



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Ursula von der Leyen
The President

Brussels, 14, 04, 2022
Ares (2022) 1903432

Dear Honourable Member,

I would like to thank you and your co-signatories for your letter of 14 March 2022, also addressed to Commissioner [REDACTED] and Commissioner [REDACTED] regarding the movement of pet animals travelling with refugees from Ukraine.

I am pleased to inform you that since the very first day of Russia's military aggression against Ukraine, we have asked the competent authorities of all Member States to show flexibility and pragmatism vis-à-vis the legal provisions applicable to the non-commercial movements of pet animals in order to facilitate the entry of such animals travelling with their owners from Ukraine.

According to our legislation on the non-commercial movement of pet animals, Member States may authorise, in exceptional situations, the non-commercial movement of pet animals that do not meet the conditions for legal entry into their territory, under specific permit arrangements.

The competent veterinary authorities have responded in an overwhelmingly favourable fashion to our request and have since implemented such arrangements, which include, as you suggest, all necessary veterinary assistance, including free marking, vaccination, feeding and watering and, where needed, isolation of these animals under appropriate conditions. To illustrate the efforts made so far, the Polish authorities, which receive more than 500 pet animals travelling with refugees every day, instructed a team of more than 60 veterinarians to take care of these animals at different places of entry onto its territory. Other frontline Member States made similar arrangements.

In addition, a coordination mechanism has been put in place between Member State authorities to ease the entry of pets travelling with refugees for which the entry country is not their final destination.

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I very much appreciate the willingness of animal welfare NGOs to help animals. However, I shall draw your attention to the fact that, due to the endemic presence of rabies throughout the Ukrainian territory and the high number of cases of rabies detected every year in Ukraine; in both wild and domestic animals, facilitating the entry of stray animals or animals from shelters – where almost all are captured stray animals – remains very risky. It is not only risky because rescuing activities are dangerous when military operations are ongoing; but also because such animals have no rabies vaccination history, which is the norm for family pets.

In this regard, it is important to recall that rabies is a fatal disease in animals and humans and the risk of transmission of rabies by the movement of dogs and cats in the EU is mainly related to moving an animal incubating the disease, which may, in spite of a subsequent vaccination, put at risk the health of rescuers and potential adopters.

Therefore, I count on your support to encourage NGOs with whom you are in contact to give priority to direct aid on the spot and to discourage them from rescuing and trying to transfer such animals into the EU.

I once again assure you and the co-signatories of the importance the Commission attaches to this subject and to its support for the Ukrainian people in these dark times.

Yours faithfully,



Ursula von der Leyen