

Overview of the situation of treating errant pets in Belarus.

"By pet animal is meant any animal kept or intended to be kept by man in particular in his household for private enjoyment and companionship." European Convention for the Protection of Pet Animals Chapter I - General provisions

Geographically, Belarus is located in the heart of Europe and shares borders with Poland to the West, Ukraine to the South, Russia to the East and North and the Baltic States to the Northwest, which makes it the closest neighbour of the European Union.

The surprising thing is that very little is known to those in the EU about the critical welfare situation of pet animals.

For more than 15 years animal rights organisations have been trying to get government authorities attention on subjects of cruelty against animals, specifically towards barbaric and terrifying methods of dealing with homeless pets.

It has all been useless. According to local Belarusian legislative and administrative authorities, that problem does not even exist.

Not only there is no legislation for full animal protection in Belarus, but even a law concerning "Treatment of animals" does not yet exist. In the heart of Europe, animals have no rights. Volunteers who devote their lives to rescuing and fostering animals are often considered as criminals. The only Ministry that deals with regulation of the number of domestic animals, including dogs and cats, is the Ministry of Housing and Communal Services of the Republic of Belarus. The only piece of legislation regulating the work of this Ministry is the "Regulation of Activities of the Organisations to capture, kill, maintain and euthanize stray animals on the territory of the Republic of Belarus".

The main method of regulating the number of abandoned animals in the city of Minsk, and several regional centers, is trapping and euthanasia. Throughout the rest of the country, the primary method of controlling the number of abandoned animals is shooting them to death.

According to published data for 2008 from the Ministry of Housing and Communal Services 68,666 (Sixty-eight thousand six hundred sixty-six) neglected animals were captured. In Minsk, thanks to the efforts of animal rights activists, 2,500 caught and unsupervised animals found new owners. Where are the remaining 66,000 (Sixty-six thousand) animals? Captured, shot and thrown out at the industrial animal graveyards!




WHY?

In Housing and Communal Services, the Department of Improvements addresses the problems of both property owners and neglected animals.

The main function of the Department of Housing is territorial maintenance and garbage removal. For this reason, the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus in 2001 laid a solution to the problems with stray pets on the Ministry of Housing and Communal Services.

That is, by law, stipulates that the agency, which collects garbage and deposits it in a landfill, also collects dogs and cats and deposits them onto industrial animal graveyards. Household animals (dogs and cats) in the republic of Belarus have a status of garbage. The same officials manage employees, collection of garbage, and collecting and killing dogs and cats. Housing and communal services have units that go out every day and kill animals directly in front of the citizens. For example, in the Vitebsk region, shooting stray animals is a direct responsibility of employees of Housing and Communal Services «Vitraykomhoz».

For the majority of citizens of the republic, it is common that uncontrolled breeding pets are simply collected and killed. Those who try to write statements in defense of animals, receive some kind of formal notices, saying that their letters have been received. Below is the official document that is signed by the chief of police of the city of Lepel in the Vitebsk area (note, Vitebsk - the birthplace of Marc Chagall).

	
МУС РБ	МВД РБ
Адзел унутраных спраў Лепельскага райвыканкама райисполкома	Отдел внутренних дел Лепельского райисполкома
211180, вул. Войкава, 95, г. Лепель, Віцебскай вобласці, Рэспубліка Беларусь	211180, ул. Войкова, 95, г. Лепель, Витебской области, Республика Беларусь
Тел. (02132) 4-13-62(начальник), 4-15-51(дежурный ГОВД), 4-70-83 (факс, дежурный)	
"1" апреля 2009 г. № <u>Ж-10</u>	
	✓ Пислевичу И.Г. г. Минск, ул. Крупской, 8-151
	Прокурору Лепельского района младшему советнику юстиции Полховскому В.Ф.
<p>Сообщаю, что имевший место 06 марта 2009 года в п.Межица, Лепельского района отстрел бродячих животных не должен рассматриваться как жестокое обращение с животными, так как данная акция была направлена на защиту населения района от укусов и профилактики бешенства.</p> <p>Решение об отстреле бродячих животных было принято комиссией по чрезвычайным ситуациям при Лепельском райисполкоме 26.02.2009 года (протокол №8/2009). Нарушений общественного порядка при проведении данной акции не установлено. Жалоб и замечаний в Лепельский райисполком и другие учреждения и организации на незаконные действия представителей органов внутренних дел и иных лиц, не поступало.</p>	
Начальник Лепельского РОВД подполковник милиции Целуйко 44568	 А.Т.Шило

*Translation of this document:

Belarus Ministry of Internal Affairs Department of Home Affairs
21 April 2009 №P-10
to Pislevich I.G.

to Lepel District Attorney
Associate Justice Adviser
Polshovskii V.F.

Shooting of wandering animals that took place on March 6th, 2009 in the village of Mezhitsa of Lepel district should not be seen as cruelty to animals, because this action was aimed at protecting local people from animal bites and prevention of rabies. The decision to shoot stray dogs was accepted by the Committee for Emergency Situations at Lepel Regional Executive Committee on 02.26.2009 (protocol №8/2009). Breaches of public order in this action have not been determined. Complaints and comments of the illegal actions of the members of internal affairs to Lepel regional executive committee and other institutions and organisations, have not been received.

Lepel Police Station Chief
Police Lieutenant A.T.Shilo
(Signature)

In March 2009, our organisation was contacted by a retired Nikolayenko Maria Ivanovna, of the town Karelichi from Grodno area (near border of Poland). On March 5, dog shootings were held in her hometown. The town is small and consists of private residential houses. Every owner knows his dog, every dog knows his yard. Maria's dog was shot just under the fence of her house at Tatura street, house 11. The bleeding dog crept into the yard to die. It died in the hands of the lady owner, who loved her deeply.

Maria's health deteriorated. She turned to us with the question: "Who can I write to? Who can be punished for killing my dog? "

Nobody can be held responsible!

Everything is legal! The dog came out of his fence, which meant it was now homeless and should be shot! Just as the fact that Nikolayenko Maria Ivanovna's health has gotten undeniably worse is of consequences of actions of the Division of Housing!

Laws of Belarus do not preview a responsibility of the functionaries for the cruelty against animals. There is only one article in the Administrative Code, which provides a small fine for killing or torturing an animal, but it can only punish the individuals, i.e. citizens. This article does not apply to organisations and workers of organisations that capture and kill animals. They are legally allowed to do with animals anything they want. Nobody carries the responsibility!

People who love and pity animals keep writing letters that are being answered by the same people over and over with no intent to act upon a cry for help...

In January 2009, the Attorney-General's Department of the Republic of Belarus issued a regulation to the Council of Ministers, which indicated that due to the fact that in many cities of Belarus caught animals have nowhere to be contained, killing them directly while being captured would solve that issue, and it is recommended for the "capture" units to each have a veterinarian. What that means is that domestic animals that are captured by "capture" units are killed by any method that can only occur in the head of the specialized staff team. Therefore, the Attorney General's Office recommends for the killing of animals to be more or less human, and that the team must have a veterinarian.

What country are we talking about? The country located in the heart of Europe, or the country located somewhere on the margins of the world?

We have to appeal to world public opinion! People, who are trying to protect the rights of animals in Belarus, are not being heard! Our public organisation of the Protection of Animals rights «Egida» is submitting proposals to all Government entities in order to change the legislation. We propose the introduction of the program, which exists in all European countries:

- Adoption of regulations that limit the reproduction of animals (controlling dog population without causing unnecessary or avoidable animal suffering);
- Spay/Neuter programs for shelters;
- Public education (The promotion of responsible dog ownership) Not only we are not heard, often we are being brought to justice for the fact that we interfere in the well-established routine of collecting and killing of animals! The officials of the Ministry of Housing and Communal Services mocked us with their colleagues as we dared to offer them to consider the introduction of pet sterilisation. And what is so funny about this? Ministry of Housing created Services who are engaged in hunting animals down in the streets of settlements of the Republic of Belarus. Why laugh at the word "sterilisation"?

After that "laughter" of the Ministry, which supervises sewers and sanitation, organisation of the Protection of Animals rights "Egida" has made its most important proposition: "The time has come to change the ministry, which must deal with the management of domestic animals!"

Employees of the Division of Housing, plumbers and garbage collectors are not to be responsible for the problem of domestic animals! These people know how to work well in their field. Belarus, even in Soviet times, of all the fifteen republics, allocated to order and cleanliness. But animals are not the garbage to be simply recycled! Not only there are no such establishments as shelters, but there is even no interpretation of the word "shelter".

In our country, breeders breed animals and sell them for the lack of any other skills that can guarantee potential income.

Puppies and kittens that are not sold are discarded directly in boxes. In our country, the State is not involved in the upbringing and education of the population. There are no "Lessons of animal welfare for children" in schools, practically no bioethics is taught at universities.

All actions of the Protection of Animal rights organisations are seen as attempts to "destroy order" on the collection and disposal of animals.

Since 2007, to the extent of its capabilities, "Egida" is doing what in the Republic of Belarus is considered prohibited by law or simply not perceived as the problem, namely:

- Sterilisation of stray animals, taking animals of the streets by looking for potential owners;
- Promoting responsible ownership;
- Engagement in educational work with children;
- Care for stray animals in places where they are kept by volunteers for long periods of time, which refers to the word "shelter", trying to get people and officials familiar with the word "shelter" and its meaning. We want to introduce you to excerpts of our work: daily and festive.

Our daily lives.

This is the place that we call a "shelter". It belongs to us and here we keep the dogs that we care for.

As you can tell by now, our presence here is only partly legal so we are trying to be very careful.

Fall. Removing dead leaves and preparing for the winter:



Winter. It's very cold. Dogs are freezing, water in bowls freezes over a couple of hours. It is difficult for everybody here.



Spring time. It has gotten warmer outside so we don't have to worry about our dogs freezing at night as much.



Cheers! Finally some **summer!**



Today we can bring any dog in distress to our shelter, but we are afraid we will not be able to continue doing this for a long time. Once we have publicly stated that the Department of Housing and Communal Services should not deal with the problem of stray animals, officials have declared "war" against our dogs. Today, the shelter is under the threat of closure. But we do not lose hope. Next, we would like to present to you the excerpts of our informing, Inspirational and educational work with children and people who live in Minsk.

Our first action «Dog's holiday» was held the October, 4, 2008 to the address: Minsk, Gurskogo str. 42:



"Our best friends"

Was held on January 27, 2008 at the secondary school № 222 in Minsk:



«Window into the summer»

Took place May 20, 2009 in «Ranak», Minsk.



"International Day of Homeless Animals"

Was held August 16, 2008 in the adventure park «Dreamland», Minsk.



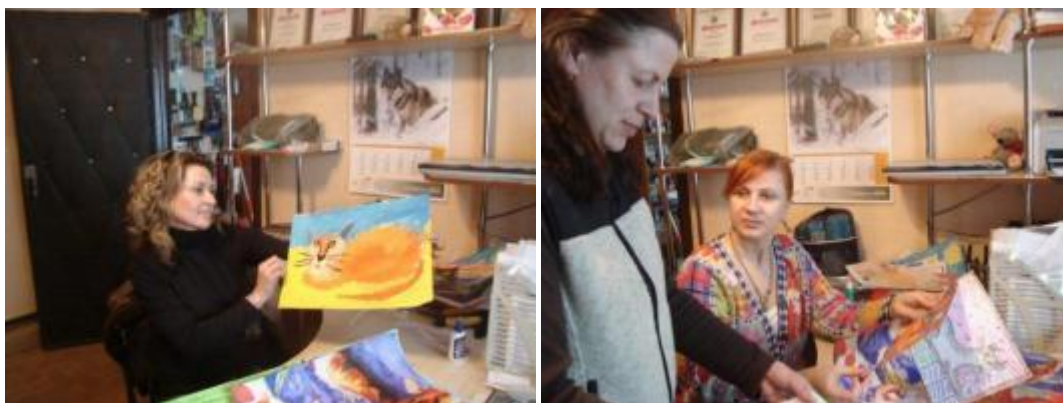
All promotions and activities of «Egida» are getting the increasing interest both from the adults and the children.

We believe that it is particularly important to work with children, mostly because children are highly expressive in their desire to become pet owners. We believe that by explaining to children that a certain percentage of liability falls on a person after the purchase of an animal, we are educating them and raising them with a sense of duty and responsibility.

We believe that by developing children mercy towards animals at an early age, we are contributing to the fact that they grow up good, merciful and kind people.

We want to introduce you to the inner world of children in Belarus, which they expressed in their artworks submitted for the contest of children's creativity «Children against animal cruelty». «Egida» announced the contest in October 2007. We spoke about it in children's newspapers and magazines, schools and creativity groups.

We have received more than 1 000 (one thousand) artworks. These were poems, sculptures, stories and paintings. Take a look at photographs of «Egida» members during the review of children artworks submitted for the contest:



The contest was finalised on April 3, 2008 at the Palace of Children and Youth in Minsk. It was a occasion for «Egida» and for all children who came from all over the country. Children of Belarus are just children, they are the same as children around the world: sweet, sensitive and emotional. Of course, they are against animal cruelty! Children all over the world are against animal cruelty!

What will children of Belarus face when they grow up?

Will anything change in this country?

Or will their beloved dogs and cats fall under the legislation of «trapping, shooting and euthanasia»?

Please, take a look at the establishment of the exemplary enterprise proudly called «Fauna city».

Minsk officials are extremely proud of it.

They are proud of the fact that no dogs are being shot in the streets of Minsk, but instead they are caught and brought to «Fauna city». According to the legislation, there the dogs can wait for the old or the new owner for as much as 5 (five) days. Very few get lucky, when their owner finds them there or new ones pick them up. Pets that have not been pick up have two options of leaving the doors of this establishment:

1. Vivarium (laboratory studies) (see the article on the main page of our site «What a strange word - «vivarium»!);
2. «Euthanasia» room, and then to the industrial animal graveyards in plastic bags.

We called this photo-session «Waiting...» (Part 1)

«I was walking with my owner, but got lost. For a few days I was trying to find my house. Then some people put me in a mesh and loaded me in the trunk of the car. Where did they bring me?»



«It's wet. It's cold. It's scary. There are a lot of bars. Where am I?»



«Does my owner have enough time to understand that I got captured and live in this terrible place? A man stopped beside me. He is looking at me. Maybe he will take me out of here? I look forward to it. My neighbors are also waiting...



«What is this? Is this Food? Is it even edible?»



«My neighbors and me are going for a walk. People are smiling at us. Maybe they will adopt us?»



«We are being put back in cages. These lovely people are leaving. Why are they crying?»



«Where are they taking me?» / "Euthanasia"



«They are removing my collar. Why?»



«I no longer exist...»



«It's over...»



For the little heroes from our photos the journey though «Fauna city» is over. But the new day comes and new noses are going to be pressed against the lattice of «Fauna city».

They are going to be waiting ... for what?

«Waiting...» (Part 2)

Something needs to be changed! Trapping and euthanasia exist in all civilized countries. But nowhere, and we emphasise nowhere(!), trapping and euthanasia is considered to be the only method of regulation of the animal population.

In Belarus, people who protect and rescue animals from death are violating the existing law. They are fighting the State, which is considering them as criminals, as they consider themselves criminals too. They hide, and hide their rescued animals. Not a single shelter for homeless animals exists in the Republic of Belarus. We are unable to get the land, there is no system for obtaining approvals from the Health Services, Fire Department, etc.

This photo was taken in the place where people hide animals rescued from death. Fully acknowledging that they are violating the law, they know that their pets can be taken away at any time to be sent to their death.



What are these people waiting for?

They are waiting for the moment when they will no longer need hide themselves and hide their pets.

They await the moment when it will be possible to open an official shelter, where dogs will be waiting for their new owners.

Even today, clandestinely, they rescue, sterilize, and find new homes for their pets.

Generally, these are young people. Mostly young girls. Young, beautiful and smart. All of them work and study, but almost all the free time they have, they spent caring for homeless animals. Taking care of animals teaches them responsibility, self-awareness and patience.

Why should they feel like criminals?



Which ministry or department of the Republic of Belarus will support their endeavor?
When their expectations will be met?

«Waiting...» (Part 3)

Look at us. We are energetic, educated and selfmotivated!
We want to destroy existing inhuman attitude towards nature in Belarus, which is based on the myth that a person is the king of all living creatures.
We no longer want to hide! We want to be heard!



We want to see shelters for homeless pets in the Republic of Belarus!
We want our children to be taught «Protection of Animals» lessons in school!
We want our breeders to stop throwing unsold puppies and kittens into the garbage!
We want our country to not only adopt «The law on the treatment of animals», but the «Law on the protection of animals from abuse»!
We want the Republic of Belarus to sign the «European Convention for the Protection of pets».
We want the Ministry of Housing and Communal Services to stop shooting animals on the territory of the Republic of Belarus.
We want a lot of things changed in our country in terms of attitude towards nature in general and towards domestic animals, in particular that «no one has the right to cause the animal unnecessary pain, suffering or injury» (art. 3 «European Convention to protect domestic animals »).

Please, support us!

We are not ashamed to say that in order to present the question of the opening of the first shelter for homeless pets in the Republic of Belarus to the authorities, we need

money. In addition to the money we need your moral support.

Join us now!

We are waiting!

[*www.egida.by*](http://www.egida.by)
