coincidence, maybe not. The official reason was that these dogs soil on the market and this woman has to clean it. However, the locals stated that dogs never do so on the territory of the market.



The catchers were supposed to come to the market on December 7 2009. On the day before locals called Svetlana Harevitch, lawyer and active animal protector, and she went to Borovlany to support the people who didn't know how to protect their dogs. She organized a small meeting, took photos of the dogs and interviewed people.

Soon the director of the market Mr Yury Ivanovitch Nesterovitch came. During the conversation, Mr Nesterovitch stated he believed that the dogs will be brought to Minsk for keeping them there and looking for new owners. At least the catchers had said so. According to local citizens, every time when Mr Nikolay Rudena, a catcher of animals in Minsk district, comes to do his job he tells people the same story. Many prefer to believe it.

When Svetlana told Mr Nesterovitch and the others that the state-run organization "Fauna city" in Minsk is not a shelter and the dogs are killed there every day, they were shocked. Another peculiarity which never seems to shake people's beliefs is the fact that "Fauna city" is responsible for animals from Minsk only, not from the district or other regions of Belarus. Paradoxically "Fauna city" is financed by the dog owners of Minsk who pay a dog tax which in turn is forwarded to that organisation.

After all, the animal-catching team did not show up on that December day on the market in Borovlany. For this time the dogs were saved. However, their future depends on negotiations with the administration of the market.

Publication of a related article in the internet had big resonance. Many people became aware of events in Borovlany, including the wife of the director of the market. She convinced her

husband to take care of the dogs and to put up fences and huts in a corner of the market to keep the dogs there during the day and register them as guarding dogs with the administrative department in charge. Additionally, people collected money for the sterilization of the dogs.

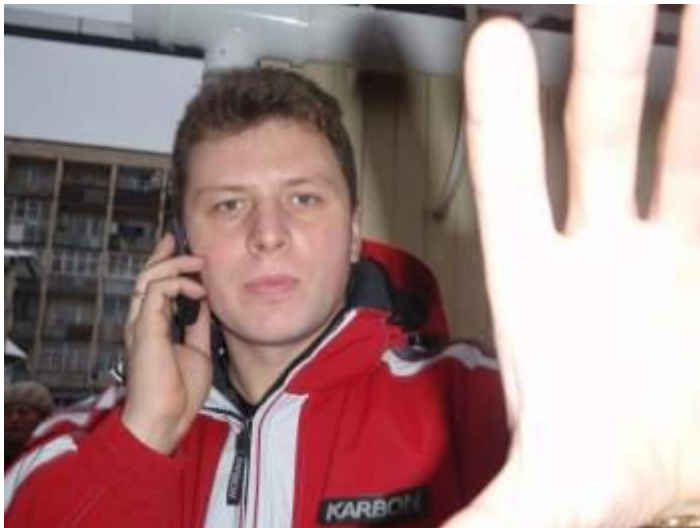
Here you can see a photo of Umka after the operation. This pictures were taken in the apartment of the lady that is now takes care of Umka.



Story Two - Zaslavl'

Unfortunately, there are not many stray animal-related stories with a happy end. Just a few days after the Borovlany case news reached us that the director of the open-air market in the town of Zaslavl' had called the animal-capture team.

The process of appointing the capture team is a special issue in this case. First, the market director called the widely-known administrative unit "Fauna city" in Minsk. However, there he was told that they "served" only the capital city.



This is the director and the owner of the market in Zaslavl', Alexey Demeshko.

Then he contacted the district executive committee of Zaslavl'. Although this committee refused responsibility for the issue its employees advised to appeal to the administration of Minsk district. There, the director of the market received the mobile phone number of the head of a catching team of the Minsk district executive committee, consisting of two persons. Due to the twisted procedure, the demand to catch the dogs on the market was registered nowhere. It was more or less a private arrangement which allowed the catchers to come to the marked at a time comfortable for them.

They showed up on December 10, 2009, during the busiest time on the market at 10 a.m. Using choke-chain collars three dogs were caught. These dogs were not stray animals in the narrow meaning of the word. People had taken care of them, given food and arranged for injections against rabies.



It is a photo of the market in Zaslavl' where the dogs were killed. The photo was taken in the evening when there are no people. When the dogs were being killed, there were a lot of people.

One of the dogs - named Ryzhiy - was hidden by Mrs Tamara Chudnikova a 55 year old selling woman in her shop. Mrs Chudnikova already keeps three dogs at her home; therefore she couldn't take Ryzhiy with her. She had tried to convince the director of the market to put up a hut for the dog many times. He always refused. Therefore, when the catchers of the animals arrived she opened her door for Ryzhiy. She was aware that this constituted a breach of sanitary rules but she didn't know how to save him otherwise. Only after the director's threat to dismiss her, she opened the door and brought the dog out. Then one of the catchers put a choke-chain collar on the dog and pulled him to the car, where he gave the dog an injection with an unknown drug.



This is a picture of small shop where Tamara Chudnikova hid Ryzhiy in order to save his life.

Afterwards, the director of the market warned Mrs. Chudnikova that if she feeds other dogs on the premises and by doing so does not comply with sanitary rules her contract would not be prolonged. To the woman's argument that the killing of animals in the observed way also was also a breach of law, the director responded that this case did not touch his responsibility. If the catchers killed the dogs they were obviously entitled to do so.

The other dog lived on the next street. Its owner was an old poor woman, who couldn't provide enough food for the dog. Therefore, selling people gave food to this dog. Looking for

food this dog was caught as well that day. Several puppies stayed without their mum because of this. Without her milk and warmth they didn't survive.

When people found out the telephone-number of the catching team and called a few hours later, it was too late to do anything. The dogs were already dead. Against all regulations, these dogs were not examined by a veterinarian, they were not kept for the required minimum period of five days. Even the killing was not done by a veterinarian as prescribed. The staff of housing maintenance and utilities board of Minsk district which is responsible for stray animals consists of the two catchers only.

In conclusion only two persons deal with all stray animals in Minsk district where more than 170 thousand people live in 20 small towns and many villages and settlements. As we can see from the story, the catchers are not supervised and do not comply with animal-related rules. Nearly nobody ever asks them what they do with caught animals, where cats and dogs are brought, how and by whom they are killed. Only animal rights protectors raise these questions, but we are still very few, and definitely not enough to protect all animals...

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