

THE REFORM OF ANIMAL WELFARE ACT

STATEMENT

AGAINST THE PROPOSED BAN OF ZOOPHILIA

4.8.2015

ADDRESSED TO

The working committee for reforming the Animal Welfare Act (247/1996).
Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry.

FROM

Suomen Eläintenystävien Foorumi (SEF; 'Forum of Finnish animal friends')
(multiple writers)

[TRANSLATION OF THE ORIGINAL FINNISH VERSION]

(not word by word, but the general meaning)

INTRODUCTION

This is a reply statement against the working committee's meeting at 2.12.2014 proceeding's section 3: "intercourse or other sexual actions with an animal".

This statement is meant to correct the false assumption of zoophilia being harmful towards animals, and to correct the working committee's general misconceptions about zoophilia. It is also meant to dispute the assumed need for the recriminalization of zoophilia, and to rectify the false presumptions surrounding the matter. This statement is based on findings in scientific literature.

BACKGROUND

In Europe (e.g. Germany) and Scandinavia (e.g. Denmark, Sweden) zoophilia recently has been banned. The cross-continent wide introduction of a zoophilia ban has been a result of strong lobbying by local animal rights organizations.

AGENDA

The presumptions which are meant to justify the proposed ban of zoophilia have been misleading both the working committee, but also the public. As a community group we have examined the same scientific studies which have been used by the groups lobbying against zoophilia. We have also examined some additional official studies. Based on the studies and on our own experiences, we represent our aspect of zoophilia to the working committee.

Based on the studies zoophilia isn't a matter of animal protection. The reformed animal welfare act should be based on practice, minimizing any harm to animals while respecting the rights of minorities. The basis of the reformed animal welfare act must be able to withstand critical evaluation in future.

The still ongoing preparation of the law has been deliberately misguided into a certain direction (recriminalization) thus we feel obligated to send you this statement.

Having read and discussed the fact based arguments presented below (the sources are available as a separate attachment) we kindly ask you to reconsider your plan to ban zoophilia – as well as the basis of your opinions.

- 1) Zoophilia is an orientation you are born with (Miletski 2013). As heterosexuals cannot choose to become homosexuals, neither can zoophiles choose to become non-zoophiles.
- 2) According to a research conducted in Sweden in 2004 (Andersson 2005), in the last 35 years based on police reports in total 209 animals have been sexually abused. Majority of the presented cases were zoosadism, or intentionally caused harm to animals. Research focusing on zoosadism should not be used as basis for banning zoophilia. These two are barely related to each other. Some numbers for comparison: Sweden has approximately 780 000 dogs, 1 200 000 cats, 1 500 000 cows and 360 000 horses (Agria 2013, Sveriges Radio 2013).
- 3) A Norwegian research paper presents the following (Revholt 2006):
 - a. References to research commissioned by animal welfare advocates, who have declared interests they pursue. Research like these must be handled with criticism, as they intentionally omit or highlight desired results beneficial to the groups' agendas.

- b. Out of veterinarians who participated in the research, only 22% had come across one or two cases of animal abuse in their whole career. In the research paper this corresponds to about 124 animals. For comparison: Norway has approximately 500 000 dogs, 750 000 cats, 240 000 dairy cows ja 35 000 horses (NRK 2010, Olsen 2011, NKK 2013).
 - c. Injuries to the animals had been induced by multiple sources (eg. other animals), and many cases were obviously work of zoosadists, and therefore unrelated to zoophilia. Zoosadists only want to inflict pain and misery upon animals. Reasons for this can be hatred of cats or desire to harm neighbors' pets. This is already illegal in Finland.
 - d. For the animals that were in the research, 29% of the cases were caused by zoosadists and only 3% were purely caused by zoophiles. The rest could not be categorized due to unknown factors (eg. Other animals or structures in the animal pens).
 - e. According to the research zoophiles primarily have sex with their own pets.
 - f. Additionally according to the research zoophiles do not want to harm their animals, but love and care for them. The majority of the recorded cases with abuse are not related to zoophilia.
 - g. Criminalization of zoophilia has been earlier opposed in Europe for such reasons as it is foolish to prohibit something, if there doesn't exist a problem in the first place. Prohibition would criminalize people who cannot be accused in the light of what is known today about how sexual orientations develop.
 - h. Zoosadism has been already criminalized, and criminalizing zoophilia would not affect zoosadists in any manner.
- 4) The ban would not improve the understanding of zoophilia as a phenomenon, spreading the information related to it or reducing the harms from a psychiatric point of view (Ranger and Fedoroff 2014). Instead of a ban, we should aim to better understand those with zoophilistic characteristics and thus promote spreading of information, healthy sexual behavior and awareness of possible risks. This would have a stronger impact on the promotion of animal welfare than a possible ban ever could. Recriminalization would force zoophilia – which is already a huge taboo – to go even deeper underground.
- 5) According to a Swedish study (Andersson 2005), the police in Sweden received 25 possible cases of harm done towards animals per year during the years 2000-2004. We would estimate – according to Kinsey's studies (Kinsey 1948/1953) – that 5% of the population have had experiences of, or have a preference for zoophilia, and that 1% of population could be in long-term relationship with an animal. For example: there are 9 500 000 residents in Sweden, which would translate into 95 000 zoophiles. If we were to assume that all of the previously mentioned cases are cases of animal abuse caused by zoophiles, then 0,026% of zoophiles would be involved in harmful acts. If we exclude the cases of zoosadism, the amount of such cases caused by zoophiles approaches 0 %. However, recriminalization of zoophilia would make all those 95 000 criminals. And now a similar law is suggested here in Finland!
- 6) A sexual act with an animal is not a matter of animal protection in itself. Causing harm, pain or suffering is a matter of animal protection. A zoophile does not cause harm to animals.
- 7) The Ministry of Justice has already taken negative stand for the possible ban in the working committee. The arguments for this stand are better known to the committee, but we believe they

are related to the difficulty of proving actual harm to animals, and to the criminalization of people based on their inborn sexual orientation.

- 8)** The executive manager of Finnish Human Sexuality Association (Sexpo Foundation) has decided to take an opposing position to the recriminalization of zoophilia (Kaukonen 2015, MacGilleo 2015). Due to his statement people have gone in a frenzy on social media and demanded for his resignation. The social media rage has also been targeted to RAY (Raha-automaattiyhdistys; Finland's Slot Machine Association), the main supporting financier for Sexpo (Mäkinen 2015). The common atmosphere around the subject is very tense, prejudgemental and biased. The activists provoked by deliberately spread false facts and info have already begun to smear peoples' reputations and to ruin their lives, only because these people have opposing opinions. Due to the suggested recriminalization, the previously mentioned harassment of people for their sexual opinions or preferences would only gain more legitimacy.
- 9)** Sexual equality organization Finland (SETA ry) has taken neutral position towards zoophilia (conversation via email with main secretary Aija Salo 22.8.2014).
- 10)** According to police inspector Kasurinen, there are no animal brothels in Finland (Kasurinen 2015). So-claimed brothels existing in Europe has also been proven a false fact from the start (Mayer 2012). The "animal brothels exist in Europe" - argument has probably been used in working committee to falsely convince members of the group to believe necessity of prohibition law.
- 11)** National media in Finland (for example Yle) have published misleading information and stories based on false facts about zoophilia (Malmberg 2015, Pippuri 2015). The false facts have not been corrected even after requests for correction. Contrary to good journalistic practice, the opposing opinions have not been heard or published. In addition the same false facts are reused over and over again. However, this might be because of taboo quality of the matter and the sought shock-news value.
- 12)** Despite the requests, the main party promoting recriminalization has not published any reason or arguments for the facts they are promoting. It is challenging to have a rational debate on the subject if the counter party doesn't play its part. We've comprehensively gone through the main facts and arguments used by animal right organizations across Europe. Those facts have disturbingly turned often to be based on rumors, completely false or falsified information or deliberate smearing.
- 13)** At least in Germany, there is circling a series of photos which depict animals in bad shape and it's claimed that they are victims of zoophiles or zoosadists. Actually, the origin of some of the photos have been revealed to be from an animal shelter located in Bosnia-Hertsegovina or at a veterinary's clinic after a surgical operation (www.zoophiler-tierschutz.info 2014a ja 2014b). Animal protection societies are still using these kinds of fake material to cause shock reaction from the public and defame the zoophiles.

- 14) The intrinsic value of an animal is important for a zoophile. Zoophiles aim to take care of animal's well-being as a whole. Animal's sexual need (sex) is one of the basic needs along with social interactions, need for food or shelter (Sexpo Foundation). A zoophile wants to allow and cause pleasure for animal; not just him-/herself. Is a dog suffering, if he 'humps' another dog, a pillow or owner's hand? Sex with humans cannot be different from sex between animals.
- 15) Animal's consent is not asked in meat industry, artificial insemination, laboratory animal research, having one as a pet or neutering the pet. Why is it required only in the sexual settings – especially when the act is meant to cause pleasure to both participants? If excluding zoophilia, is the act of previously listed deeds accepted when there is economical benefits to be gained, ie. artificial insemination of cattle with the best-of-breed's sperm? An animal can express it's opinions by body language and – if necessary – defend itself with teeth and hoofs (Miletski 2013). According to a Norwegian study, an animal can also make the initiative for the sexual intercourse (Revholt 2006)

EPILOGUE

We understand that zoophilia is a big taboo. We hope we now have informed you about the current public image of zoophilia being mostly incorrect. The erroneous image is maintained by the nature of being taboo, purposely spread false or misleading information, forums of adult-related websites and also intentionally biased studies.

The people against zoophilia deliberately or unknowingly present erroneous or falsified claims. The claims have gained foothold in Europe because they haven't been strongly opposed by any coalition of zoophiles. Scattered groups of zoophiles have been mostly hiding from the publicity and an official common interest group hasn't been dared to set up. The case of the executive manager of Sexpo (section 8) is a perfect example of how zoophilia faces both prejudice and lynching attitudes.

The reformation of the Animal Welfare Act is long waited for and it is hoped to improve the situations of animals in Finland. **However zoophilia should not be banned as a part of the reformation, because based on the studies discussed above zoophilia doesn't cause harm or suffering to the animal.** On contrary to public belief and also based on the studies, zoophiles genuinely love their animals and also want their complete well-being. The recriminalization would deteriorate our ability to understand and study zoophilia as a phenomenon but also it would stigmatize a group of people which already is being harassed and mistreated.

As zoophiles we also wish to promote animal protection and welfare, but because of this now proposed renewed law we would become criminals by default. Perhaps it would be wiser to keep the channel of communication open.

With kind regards,

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ABBREVIATIONS

- SEF = Suomen Eläintenystävien Foorumi (SEF, 'Forum of Finnish animal friends'). A forum for Finnish zoophiles in the internet.
- SETA = Seksuaalinen tasavertaisuus ry. SETA - LGBTI Rights in Finland is a national human rights NGO.
- SEXPO = Sexpo Foundation has been working to promote sexual well being in Finland since 1969.
- SEY = Suomen Eläinsuojeluyhdistysten liitto ry (The Union for Animal Protection Societies in Finland). Lobbies for banning the zoophilia.
- ZOOPHILIA = A love towards animals, which also includes the sexual part either in practice or fantasy.
- ZOOSADISM = Intentional cruelty towards animals, also without the sexual part. Kicking the neighbor's cat in order to revenge the neighbor is considered zoosadism.

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