



18.12.2015

NOTICE TO MEMBERS

Subject: Petition No 0049/2015 by S. de R. (Dutch), on the compulsory vaccination of puppies

1. Summary of petition

The petitioner complains about the rules for vaccinating puppies against rabies which have been in place since 29 December 2014. According to these rules, puppies cannot travel or be imported or exported for 21 days after they have been vaccinated against rabies. For pedigree puppies, this means that they have to stay with the breeder for 15 weeks. According to the petitioner, this is detrimental to puppies that have been sold abroad, since they thus miss out on the most important phase of their rearing – between the eighth and twelfth week (the primary socialisation period) – with their new owner. As soon as the puppies are allowed to travel to their new family (16th week), they are already in the second phase (secondary socialisation period). According to the petitioner, the new rules lead to behavioural problems in dogs, meaning that there will be less import and export of pedigree dogs and more inbreeding of pedigree dogs. She understands that the rules are there to provide better protection for puppies and better supervision of breeding establishments, but she expects that breeders will forge the dates on the pet passports. The petitioner claims that the EU does not take into account the breeding system used by pedigree dog breeders, or their breeder's certificates and DNA record. Pedigree dog breeders have been struggling to gain this recognition for years. She states that a breeder's certificate or DNA record containing all of the data relating to a puppy is a reliable system. The petitioner will continue to argue for pedigree puppies to be able to be imported and exported at 8 weeks.

2. Admissibility

Declared admissible on 20 October 2015. Information requested from Commission under Rule 216(6).

3. Commission reply, received on 18 December 2015

The petitioner refers to the obligation, since 29 December 2014, to vaccinate puppies against rabies at the age of 12 weeks and raises the point that taking into account the 21 day-waiting period before movement (travel, import, export) the puppies will have to stay by the breeder until they are 15 weeks old. She expresses particular concerns for pedigree puppies for which a pedigree breeding system, breeding certificates and DNA-registration are in place to prevent any falsification on puppies' details. She is accordingly seeking a special regime for the pedigree puppies.

The EU law¹ requiring that dogs should be at least 12 weeks old at the time of vaccination against rabies only applies to dogs moved for non-commercial purposes with their owner to one Member State from another or from a third country, or when they are subject to trade in the Union or imported from a third country. This EU law is not applicable within one Member State and does not differentiate categories of dogs.

This law however provides that Member States may, at their discretion, allow the movement onto their territory of dogs which are less than 12 weeks old and have not received an anti-rabies vaccination, or are between 12 or 16 weeks old and not yet fully protected after they have received an anti-rabies vaccination and therefore do not meet the validity requirements for anti-rabies vaccinations laid down in the EU law. The decision taken by each Member State with regard to this issue is publicly available².

Conclusion

The Commission cannot support the petition seeking a special regime for pedigree puppies since the EU law adopted by the European Parliament and the Council does not provide for any derogation to the anti-rabies vaccination for particular categories of animals. The EU law provides for a general derogation to that vaccination at the discretion of Member States. The petitioner has therefore to address her concerns individually to Member States.

¹ Regulation (EU) No 576/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 June 2013 on the non-commercial movement of pet animals and repealing regulation (EC) No 998/2003 (OJ L 178, 28.6.2013, p. 1). <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32013R0576&from=EN>

² http://ec.europa.eu/food/animal/liveanimals/pets/young_animals_en.htm