



Animal Action Hellas

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To:

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Subject: Request for the creation of a framework of conditions for subsidising the purchase and installation of electric fencing, in order to reduce and / or eliminate the illegal practice of hobbling of working equidae and farm animals, in areas where it is widely used.

For more information regarding the practice of hobbling, we have attached our letter, dated 11/10/2018, to the Ministry of Rural Development and Food (Prot. No. 2739 / 11.10.2018, No. Prot. Office of the Secretary General 2562 / 12.10.2018, Prot. No. Office of the Minister 3699 / 12.10.2018), to which we did not receive a response (Appendix 1 – attached).

Ladies and gentlemen,

Animal Action Hellas is the Greek non-profit organisation (No. 63793/505) of UK registered charity, Greek Animal Welfare Fund. We have a charitable purpose that is the prevention and relief of cruelty and suffering amongst animals in Greece, and we have a vision for Greece to become a nation whose people care about the quality of animals' lives. That is why our mission is "to use the way we care for animals to educate and inspire, encouraging changes in attitudes at every level of Greek society."

One of our organisation's core programmes, named "FOUR FEET FREE", aims to reduce, and ultimately eliminate, the phenomenon of hobbling (tying together the front and back legs of one side or the two front legs of an animal). We are currently focussing our efforts on the Cycladic Islands, but we are also working in some of the more isolated areas of the country, both on the islands and the mainland.

From a veterinary perspective, hobbling impedes the normal movement of the animal and puts strain on the spine, joints, muscles and tendons. It also causes external injuries to the skin and inflammation of the underlying tissues. It does not allow the hooves to be "worn down" normally and it is not uncommon to cause serious accidents such as dislocations, limb fractures, pelvic fractures, necrosis and apoptosis of the hooves, which can often lead to death or the need for euthanasia.

In Appendix 2, which follows at the end of the letter, we show two photos, where you can see some of the consequences of hobbling.

All of these issues result in pain and lameness, reduce life expectancy and very often lead to a complete loss of working capacity (for equidae) or productivity (for farm animals).

From an ethical point of view, as the use of hobbling is characterised by:

1. The presence of pain and injury,
2. The inability to manifest normal behaviour, and
3. The presence of fear and other forms of stress,

It clearly violates three of the five conditions of well-being, contrary to both i) the original definition given by the Farm Animal Welfare Council in Great Britain (FAWC, 1979, 1993), (FIVE FREEDOMS), according to which the welfare is a set of specific conditions that must be present in order for the basic needs of animals to be met, and ii) the later definition of Mellor DJ & Reid CSW (1994), (FIVEDOMAINS), in which the basic principles remain the same, with further emphasis being placed on the mental and emotional state of an animal.

In addition, Article 1 of the National Law on Animals L.4039 / 12 emphasises the meaning of welfare by explicitly mentioning the concepts of "protection, good treatment, absence of pain, no suffering... care for respecting their existence".

Hobbling is considered illegal by the Greek justice system, without being explicitly stated in the legislation. It can be deducted by all the general provisions on welfare in laws 1197 / 1981, 4039 /

2012, 4235 / 2014, which the respective prosecutor can “translate” differently during the investigation of the report.

It is very common for both animal welfare organisations and individual citizens (locals and tourists) to resort to reporting cases of hobbling to the police, as their only possible solution.

Guided by animal welfare, while at the same time respecting humans, we recognise that there are negative consequences of such constant reports. These are:

1. Financial burden on the owners (mostly farmers);
2. Hobbled animals either moved to distant locations or made to disappear, leading to an unknown end to their lives;
3. All animals are either removed or sold, as the owners are unable to find an alternative solution.

All of these situations lead to a continuous reduction of both livestock and farmers in these areas, meaning that, in an already under-functioning, primary production sector, the population of indigenous farm animals and working Equidae are in danger of significant shrinkage.

In an effort to find an effective solution, our organisation uses the method of approaching, informing and educating animal owners (of working equidae and farm animals) on alternative ways of restricting their animals, in order to reduce, and ultimately eliminate, the use of hobbling.

As the use of electric fencing is the most appropriate alternative and considering (based on field interviews) that the financial situation of a large number of farmers and equine owners does not allow for its purchase, but also considering that an already established bad practice for decades requires significant motivation in order to change, **we ask the Ministry of Rural Development and Food to create a framework for subsidising (in total or partially) the purchase and installation of electric fencing to those owners of farm animals and working equidae, who wish to use this method in their own or rented facilities but do not have the financial capacity.**

We note that a similar action has been carried out in the past with JM 8512, for the purchase and installation of electric fencing in a livestock facility or crop, in the context of bear protection (Government Gazette 1060/29/4/2013).

http://www.minagric.gr/images/stories/docs/agrotis/MeliMelissokomia/KYA8512_Ilektrofora_perif_r.pdf

The benefits of creating such a framework are varied:

1. **Reduction / elimination of the phenomenon of hobbling in working equidae and farm animals, by increasing their life expectancy and efficiency.**
2. **Maintaining and strengthening livestock activity (necessary both nationally, but also on a local level in partially isolated societies, such as some islands).**
3. **Preservation / non-alteration of the traditional rural environment.**



4. **Preservation of indigenous breeds of farm animals and equidae.**
5. **Enhancement of tourism through the development of an animal-friendly climate that will be advertised internationally (overturning the existing negative climate of international outcry of our country because of this phenomenon).**

The framework of conditions should be implemented by the Ministry, after discussion and cooperation with the local livestock associations, in order to estimate the number of potential beneficiaries. Knowing the situation, our organisation intends to contribute in a consulting role to the creation of the framework, if requested.

This letter is co-signed by the **Department of Veterinary Medicine of the School of Health Sciences of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki.**

We look forward to your reply and hope for your positive response.

Yours sincerely,

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Paul McGlone
Director & President
Animal Action Hellas

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Elisa Geskou
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APPENDIX 2

Below are two photos from the island of Naxos. The first depicts the practice of hobbling and one of its consequences: hooves that are not worn down normally due to the animal's inability to move normally.

The second one shows the same animal, after our team's farrier has treated the hooves. The scars from the use of hobbling are visible.

1. Hobbling and oversized hooves



2. Removal of hobbling and farriery treatment

