

29<sup>th</sup> March 2022

**RE:** Coordinating efforts for Ukraine

Dear Commissioner Stella Kyriakides,  
Dear Dr. Emmanuelle Soubeyran,

The Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE), Eurogroup for Animals (EFA) and FOUR PAWS are all very worried about the horrible consequences of the war in Ukraine. From the start of the war, we coordinated relief measures and efforts to support those affected, both people and animals.

FVE developed a special portal ([www.VetsForUkraine.com](http://www.VetsForUkraine.com)) to coordinate the many relief initiatives both for displaced veterinarians, animals and their owners, as well as for veterinarians and animals in Ukraine. Eurogroup for Animals and Four Paws have set up a task force of several animal welfare organisations to coordinate response efforts. All our organisations are in constant communication with our colleagues in Ukraine and with the neighbouring countries.

We want to express our gratitude to the European Commission for advising all EU Member States to ease the process for non-commercial movement of pet animals into the EU territory, noting that all EU Members States may develop permit arrangements that would apply to pets travelling with refugees and authorise their entry without a prior individual application for a permit as laid down in Regulation (EU) 576/2013. The swift reaction of the Commission was welcomed as an expression of European solidarity to those forced to flee without having to leave their dogs, cats and ferrets behind.

Yet, while this was very helpful, we have been informed from the field that there is still some serious confusion in respect of the applicable rules, with resulting practical problems, such as:

- In respect to the above-mentioned **non-commercial transport of pet dogs, cats and ferrets**: no standardised protocol does exist yet, leading to the introduction

of various isolation/quarantine rules ranging from 5 days to 6 months for dogs entering the EU, with and some countries e.g. requiring rabies antibody titration, while others not. Coordination between transit and destination countries on the matter is also lacking.

- In respect to **commercial movement of pet dogs, cats and ferrets**: While some bordering countries have temporarily allowed the entry of over 5 pet animals, as well as animals originating from shelters (provided they followed all disease prevention and quarantine measures), others still prohibit any entry of animals without the required paperwork (which is extremely difficult to secure in a time of war). There is especially a problem with shelter animals. As many people were fleeing, they had to abandon their pets, leading to overcrowded shelters operating under dire conditions. With fleeing staff, depleted food stores and no access to medicine, thousands of animals are suffering in shelters. Support must be given to these shelters, to care for their animals and prevent their free roaming freely, which could potentially lead to more rabies outbreaks. Equally concerning due to the lack of feed sources and veterinary care is the fate of thousands of stray dogs and cats – including abandoned pets and community animals which have been left behind. Again, some shelters and volunteers are trying to assist but urgently need support.

- **In respect to equines**: Many equine owners are desperate to bring their animals into the EU. However, to do so it is extremely difficult and costly due to the paperwork and, blood tests needed, as well as applicable customs and VAT.

The undersigned organisations are well aware of the disease risks associated with the movement of some animal species (e.g. rabies, EIA, etc.). It is of utmost importance to all of us to avoid the danger of disease incursion into the EU and avoid jeopardising the efforts made over decades to lower the burden of zoonoses and animal disease in the EU. Nonetheless, it is necessary to find balanced measures which would still allow companion animals to be moved into the EU while reducing the risk for disease entry to the bare minimum. Administrative hurdles, rendering animal movements practically infeasible or closing the borders will only lead to more illegal imports and smuggling, which very much increases the risk for disease entry disproportionately.

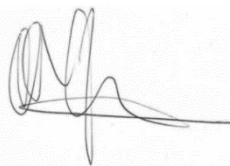
We appreciate the efforts made by the veterinary authorities and we are ready to assist in any way possible. Our organisations and many others have collected funds and can provide resources, extra veterinary staff, workforce, and help set up facilities to perform and complete vaccination schemes, isolate and quarantine animals until their health status permits their further transport, provided a proper framework and local assistance are in place.

The undersigned organisations call upon the European Commission and all Chief Veterinary Officers:

- To develop recommended harmonised import protocols for the different types of animals applicable in all EU Member States to avoid confusion
- To remove all purely administrative, non-risk-related hurdles for importing animals from Ukraine e.g., extra fees for customs, VAT, etc.
- To all work together to make it possible to import animals in a safe way through the establishment of quarantine facilities e.g., for animals coming from shelters and logistic centres in the bordering countries to ensure supplies
- To provide access to animal feed and veterinary care as part of the EU's Civil Protection Mechanism.

Lastly, we urgently request the European Commission to take the lead and to organise a dedicated meeting to coordinate our efforts and to help the people and animals of Ukraine.

Yours sincerely,



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