

Animal Action Hellas

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Athens, 11 October 2018

To: Mr. Stavros Arachovitis

Minister of Agricultural Development
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CC: Mr. Nikos Antonoglou

General Secretary
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To: Ms. Olympia Teligiroidou

Deputy Minister of Agricultural
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Subject: Hobbling

Honourable Minister,

As concerns the meeting of MPs from the area of Cyclades with the General Secretary of the Ministry of Agricultural Development & Foods mr. Antonoglou, the purpose of which to ask for an amendment to existing legislation so that hobbling (the tethering of an animal's feet) should not be considered an abuse in certain specific circumstances (<https://cyclades24.gr/2018/09/ελπίδες-για-άρση-της-απαγόρευσης-του-π/>).

The three animal welfare organisations **Animal Action** (www.gawf.org.uk/animal-action/), **Panhellenic Animal Welfare Federation** (www.pfo.gr) and **Panhellenic Equine Protection Association Ippothesis** (www.ippothesis.gr), co-sign this letter in which we clarify the reasons why hobbling is undoubtedly an abuse and, therefore, there can be no discussion to exclude it from the law.

From a veterinary perspective: hobbling (the tethering of the front and hind leg of the same side or two front legs together)

- 1) prevents normal movement of the animal. The spine, joints, tendons and muscles are forced to move in an abnormal way and are thus being stressed
- 2) causes - due to continuous contact and friction - skin injuries and inflammation in the underlying tendons and bones
- 3) does not allow the hooves (of equidae but also of farm animals) to be "worn down" normally - due to reduced and asymmetric movement -
- 4) quite commonly causes serious accidents, such as dislocations, limb fractures, pelvic fractures, necrosis and apoptosis of hooves. These often lead to death or to the need for euthanasia.

All of this leads to pain and chaos, reduced working hours or productivity and very often, ultimately, total loss of work capacity (for equidae) or productivity (for livestock).

From a moral perspective and in accordance with welfare rules:

According to the definition given from the Farm Animal Welfare Council in Great Britain (FAWC, 2001) welfare is described through a set of conditions that have to be met in order to meet the basic needs of animals. These conditions, or as the FAWC calls them the "freedoms" of animals, are as follows:

- 1) Absence of hunger or thirst
- 2) Absence of environmental stress - proper shelter
- 3) Absence of pain, injury or illness
- 4) Ability to manifest normal behavior
- 5) Absence of fear or any other form of strain

The National Animal Law 4039/12 furthermore underlines, as you already know, the definition of welfare in Article 1 which explicitly mentions the concepts of "protection, welfare, absence of pain, not suffering ... care and respect of their existence".

Thus, welfare is a broad concept that encompasses both the physical and mental well-being of the animal and, in any attempt to evaluate it, we should also take into account those scientific elements which are also related to the feelings of the animals.

The use of hobbling clearly violates three of the above 5 freedoms:

- 1) Absence of pain, injury or illness (hobbling causes pain and injuries to the animal)
- 2) Ability to manifest normal behavior (a hobbled animal cannot move and express itself in a normal way)
- 3) Absence of fear or other form of strain (with its limbs tethered together the animal is inevitably stressed, feels fear and is strained)

Therefore, the view that "hobbling is acceptable provided the rope is soft and does not injure the legs" is scientifically absolutely wrong.

Even if it is done in a way that means the rope does not cause obvious injury to the skin, hobbling puts a strain on the whole body while, at the same time, it undoubtedly violates the other two freedoms which are extremely important for the life of an animal, be it a farm animal, a working one or one kept as a companion animal.

Of course, hobbling is a practice that has been used for hundreds of years in the Cycladic islands and is connected to geophysical and economic factors (difficulty in erecting or placing permanent hedges due to the nature of the terrain and lack of financial resources) and with attitudes that have become entrenched over time (conflicts between neighbors when an animal escapes, destruction of crops, etc).

However, the fact that it has been used for decades does not, in any way, excuse hobbling, since no practice in the world can be accepted as correct based only on the fact that it has been carried out for decades.

Tethering the animals' legs is undeniably an abuse and must be stopped.

There are alternative ways of restricting animals which can be implemented and are compatible with animal welfare, which we are willing to present to you at your convenience.

Finally, something very important you need to keep in mind before making any decisions:

The amendments to the National legislation concerning hobbling cannot be based on "tradition" and decades of set mentality without taking into account current European and global scientific data on animal health and welfare. If this happens it will not only have negative effects on the animals, it will also have a direct negative impact on the image of our country.

Allowing the practice of hobbling to continue will cause outrage (as it already does) among foreign visitors that care about the welfare of animals and will also generate intense reactions of animal welfare organisations abroad, with direct negative impacts on tourism. Finally, it will force the global scientific community which deals with the welfare of animals to characterize the country in a degrading manner.

Taking into consideration all of the above, we sincerely hope that the Ministry's decision will be based on scientific facts and a definitive negative response will be given to those who seek to exempt hobbling from the list of abusive practices under the law.

Sincerely yours,

Elisa Gkeskou
Veterinarian
Equine Welfare
Programme Coordinator



GAWF/Animal Action Hellas

Irene Molfessi
President



**Panhellenic Animal
Welfare Federation**

Rosa Roussou
President



Ippothesis