

Disclaimer: The English language text below is provided by the Translation and Terminology Centre for information only; it confers no rights and imposes no obligations separate from those conferred or imposed by the legislation formally adopted and published. Only the latter is authentic. The original Latvian text uses masculine pronouns in the singular. The Translation and Terminology Centre uses the principle of gender-neutral language in its English translations. In addition, gender-specific Latvian nouns have been translated as gender-neutral terms, e.g. *chairperson*.

The *Saeima*¹ has adopted and the President has proclaimed the following Law:

Animal Protection Law

The ethical obligation of humankind is to ensure the welfare and protection of all species of animals, because every unique being is in itself of value. A human being has a moral obligation to honour any creature, to treat animals with empathic understanding and to protect them. Without a substantiated reason no one is permitted to kill an animal, to cause it pain, create suffering or to otherwise harm it.

Chapter I General Provisions

Section 1.

The following terms are used in this Law:

- 1) **animal owner** – a legal or natural person, who owns an animal.
- 2) **animal keeper** – a person in whose custody and care is an animal;
- 3) **welfare** – the totality of endeavours ensuring the physiological needs of an animal;
- 4) **euthanasia** – painless killing;
- 5) **animal sanctuary** – a specially equipped place for the boarding of seized, stray, confiscated and ownerless animals, as well as animals which are in need of assistance;
- 6) **animal boarding facility** – a specially equipped place where owners of domestic (pet) animals may leave their animals to be cared for, for a specified period of time.

Section 2.

This Law sets out the rights and obligations of a person within the sphere of animal protection.

Section 3.

Animals shall be classified according to their actual situation or method of utilisation as follows:

- 1) farming animals;
- 2) domestic (pet) animals;
- 3) sport and work animals;
- 4) animals utilised for experimental and scientific purposes;
- 5) wild animals; and
- 6) exhibition animals

Section 4.

Cruel treatment of animals is prohibited, that is:

- 1) the killing of an animal, except in the cases provided for in this Law;
- 2) the mutilating, tormenting and torturing of an animal;
- 3) leaving an animal without care;
- 4) leaving an animal in a helpless situation;

¹ The Parliament of the Republic of Latvia

- 5) annoying and baiting an animal, except in the cases when it is necessary for the training of a work animal;
- 6) the organisation of animal fights, the involvement of animals in such fights and support of such fights;
- 7) the use of animals for religious rituals, lotteries and giving animals as gifts at public events except for farm exhibitions;
- 8) the use of an animal as a target for training in shooting or in competitions;
- 9) the use of animals for the training of animals of other species, except for the training of hunting dogs;
- 10) the use of animals, making them exceed their natural capabilities;
- 11) the showing of animals in travelling menageries;
- 12) the offering and use of a female animal for the sexual satisfaction of a male animal without the intent of obtaining offspring; and
- 13) the carrying out of other such actions which cause or may cause mutilation or death, or create suffering for an animal, except in cases when such actions have been carried out for treatment, experimental or scientific purposes or in cases when the life or health of a human being is being threatened.

Section 5.

- (1) An animal owner has authority over an animal as provided for by The Civil Law, except in the cases provided for in this Law and other regulatory enactments.
- (2) An animal owner has the following obligations:
 - 1) to take care of the health, welfare and use of an animal in accordance with its species, age and physiology;
 - 2) to take care that society has a favourable attitude towards the animal in the possession of the owner;
 - 3) to ensure that the animal does not disturb or threaten human beings or other animals; and
 - 4) to not permit uncontrolled animal reproduction.
- (3) An animal keeper, to whom an owner has entrusted an animal or in whose possession an animal has come in another way, also has the obligations mentioned in Paragraph two of this Section.
- (4) Only an animal owner has the right to show an animal in public exhibitions, to give permission for its use as a donor and in the cases provided for in this Law, to kill or use it for experimental and scientific purposes;

Section 6.

An animal owner shall ensure that an animal is registered and marked in accordance with the procedures prescribed in regulatory enactments.

Section 7.

Assistance shall be given to an injured or a sick animal, if necessary with the aid of a practising veterinarian.

Section 8.

- (1) An animal, which has been left homeless or without the care and supervision of an owner (except for hunting dogs during hunting season) shall be considered to be a stray animal.
- (2) Any person shall without delay inform the local government authority regarding a stray animal.

Section 9.

- (1) Observance of the requirements of this Law shall be supervised and controlled by:
 - 1) the institutions under the supervision of the Ministry of Agriculture:
 - a) the State Veterinary Service – in relation to the protection of animals referred to in Section 3 of this Law; and
 - b) the State Forestry Service – in relation to wild (game) animal protection; and

2) Institutions subject to the control of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development – in relation to the protection of wild animals.

(2) The authorities referred to in Paragraph one of this Section may involve public animal protection organisations in the observation of the requirements of this Law.

Section 10.

The Cabinet shall approve:

1) the procedures by which animals kept for farming purposes shall be kept and used, and shall determine the welfare requirements for the keeping and use of each species of animals kept for farming purposes, the procedures for the trading of animals kept for farming purposes, the requirements for the protection of animals kept for farming purposes which are intended for slaughter, as well as the rights and obligations of the keeper of animals kept for farming purposes;

2) the provisions for the protection of domestic (pet) animals and shall determine the welfare requirements for the keeping, trading, and exhibiting at public exhibitions of such animals, as well as the rights and obligations of the keeper of domestic (pet) animals;

3) the procedures by which animals are to be used for sports and for work, and shall determine the welfare requirements for the keeping, use and marketing of sport and work animals, as well as the rights and obligations of the owner of a sport or work animal;

4) the procedures for the keeping, use and trade of animals to be used for experimental and scientific purposes, and shall determine the welfare requirements for the use of such animals, and the procedures and methods for their killing;

5) the provisions for the protection of wild animals and shall determine the requirements for the capture of wild animals, their keeping in captivity and the formation of wild animal collections, the procedures by which wild animals are imported into the State and by which import licenses are to be issued, as well as the procedures by which the renewal of animal populations (reintroduction) shall occur in nature and the importing (introduction) of wild animals not characteristic to the nature of Latvia;

6) the provisions for the protection of exhibition animals during their keeping, training and exhibiting process;

7) the welfare requirements of animals in animal sanctuaries and animal boarding facilities;

8) the procedures for transporting of animals and shall determine the welfare requirements for transporting various species of animals by various means of transport, as well as the rights and obligations of the animal owner and animal transporter during transportation; and

9) the by-law of the Animal Protection Ethics Council and shall determine its composition, functions and operation.

Section 11.

The Animal Protection Ethics Council shall be a consultative authority that shall educate the general public and give recommendations to State institutions in the sphere of animal protection. It is comprised of representatives of the State, scientific institutions and public organisations.

Section 12.

(1) Persons shall be held liable for violations of this Law in accordance with the liability prescribed by law.

(2) Holding persons administratively or criminally liable shall not release such persons from the obligation to compensate for losses caused as a result of violation of this Law.

(3) If an animal owner carries out the actions referred to in Section 4 of this Law or allows such to occur or does not carry out the actions referred to in Paragraph two of Section 5, the institution officials referred to in Paragraph one of Section 9 may, within the sphere of their competence, confiscate the animal in accordance with procedures prescribed by law.

Chapter II Protection of Animals Kept for Farming Purposes

Section 13.

Animals kept for farming purposes are used for the acquisition of products of animal origin or for work.

Section 14.

A person who is knowledgeable in the keeping, training and use of the relevant species and breeds of animals shall be permitted to use animals kept for farming purposes for work.

Section 15.

In cases of disease or trauma of animals used for farming purposes, the owner must obtain the opinion of a practising veterinarian regarding necessary care and treatment.

Chapter III Protection of Domestic (Pet) Animals

Section 16.

It is prohibited to keep as domestic (pet) animals, wild, poisonous or predatory animals, apes, sea mammals as well as animals which are fed on live warm-blooded animals.

Section 17.

In regard to domestic (pet) animals, it is prohibited:

- 1) to use them for haulage work (except for breeds of dogs suitable for this purpose, in special harness); and
- 2) to raise and use them for the acquisition of food and furs.

Section 18.

It is prohibited to perform surgical operations on domestic (pet) animals, in order to modify their external appearance or for other non-curative purposes, except in cases when the operation has been prescribed by a practising veterinarian.

Chapter IV Protection of Sport and Work Animals

Section 19.

- (1) It is permitted to organise competitions with the participation of animals only with a permit from the director of the veterinary service of the relevant territory, and in the case of international level undertakings, only with the permit from the chief veterinary inspector of the State.
- (2) Only animals that have a veterinary certificate or a veterinary (health) certificate from the state of export are permitted to participate in competitions.

Section 20.

In competitions, it is prohibited to use threatened species and protected species of animals whose protection is specified in international agreements which are binding for Latvia.

Section 21.

It is prohibited to inject medical substances (doping) into sport animals in training and in competitions, which affect their natural capabilities.

Section 22.

Work animals shall be selected in accordance with the type of use, work conditions and carrying out of specific functions.

Section 23.

A work animal may be used by a person, who:

- 1) is knowledgeable the keeping and training of the relevant species and breed of animals; and
- 2) is capable of controlling the animal and, if necessary, stopping its attack on a human being or an animal.

Chapter V

Protection of Animals Used for Experimental and Scientific Purposes

Section 24.

- (1) Specially raised animals (laboratory animals), or where the permission of owners is obtained, other animals, may be used for experimental and scientific purposes.
- (2) Wild animals may be used for experimental and scientific purposes if it is not possible to achieve the objective by other means.
- (3) The number of animals to be used for experimental and scientific purposes shall be reduced by improving experimental methods and, if possible, experiments with animals shall be replaced by alternative methods of research.

Section 25.

After evaluation of an opinion by the Animal Protection Ethics Council, the State Veterinary Service shall issue a permit for the use of animals for experimental and scientific research.

Section 26.

In acquiring professional education in biological, medical and veterinary medicine, it is permitted to use laboratory animals and other animals during the study process, if it is not possible to achieve the objective by other means.

Chapter VI

Protection of Wild Animals

Section 27.

To capture and keep a wild animal in captivity is permitted only for scientific, educational or species saving purposes if a permit has been obtained from the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development.

Section 28.

It is prohibited to train or use wild animals for entertainment purposes.

Section 29.

It is prohibited to release a tamed wild animal, which is not accustomed to a life in the wild, into the open.

Section 30.

It is prohibited to maliciously destroy the natural places of habitation (burrows, lairs, nests etc.) of wild animals.

Section 31.

A permit from the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development is necessary for the renewal (reintroduction) of extinct animal populations in nature and the import (introduction) of wild animals non-characteristic to the nature of Latvia.

Section 32.

- (1) Collections of wild animals (zoological gardens, animal parks, aquariums, terrariums and others) may be established for scientific, educational and species-saving purposes.
- (2) Wild animal collections may be established only with a permit from the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development and a permit from the State Veterinary Service.

Section 33.

Wild animal owners shall be required to have a document, as set out in regulatory enactments, regarding the origin (lawful acquisition) of each animal.

Section 34.

An owner of a wild animal collection has the obligation to create, for each species of animal, conditions approximating its natural environment and to ensure the satisfaction of the physiological and zoologically psychological needs for each species of animal.

Section 35.

A wild animal may be imported into the State and exported from the State only with a permit from the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development, as well as by observing the requirements of the State Veterinary Service.

Chapter VII Protection of Animals during Their Transport

Section 36.

- (1) An animal shall be transported by an appropriate means of transport, ensuring conditions not harmful to its health.
- (2) If necessary, prior to transportation or during transportation, an animal may be injected with tranquillising medical substances, observing the instructions of a practising veterinarian.

Section 37.

An animal owner or a person authorised by the owner shall be responsible for the observance of the requirements of this Law during the transportation of the animal.

Section 38.

- (1) Customs control of an animal being transported shall be carried out without delay.
- (2) Delay of the transportation of an animal shall be permitted only for the good of the animal or in cases when there is cause for suspicion regarding the animal becoming ill with an infectious disease.

Chapter VIII Animal Sanctuaries and Animal Boarding Facilities

Section 39.

Local governments shall establish and maintain animal sanctuaries, as well as enter into agreements with animal sanctuaries under the supervision of legal or natural persons regarding the provision of accommodation and care for stray animals.

Section 40.

Animal reproduction shall not be permitted in sanctuaries.

Section 41.

- (1) A sanctuary may release an animal to a person who has attained 18 years of age and who undertakes to ensure the welfare of the relevant animal.
- (2) A sanctuary may only release sterilised animals, except for purebred animals, which have relevant documents certifying their breed.
- (3) Information regarding the subsequent owner of the animal shall be retained by the sanctuary for not less than one year.

Section 42.

A sanctuary shall provide the subsequent owner with information regarding the behaviour of and unique care features for the animal.

Section 43.

An animal owner may for a specific time leave the animal in the care of a boarding facility.

Chapter IX Killing of Animals

Section 44.

It is prohibited to kill an animal. The prohibition does not apply to:

- 1) the slaughter of animals kept for farming purposes;
- 2) animal euthanasia;
- 3) sports hunting;
- 4) fishing;
- 5) destruction of harmful rodents and insects;
- 6) cases, when an animal directly threatens the health or life of human beings or other animals;
- 7) cases, when a programme combating infectious diseases provides for the killing of an animal; and
- 8) the killing of animals used for experimental and scientific purposes, if it is provided for in the objectives of the experiment.

Section 45.

An animal may be killed only with the permission of the animal owner (in the case of euthanasia – permission in writing), except in the cases provided for in Clauses 6 and 7 of Section 44 of this Law.

Section 46.

In the killing of an animal, a method shall be selected which causes the least suffering for the animal.

Section 47.

An animal kept for farming purposes may be killed if:

- 1) it has been raised for the production of food of animal origin intended for the sustenance of human beings and for raw materials for manufacturing;
- 2) the keeping of an animal has become economically disadvantageous due to its non-productivity;
- 3) an animal is under threat of death due to a disease or a trauma; or
- 4) it has been provided for in a programme combating infectious diseases.

Section 48.

In a case of final necessity, an animal kept for farming purposes may be slaughtered after stunning, as well as in a case when, due to disease or trauma, the death of an animal is possible.

Section 49.

Intentional killing of a pregnant animal kept for farming purposes is prohibited, except in cases prescribed by a practising veterinarian.

Section 50.

It is permitted to perform euthanasia of an animal, if:

- 1) it has an incurable disease;
- 2) during the ageing process, irreversible health changes have arisen;
- 3) due to its aggressiveness, an animal has become dangerous to human beings or other animals;
- 4) it has been provided for in a programme combating infectious diseases;
- 5) it has been requested by the animal owner; or
- 6) it is a stray or a confiscated animal and within a fourteen-day period it has not been possible to find the previous owner or a new owner.

Section 51.

The euthanasia of an animal shall be performed by a practising veterinarian.

Section 52.

- (1) In euthanasia, medical substances shall be used which cause an immediate and irreversible loss of consciousness and death.
- (2) After euthanasia, a practising veterinary shall make certain that biological death has set in for the animal.

Transitional Provision

Persons who have in their possession the animals mentioned in Section 16, at the time this Law comes into force, may not allow the reproduction of such animals and up to 1 July 2000 shall ensure the keeping of such animals in wild animal collections, or if this is not possible – euthanasia.

This Law shall come into force on 1 January 2000.

This Law has been adopted by the *Saeima* on 9 December 1999.

President

V. Vīķe-Freiberga

Rīga, 29 December 1999