

WRITTEN QUESTION E-3117/09
by Catherine Stihler (PSE)
to the Commission

Subject: Animal welfare in Greece

A constituent has approached me about an animal welfare incident encountered in Greece in January 2009.

On the Peloponnese, near the village of Stoupa, the constituent came across a cow with some calves.

'The cow was hobbled very cruelly - her legs were tied with rope so she moved very slowly, but also her head was tied down so that she could barely look ahead. She looked very miserable indeed. Evidently this is done, we were told, because the cows nibble at the lower branches of the olive trees. I would like something done about this horrible practice. It is barbaric and abusive. Other animals are hobbled in Greece - sheep, even hens. It must put a terrible strain on muscles and cause considerable pain.'

Whilst EU law does not expressly prohibit hobbling, is the Commission prepared to raise concerns over the practice in the light of Article 3 of the General Farm Animals Directive (98/58/EC)?¹

Article 3 states that:

'Member States shall make provision to ensure that the owners or keepers take all reasonable steps to ensure the welfare of animals under their care and to ensure that those animals are not caused any unnecessary pain, suffering or injury.'

¹ OJ L 221, 8.8.1998, p. 23.