



Animal Welfare & Awareness

The following is the text provided by one particular correspondent who holds animal welfare at heart: Malta and Gozo are renowned for their stray dog and cat problem where there are an estimated 60,000 dogs and even more cats and kittens. These stray and abandoned dogs and cats are all over the island resulting in hundreds of unwanted litters of puppies and kittens being born each day. A single pair of cats and their kittens can produce as many as 42, 0000 kittens in just 7 years. The situation is getting worse despite several organisations working towards neutering all the strays on the island.

Malta has also allowed a dolphinarium for tourists, a circus's with animals, horses and cabs to take tourists around. Where are the laws governing the welfare of horses and cabs better known as 'Karoozin' which are seen around the tourist areas? One can easily hear tourists complain, since the horses stand there in 100 degrees, no shade and no water. Stricter regulations are needed re: specified total working hours, breaks, distance the horses are allowed to walk to their destinations, shelters to be built and regular checks by the animal welfare. Many of these horses live in garages. Can one consider the Maltese as animal friendly when facing the latter?

We are aware that a government paper <http://www.doi.gov.mt/en/legalnotices/2011/05/LN199.pd> has been written setting out new regulations and laws for all animal sanctuaries, pet shops, animal keepers, importers etc. It has not been voted through the house yet but has appeared as a legal notice this year. Further Government help is needed to help tackle the problem which we are highlighting below:

The homing centres and sanctuaries are permanently full, presently the SPCA have around 100 dogs and 50 cats, the AAA have 150 dogs, SPCA Gozo have around 25 dogs, 30 kittens. The regulations are needed but that means that less dogs and cats can be taken into the homing centres/sanctuaries and re-homed. What will happen to all these strays and abandoned animals? Facebook is full of hundreds of pages of 'Causes' – where Facebook users click to share the Cause with their FB friends – the Maltese are sharing hundreds of these causes. The media are now taking on board that people want to learn about animals, help where they can, improve their education. The public care, the tourists care, the Govt may care but they are not doing enough about the growing problems within Animal Welfare.



Animal NGO's no longer get any government financial backing. The homing centres and sanctuaries are willing to do their work for them but they won't provide support and any financial assistance. A working party needs to be formed to include representatives from all homing centres, sanctuaries etc. Government must get all the sanctuaries and homing centres working together – at present some of them are in 'competition' with each other. The new laws are to be made more practical for animal homing centres, adequate time given to comply with these laws and support from the government to help them adhere to the new regulations. Each centre needs to be reviewed on an individual basis. Government support is required financially but also with the provision of land and planning permission for existing and new animal NGO's.

The feeders - what fantastic and dedicated these people are to feed the strays all over the island, day in, day out - do you think they get any help from the Government? No.

There is also the need to set up Animal Welfare in Gozo. At present Animal Welfare will not go to Gozo. SPCA Gozo have been trying to get new homing centre premises for many years due to the stray problem on the island. They eventually got the land but again been turned down for planning. Why is this so, when it is so badly needed? If the government wants the stray problem under control in Gozo why isn't the government working with and supporting animal welfare?

SPCA Malta has been promised a new homing centre for 9 years. So far only failed promises from the governments end. In contrast the government, virtually 'overnight' got planning through and built a dog playground at Ta' Qali. Great idea but would have been better to help rescue and save dogs before giving them a playground?

With the new regulations coming into force, any dog or cat found and handed into the police has to be kept for 7 days. The sanctuaries are permanently full so what happens to them? The police will have the option of putting them down, with no dog pounds at police stations, what other choice will they have?

Under the new laws as from 30.4.12 everyone has to have their dog micro-chipped instead of the old dog licence. Brilliant news but will the government enforce this law?

Finally, an Animal Welfare foundation is a must but made up of representatives who know what is needed and will make things happen.

