

A close-up, black and white photograph of a dog's face, focusing on its eye. The eye is strikingly colorful, with a blue and yellow iris. The dog's fur is dark and textured. The background is blurred.

The nature and extent of animal welfare cases and the state of affairs regarding law enforcement in this area in the Netherlands

Focusing on animal welfare

Summary

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Beke *reeks*

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This study has tried to map out the nature and extent of abuse and neglect of animals and the state of affairs regarding law enforcement in this field in the Netherlands. The problem statement and the research questions derived from it relate to the broad field of animal welfare but are regarded in the light of the animal police. Affecting animal welfare in a negative way (and similar descriptions) implies inflicting pain or injury on animals, withholding care from animals and other criminal behaviour concerning animals.

This summary provides the most important findings of the study. The research questions are guiding and are answered one by one. First we will describe what is known about the extent and nature of animal welfare cases and the way cases are dealt with and registered (1). The next section (2) describes the measures in place to maintain animal welfare, the cooperation between parties on paper and in practice, as well as the experiences with and the results of this cooperation. Section 3 summarizes the main findings from international literature as to the cruelty link. The chapter concludes with an evaluation (4).

1 Extent, nature, settlement and registration of animal welfare cases

This section discusses the most important findings with respect to the extent, nature, settlement and registration of reports, offences and felonies concerning animals. These findings relate to the first three research questions.

1.1 Extent, nature and settlement

This subsection deals with the extent, nature and settlement of the cases relating to animal welfare in general and offences and felonies in particular. In doing so, the first two research questions are answered. These questions were formulated as follows:

Research question 1: What is known about developments in the number of reports, offences and felonies concerning animal welfare (abuse and neglect of animals in particular) previous to and at the time of introduction of the animal police?

Research question 2: What is known about the nature of the incident reports, offences and felonies with regard to animal welfare and the settlement of cases concerning animal welfare?

In order to provide insight into the number of animal welfare cases we analyzed the data available in the registration systems of both police and Public Prosecution Service. The Public Prosecution Service system also provides insight into the settlement of cases. Furthermore, the reports registered with Incident Reporting Number 144 (IRN or Meldpunt 144) 'Save an Animal', a nationwide sample of 250 animal police files and the reports of two police districts offered insight into the nature and number of incident reports concerning animal welfare and the extent of the animal police's involvement. The Dutch Animal Protection Society (de Dierenbescherming) was a source of information as well. Before describing the findings of our analyses of these separate sources of information, we will first discuss the sources used and the scope of the figures.

Sources and figures put into perspective

The figures provided by the police and the Public Prosecution Service show some trends regarding the number of registered cases concerning animal welfare law enforcement. Before the introduction of the animal police in 2011, police and Public Prosecution Service also registered animal related cases. From the registrations made by police and Public Prosecution Service after the introduction of the animal police, it cannot be deduced which cases can be attributed to animal police officers. This is possible, though, for the reports via IRN 144, which are all switched through to the animal police. In addition to the reports via IRN 144, the animal police officers can identify cases themselves and then register them in the police system. The data from the national sample of 250 cases dealt with by the animal police provide insight into the nature of those cases.

Police figures

The police figures showed that more than 48,000 cases in 2010 and more than 46,000 cases in 2011 concerning animals were registered in the police computer registration system (BVH). The data available with respect to the first six months of 2012 showed an increase in the number of police registrations concerning animals: over 28,000 reports were filed during that period of time. This effect might be ascribed to the introduction of the animal police, but this assumption cannot be easily substantiated since every police officer can report cases concerning animals.

With respect to the nature of the cases concerning animals, no clear conclusions can be drawn based on the police registrations. The police registration system does not provide for a separate classification with regard to animal abuse and neglect. The system comprises twelve categories pertaining to animals, but it is largely dependent on the discretion of the police officers concerned in which category they register the report. '(Other) reports concerning animals', 'Animal health and welfare' and 'Stray animals' were in the top three of

most ticked categories in the police registration system. The first two categories, however, do not say anything about the nature and content of the cases. Also, the cases in the police registration system need not always be offences or felonies, but can also be of a 'more neutral' character, for example police officers collecting a cat and taking it to a kennel because its owner is in hospital.

The analysis of 250 animal police cases, did provide more insight into the nature of the cases, however. In 49% of the incident reports the animal police acted upon, animal neglect was suspected by the callers and in 7% of the reports there was suspicion of animal abuse. The remaining reports included cases about dangerous, injured or dead animals. When the animal police visited the scene itself, it turned out that 19% and 2% of the cases respectively concerned neglect and abuse. In almost half of the cases (44%) the animal police officers observed that there was nothing wrong (anymore).

Public Prosecution Service figures

The data analysis of the two police districts showed that in 13% of the cases in these districts a booking was issued and sent to the Public Prosecution Service. The number of cases concerning animals handled by the Public Prosecution Service have fluctuated over the years. Between 2007 and 2009 over 2,000 cases were settled, in 2010 over 1,500 cases and in 2011 over 3,000 cases. The available figures concerning the first six months of 2012 showed a decrease compared to the previous year. Based on these figures it can be established that there was no increase in the number of 'animal welfare cases' settled, whether or not by means of criminal action, in the first six months following the introduction of the animal police. The Public Prosecution Service's preferred policy is administrative action instead of criminal action when and wherever possible.

The registrations by the Public Prosecution Service showed that 'fishing without a license' comprised the largest group of settled cases (45% in 2010, 78% in 2011, and 68% in the first six months of 2012). This increase is probably due to the intensified attention to this offence in this time period. The trade in protected animals (25%) and animal neglect (10%) were next in line. The majority of criminal cases were settled by imposing fines. The cases that appeared in court were also often settled by imposing fines. Prison sentences, suspended or not, were imposed in about 4% of the cases.

IRN 144 figures

IRN 144 was introduced simultaneously with the animal police. During the first nine months in operation more than 135,000 telephone calls were handled. This resulted in almost 40,000 incident reports concerning animal welfare during this period of time. The number of telephone calls fluctuated between 2,000 and 6,000 a month. The telephone calls that resulted in incident reports were then passed on to the authorities designated to deal with them. The animal police is one of those authorities. The animal police took care of approximately one fifth (19%) of the total number of reports. Not all telephone calls

resulted in reports; a large number of the calls served an informative or advisory purpose. In those cases there was no need to refer the reports to other authorities. As to the nature of the reports passed on by IRN 144 it can be stated that most cases concerned injured (37%) or found (19%) animals. Furthermore, IRN 144 chiefly received reports about neglected animals (15%) and, to a lesser extent, reports about animals in distress (6%) or about animal abuse (3%).

Animal Protection figures

With the introduction of a national reporting number, the IRN of Animal Protection (the Animal Protection National Inspection Service or LID), was integrated into IRN 144. Before the introduction of IRN 144 40,000 calls were received annually. Approximately 8,000 of those calls resulted in registered complaints or reports. The number of reports received via IRN 144 is considerably higher.

In short, it can be concluded that since the introduction of IRN 144 and of the animal police more incident reports have been registered concerning animal welfare. The IRN 144 data show that the animal police receive approximately 10,000 reports per year: Part of them probably reports that used to be received directly by authorities such as LID, part of them probably 'new' reports that can be attributed to the introduction of IRN 144 and the animal police.

Preliminary figures concerning the first six months of 2012 showed that the role of the Public Prosecution Service seems to have become smaller with regard to settling animal-related cases. This might be explained by the introduction of the national 'Assessment Framework Animal Law Enforcement' ('Afwegingskader Dierhandhaving') which prefers administrative settlement of animal welfare cases to criminal settlement.

1.2 Registration

Research question 3: How are reports, offences, felonies and implemented measures registered and to what extent is this registration suitable or sufficient for measuring results?

This study has made use of data from police registration systems, the Public Prosecution Service and IRN 144. The manner of registration and to what extent the systems are fit for measuring results will be discussed per data system.

Police

The police registration system (BVH) distinguishes twelve social classes (offence categories) that pertain to animals. Whenever the police determine that an offence or felony towards animals has been committed, it is supposed to be registered in one of the relevant classes. Since these classes may overlap and are not always unambiguous, registration errors can occur. This is the reason why not all animal cases end up in the correct classes. Assuming

that the manner of registration of the police has remained more or less the same over the years, an analysis of social classes with regard to animals will provide a general idea of the developments over the years. Such an analysis was performed to determine the volume. The increase shown during the first six months of 2012 might be attributed to the deployment of the animal police. By applying the same method of measurement to the relevant social classes over the second half of 2012 and forthcoming years, developments can be monitored in a general sense. In a general sense, because these classes can be filled in by all police officers and not exclusively by animal police officers.

However, the project code with which the animal police can label animal welfare cases provides a source on the basis of which it can be determined which cases belong to animal police exclusively. On the introduction of the animal police, all police districts were asked to mutate the cases the animal police deal with in the police registration system (BVH) with the help of a special project code. This code has not been used consistently by all districts and by all animal police officers right from the start, which is the reason why a code-based analysis will provide biased results. At the time of this study, approximately half of the police districts appeared to use the project code correctly, and insight into developments in animal police cases in those districts could be gained. An analysis of the number of cases based on the project code can offer insight into the development of animal police cases if the districts apply the code unambiguously and consistently.

For both the registrations based on social classes and the project code for the animal police it holds true that a system analysis only provides insight into (developments in) the number of cases. To further explore the nature of the cases and the measures implemented, a content analysis of police files needs to be done (as was done in this study). These data cannot be retrieved on system level.

Public Prosecution Service

The Public Prosecution Service keeps record of the so-called police records in the Judicial Documentation System (JDS). All crimes and part of the offences are registered there. The Research and Policy Database Judicial Documentation (OBJD) is an anonymized file of that documentation system. The cases in these systems are registered according to articles of law. Ten articles of law with respect to animals can be distinguished. The analysis of a specific time interval will offer a general picture of the numbers and nature (i.e. article of law) of the criminally settled cases concerning animals over time. Linking these data to the animal police is not possible because animal police cases are not registered separately. Since tackling animal welfare cases also has an important administrative side – which, in addition, is encouraged in accordance with the ‘Assessment Framework Animal Law Enforcement’ of the Public Prosecution Service – it is important for future results measurements to take into consideration the administrative settlements as well.

IRN 144

National IRN 144 'Save an Animal' started at the same time as the animal police. IRN 144 is in fact the telephone exchange behind the authorities dealing with animal welfare. Right from the beginning IRN 144 has registered all telephone calls received and the resulting reports. This registration has been done in Microsoft Word and Excel files. Based on these files the number and nature of the reports can be monitored. An analysis of the IRN 144 files provides insight into the number of incident reports resulting from the calls, the nature of the reports and the authority to which the reports were handed over.

From its very beginning IRN 144 has been trying to find a suitable system and will switch to a new registration system in the foreseeable future. For the time being it is unclear to what degree this new registration system will be able to monitor developments. It is important to note that the registrations of IRN 144 offer insight into just a part of the reports concerning animal welfare, for people can notify authorities such as the police and the Netherlands Food and Consumer Product Safety Authority (NVWA) directly.

2 Measures and cooperation with respect to animal welfare

For a long time now many parties have been working at maintaining and enforcing animal welfare and aid to animals. The animal police is a new player in the field of animal welfare. This section will provide more details on the measures regarding animal welfare as taken by the various parties. We will outline the agreements in place between the authorities and how these agreements are experienced in practice and what the final results are. These issues pertain to research questions 4 through 6, which will be answered one by one in the subsections.

2.1 Measures

Research question 4: Which measures were and are being taken jointly and which separately by the authorities involved to counter offences and felonies concerning animal welfare? What is the extent of the capacity and deployment with respect to law enforcement and what developments are to be expected?

By means of a document study and interviews with the most important parties dealing with animal welfare insight has been gained in the measures taken in order to prevent and handle animal neglect and abuse. These measures relate to individuals (inspectors or criminal investigation officers), reporting centres and covenants.

Individuals

Firstly, the Animal Protection National Inspection Service (LID) and the Netherlands Food and Consumer Product Safety Authority (NVWA) employ inspectors who monitor compliance with laws and regulations concerning animal welfare and who are authorized to take administrative enforcement measures if necessary. These inspectors are qualified

special investigation officers (BOAs). The LID employs some fourteen BOAs, the NVWA employs approximately 196 BOA qualified inspectors and surveillants.

At the time of this study some 130 animal police officers were employed in the police force, which means that the capacity for surveillance and enforcement in the field of animal welfare has increased compared to the time preceding the introduction of the animal police. Whereas NVWA and LID mainly focus on administrative law enforcement with respect to animal welfare, the animal police deal with criminal law enforcement.

With the introduction of the animal police, LID and NVWA are the second-line organizations animal police officers can appeal to for expertise and settlement of cases. If an administrative approach is required the LID takes control when domestic or hobby animals are involved and the NVWA takes control in the case of commercially kept animals. Because as a rule the animal police focus on domestic animals and hobby animals kept in small numbers, they more frequently ask for help from the LID than from the NVWA. As far as capacity for enforcement is concerned, the LID feel they are just able to cope with their current staff compared to the circa 130 animal police officers active at the time of this study. Since the NVWA focuses on commercially kept animals, this authority has fewer dealings with the animal police. Apart from the animal police activities the capacity of the NVWA is, so they say, only just sufficient.

Incident Reporting Centres

Because of their monitoring tasks, authorities such as police, LID and NVWA can act against abuses concerning animal welfare. A different, more frequently taken route, involves acting on reports on alleged situations of neglect or abuse of animals. In the past, both LID (i.e. the Animal Protection Society) and NVWA had their own IRN numbers which people could contact to report such situations.

Simultaneously with the introduction of the animal police, IRN 144 'Save an Animal' was established. Its goal is streamlining the incident reports with respect to animal welfare. The LID incident report number was closed to the public when IRN 144 was introduced. It became part of IRN 144. The NVWA, on the other hand, kept its own incident reporting number. IRN 144 receives far more incident reports than LID used to receive. The number of reports received by the NVWA has not risen as a result of the introduction of IRN 144.

Covenants

The animal police and IRN 144 are 'new' links in the field of animal welfare. In order to achieve an effective and efficient joint approach clear agreements concerning tasks and responsibilities are essential. At the end of 2011 the cooperation between the parties involved was further defined by means of drawing up covenants. The most important parties in the field of animal welfare have agreed on two covenants: 'Covenant Animal Aid' and 'Covenant Cooperation Animal Law Enforcement'.

The first covenant entails agreements concerning aid to animals that are injured or found lost. The covenant partners are the Animal Protection Society (de Dierenbescherming), the Royal Dutch Society for Veterinary Medicine (KNMvD) and the Federation of Animal Ambulances (FDN). The goal of the covenant is to establish a nationwide and well functioning network behind IRN 144 by the end of 2013. The agreements in the covenant are aimed at improving and professionalizing the existing network of animal aid services with trust, quality and accessibility as focusing points. The partners in aid to animals are expected to reach an agreement concerning 24/7 availability according to the covenant. Besides that, quality requirements for animal ambulances are to be developed and the partners are to establish national, uniform agreements on the organization of veterinary aid.

The second covenant entails agreements on how to enforce the law concerning animal welfare. The partners in law enforcement are the police, the Public Prosecution Service, NVWA, LID and the Rules and Regulations Service (DR) of the Ministry of Economic Affairs, Agriculture and Innovation (EL&I). The covenant is meant to enforce that the laws concerning keeping and treating of animals are observed in the most optimal way. Whereas it is the goal of the aid covenant to professionalize processes, the covenant concerning enforcement describes concrete work agreements and task boundaries. The agreements already in place concerning cooperation, allocation of tasks and exchange of information between LID and NVWA are part of the covenant.

In essence the agreements amount to the (animal) police being the primary organization when it comes to emergency aid to animals. LID and NVWA are the second-line organizations the animal police can appeal to for expertise or settlement of incidents. In the case of domestic animals and hobby animals kept in small numbers the LID is the designated second-line party and in cases concerning commercially kept animals the NVWA takes that role. Situations not involving emergency aid are to be dealt with by the designated party.

The animal police must act against a concrete number of crimes; articles 36 and 37 of the Animal Health and Welfare Act, articles 254 and 254a, 350 paragraph 2, 425 of the Penal Code, articles 9 and 13 of the Flora and Fauna Act and articles 10, 16 and 21 of the Fisheries Act.

Furthermore, the covenant contains agreements with respect to legal action and legal settlement of animal welfare cases. The Public Prosecution Service is responsible for criminal cases relating to animals and the DR of the Ministry of EL&I is responsible for administrative settlements.

The choice whether to deploy criminal law, administrative law or a combination of the two is to be determined according to an assessment framework designed by the Public Prosecution Service together with the covenant partners. According to the covenant all district courts are to appoint a contact person for animal law enforcement cases who advises partners on the course to be taken in the situations they come across.

2.2 Cooperation

Research question 5: What is the state of affairs concerning the implementation of the measures, are the agreements satisfactory and where, if any, do problems occur?

Based on interviews with animal police officers and authorities working in the field of animal welfare it has been possible to gain insight into the state of affairs regarding the measures taken and the experiences concerning cooperation between the covenant partners. These will be described according to subject matter in the following sections.

IRN 144

IRN 144 became operational at the end of 2011 within a very short period of time. This has had a negative impact on the quality of passing on the reports. The expertise and know-how of its telephone operators were not up to scratch in the beginning: the content of the reports could not always be dealt with by the authorities that received the reports. The processes and knowledge not being adequate caused delays in acting upon the reports. By now the work processes have been revised and the level of knowledge and consequently the assessment of reports by the telephone operators (better trained and more experienced now) have improved. The authorities involved said the whole process was going rather smoothly. Expectations are that the assessment and passing on of reports to the back offices will further improve in the future.

Following up on agreements

Covenant partners agreed that agreements and tasks on paper were clearly and well defined and were endorsed by all parties.

Aid services have invested in cooperation on the level of policy. Observing the intentional agreements in the covenant proved to be difficult in practice, however. Realizing all agreements within a short period of time appeared not to be feasible. Quality standards for animal ambulances, however, were being developed, but 24/7 availability of the aid services had not been realized yet. Since the project has been put in motion and parties agree on the direction to be taken, it is to be expected that with some perseverance and sufficient resources the agreements can be implemented in the long run.

Compared to the agreements in the aid services covenant, the agreements in the law enforcement covenant focus less on intentions and processes, and more on concrete agreements with respect to law enforcement itself. We will later describe how they work out in practice. Explicit commitments the Public Prosecution Service has met in accordance with the covenant included appointing a contact person for animal welfare affairs with all the district courts and the development of an assessment framework for the route to be followed in the sense of administrative or criminal action or a combination of the two.

Central control and direction

By developing covenants and thus formalizing agreements with respect to law enforcement in the field of animal welfare and the provision of aid to animals, the organizations involved can be regarded as chain partners. In general, the covenant partners experienced this joint approach as a positive thing but identified the lack of central control in the chain as a problem. Before the introduction of IRN 144 and the animal police there was no central control either, but since concrete agreements about which party is to act in which situation have been made, such central control is sorely missed now.

Cooperation

Not in all the districts and between all covenant partners was there continuity with respect to consultation and mutual agreement yet. This holds true for both aid services and law enforcement authorities. Whereas in some districts the networks conferred on a structural basis, in other districts this occurred ad hoc.

Some problems were experienced as to the execution of agreements. In the majority of cases, partners took up what they were confronted with in a reactive way and then sometimes forgot the agreements on cooperation as described in the covenant.

Regarding aid to animals, people found there were many differences between the districts as to quality and cooperation. The quality standards for animal ambulances are in the process of being developed. According to the partners providing aid services there were no clear agreements on which party had to take on reports on animals other than cases of neglect or abuse.

As to cooperation in the field of law enforcement, the LID was satisfied with the cooperation with the animal police. The NVWA seemed to be less satisfied with this cooperation, however. The NVWA had experienced, certainly during the introduction phase, that the animal police went to situations that based on reports should be allocated to the NVWA. Also in this respect experiences may differ from district to district.

Expertise and experience of the partners with respect to each other's tasks and possibilities are a major point of attention. Not only according to their covenant partners but also according to the animal police officers themselves, they lack the expertise and knowhow to enable them to perform their tasks well. This was certainly the case at the time of the introduction of the animal police. This is why they had to appeal to their partners more often than necessary.

The problems experienced in practice seem to be due to short period of time in which the animal police and the agreements were realized. The partners must get to know each other and must be able and willing to appeal to each other. The finding that things went more smoothly in some districts than in others supports that view. The districts in which cooperation went smoothly had excellent networks in place and partners had known each other for some – or a long – time. Consultation between partners in the same district was considered essential for being able to cooperate well.

Settlement and prosecution

The district courts have appointed a contact for animal welfare cases. The partners acknowledged the importance of this permanent contact person in the Public Prosecution Service. In this way, the expertise concerning animal welfare is guaranteed in persons and the animal police officers can get in touch with the Public Prosecution Service easily so that they are advised and supported directly when having to decide on animal welfare cases. The respondents within the Public Prosecution Service felt they had things under control and that routing and communication ran smoothly.

According to what had been agreed upon in the law enforcement covenant the Public Prosecution Service developed a national assessment framework concerning animal welfare, the so-called 'Assessment Framework Animal Law Enforcement' ('Afwegingskader Dierhandhaving'), late 2011. In practice, and in accordance with this framework, the emphasis is on an administrative approach. Criminal action is taken only in a minority of cases. As agreed upon, LID and NVWA take care of the administrative approach and the animal police take care of the criminal approach. However, there are differences in the way the assessment framework is applied in the various districts, since the framework is meant to be a guideline and not imperative policy. Some respondents felt that criminal law was more often applied in some districts than in others. This is the result of a lack of unambiguous agreements on the operating procedures within the police force as to deployment of administrative or criminal law. In addition, whereas the division of tasks and powers is clearly described on paper, in practice it was not clear to enforcement partners what to expect from each other and who should act and how. This has also to do with the different visions and procedures of the covenant partners. In this respect LID and NVWA mentioned the offendercentred and reactive approach of the animal police versus the animal-centred and restorative approach they preferred. From the interviews it became clear that in general the covenant partners felt that the animal police – contrary to what was laid down in the assessment framework – were inclined to take criminal action too often and too soon. The animal police officers interviewed, however, said that for them animal welfare came first and for that reason they were reluctant to take criminal action. So it seems the covenant partners have a wrong or prejudiced view of each other's policy and vision. This is supported by the findings resulting from analyzing the files and the data from the two police districts. They showed that the animal police only rarely took criminal action on the basis of incident reports. Nor can it be concluded from Public Prosecution Service data covering the first six months of 2012 that the introduction of the animal police has led to an increase in cases concerning animals dealt with according to criminal law. Our study has not revealed how many cases were dealt with according to administrative law, but the interviews showed that the DR of the Ministry of EL&I experienced a substantial increase in work load with respect to cases concerning domestic animals.

The district courts have appointed a permanent contact person for incidents involving animals in order to speed up settlement of these cases with a view to animal welfare. This was

regarded as a very positive outcome by both police and Public Prosecution Service. The general capacity problem of the courts, which may cause delays in cases being dealt with in court, was thought to be a bottleneck, however.

2.3 Results

Research question 6: What results are to be expected from these measures regarding animal welfare?

Insight into the results of the measures has been gained by means of looking at the findings from the data analysis, the interviews with animal police officers and the analysis of police files. We will describe these findings according to subject matter.

More attention and capacity for aid to animals

First, we can conclude that attention for animal welfare has increased. The incident reports relating to animal welfare are made visible on a central level by means of IRN 144. Second, thanks to the introduction of the animal police the capacity for enforcing the regulations concerning animal welfare has grown. The animal police are a new link in the chain of authorities that have dealt with animal welfare for a long time. By identifying this underexposed aspect of the police task it is shown that animal welfare is taken seriously by the police as well.

Our data analysis showed that the police have registered more cases concerning animals since the introduction of IRN 144 and the animal police. From this it can be concluded that not only has the introduction of the animal police increased the capacity for law enforcement concerning animal welfare, but that the regular police have in effect taken on the police task regarding animal welfare more often than they used to. Of all reports received by IRN 144, one fifth was passed on to the animal police. The task of the animal police mainly concerned checking incident reports and dealing with them with or without their partners.

Central coordination and streamlined pursuit of incident reports

It is the goal of IRN 144 and the covenants to arrive at a streamlined approach of neglect and abuse of animals. A central coordination of the reports enables the aid service or enforcement authority to react swiftly and adequately to reports concerning animals. This has a positive effect on animal welfare, provided that the quality of the first step, IRN 144, is adequate and guaranteed, that the cooperation between the partners in animal welfare runs smoothly and that the quality and accessibility of law enforcement authorities and aid services are safeguarded.

The measures taken have affected the aforementioned aspects positively; IRN 144 and the covenants forced parties to professionalize. The study shows that time, communication,

expertise and experience are key concepts in order to streamline and respond to reports in an adequate way.

Stronger and more professional approach

The acting on reports related to animal welfare is followed by the settlement of cases. Because of the existence of an assessment framework developed for handling neglect and abuse of animals and because there is a permanent contact person available within the Public Prosecution Service, the nature of animal law enforcement is professional and structural. Thus, the problem of animal neglect and animal abuse has not only gained ground within the police force but with the Public Prosecution Service as well.

The approach to tackling neglect and abuse of animals has increased in strength with the introduction of the animal police, because the animal police are authorized to take criminal action. In addition, because of their background police officers have an eye for any other criminal deeds or wrongs. For example, police officers are authorized to enter a premise, and thus may spot not only animal neglect but domestic violence as well.

The focus is on animal welfare when dealing with animal neglect and abuse. Intensification of the approach does not so much result in an increase in the number of cases settled via criminal law (offendercentred), but in an increase in the number of administrative cases.

3 Animal welfare in the research literature

Research question 7: What do we know about the relationship between these offences and other offences according to nature (domestic violence for example) and extent from Dutch and foreign studies? What is the methodological quality of these studies?

In this section we will answer the question what is known about the relationship between violence against animals and other offences with respect to nature and extent from international research. In order to do so, 44 international articles and 17 international reviews concerning animal abuse and the relationship between violence against animals and violence against people were analyzed. First, the most significant results from these studies will be described, then the methodological quality of these studies will be assessed, and finally the conclusions will be presented which could be drawn on the basis of the literature review.

Findings

Almost all the studies we reviewed and which had examined the relationship between violence against animals and other offensive behaviours, showed a relationship (correlation). The articles showed that there is a relationship between animal abuse and domestic violence. In over half of the domestic violence cases, animal abuse also occurred. Also a relationship was demonstrated between children's exposure to domestic violence or children witnessing domestic violence and those children committing animal abuse later on in life. If people have gone through negative experiences, e.g. domestic violence, as a child, they are

more than twice as likely to commit animal abuse. In addition, having committed animal abuse as a child increases the chance of showing aggressive and violent behaviour towards other people as an adult. The age at which the child begins and the frequency of the number of animal abuse incidents are important indicators for committing (interpersonal) violence at a later age in this regard. The aforementioned relationship between animal abuse and domestic violence holds good the other way around as well: animal abuse turns out to be a predictor of domestic violence.

Comments

Although all studies have demonstrated this relationship, many methodological comments can be made regarding the reliability of the studies and to what extent the findings can be generalized. Many studies were retrospective, did not make use of control groups, used biased samples, and neither did they use clear definitions nor did they determine the strength of the relationship.

Some studies can be considered sound as to the methodology used. These studies made use of a prospective research design and / or combined a large research population with a control group. The studies that were more sound methodologically demonstrated a relationship between violence against animals and other criminal behaviour as well.

Conclusions

Based on our literature review it can be concluded that there is indeed a relationship between violence against animals and other criminal behavior, although it is not possible to make statements concerning cause and effect. This means that if violence against animals occurs, there is a greater chance of interpersonal violence occurring than if there is no violence against animals. However, this does not mean that animal abuse leads to other forms of violence or vice versa. As has been concluded by various researchers before, violence against animals can be considered a risk factor for other criminal behavior. Animal abuse in itself does not automatically lead to committing other violent acts; other risk factors may be at issue.

4 Evaluation

Six months after the first 130 animal police officers took up their jobs, we mapped out the state of affairs regarding the enforcement of animal welfare rules and regulations, in particular with respect to animal abuse and animal neglect. To begin with, it needs to be said that the measures are supplementary to the activities of the specialist organizations that have been working in the field of animal welfare for many years. With the introduction of the animal police the capacity and attention for monitoring animal welfare have increased, which in general is applauded by the parties already active in the field before. A new partner in the field of animal welfare makes coordination between parties necessary, to prevent them from hampering one another. To achieve this, covenants regarding enforcement and

aid were drawn up, and the national IRN 144 'Save an Animal' was established. By formalization of the agreements and the introduction of a central incident reporting number the partners to the covenants can be regarded as chain partners. A major problem experienced by these organizations is a lack of central control in the chain. The new measures had to be implemented in a very short span of time, so that there was little room for developing a vision regarding the animal police and the role of the animal police in the total chain of organizations that are active in the field of animal welfare. The negative effects of this are felt in everyday practice. Due to the hasty introduction of the animal police service and IRN 144 not all aspects of the cooperation and the approach to be taken have crystallized yet. On paper the agreements seem to be clearly defined, but in actual practice things turn out to be somewhat more complex. Central control of the animal welfare chain via IRN 144 requires knowledge, quality and cooperation. In particular in the beginning these aspects posed a problem, but gradually things have changed for the better. The problems still experienced at the moment relate to a significant extent to expertise and communication. The animal police officers and IRN 144 are new players in the field and they have gradually acquired more knowledge based on training, but certainly also because of their newly acquired experience in the field. The parties responsible for animal law enforcement and aid to animals have shared their knowledge with the animal police and cooperation between the parties has gradually grown more stable. Initially, animal police officers often called on the expertise of partners, but they seem to be operating more and more independently now. Also the incident reports to IRN 144 are nowadays passed on to the relevant partners more adequately and in a better way with regard to quality. If the animal police and IRN 144 and the chain they form part of are given the time to professionalize further, animal welfare will benefit from it. A crucial question in this regard is whether IRN 144 should be part of the police, since 'only' one fifth of the incident reports received via IRN 144, are passed on to the animal police. At the same time it can also be concluded that IRN 144 is meeting a wider need.

Besides the role of IRN 144, the role of the animal police in the wider field of animal welfare should also be a matter of concern, according to the people interviewed. The activities of the animal police consist mainly of responding to incident reports, in particular with respect to animal neglect. In accordance with the police task, the animal police officers look into these incident reports. A significant part of these incident reports turn out to be false alarm, which means that the situation seems to be less problematic than the caller indicated, or the situation had already been solved. The incident reports which do require follow-up are only rarely taken criminal action against. In most cases the animal police act by laying down conditions, carrying out checks and giving advice. In addition, partners are called in to deal with cases in an administrative way. Although this approach by the police does in fact not differ from the way they handle things concerning maintaining good living conditions in the community and preventing social disturbance, the authorities in the field of animal welfare wondered whether the animal police's current range of tasks was most

optimal. Some parties indicated that they thought the added value of animal police was particularly in the field of thematic problems relating to crime, such as dog fighting and the illegal trade in animals. At the same time partners stressed the importance of continuing cooperation with the police.

Knowledge and expertise should be secured in people in the police organization, and it was considered less relevant under which heading this should be done.

It is important that the activities of the police in the field of animal welfare can be monitored in the future. As yet the existing registration systems have not provided a solid basis for gaining insight into the animal police officers' activities in a reliable way. From the police and Public Prosecution Service registration data it is possible to generate cases with respect to animals, but it cannot be deduced which cases are dealt with by the animal police. The special project code which the animal police can use to label cases, does provide a good basis to gain some insight in this regard, however. With the help of the project code, the number of animal police cases can be made visible in a simple way, provided this code is consistently applied by all animal police officers, on the basis of an analysis of the police registration system (BVH) data.

In order to paint a picture of the nature of the registrations and the ensuing actions of the police in these cases, further study of the content of police files – on a selection of cases with the animal police label – will be necessary. Again, the project code offers, provided it is applied consistently, a good basis for the selection of cases. A similar approach was used in this study. IRN 144 is looking for a new registration system. As yet, it cannot be determined whether the future system will be fit for monitoring cases in the field of animal welfare.

On the level of settlement of animal welfare cases an analysis of Public Prosecution Service data can provide some insight into the developments in criminal settlement of animal welfare cases in the future as well. Since animal welfare cases tend to be settled by administrative action more and more frequently, it is also important to carry out some analyses of registration system data from the DR of the Ministry of EA & I.

As the cooperating partners indicated, the foundation for cooperation has been laid and it should be given the opportunity to evolve for the benefit of animal welfare. With the introduction of IRN 144 and the animal police, animal welfare has come into focus and in the long run time, knowledge and experience may lead to an effective and efficient tackling of animal neglect and abuse. In the interest of the future of the animal police attention needs to be paid to a number of issues in addition to developing a vision: defining the role of the animal police in terms of capacity and job responsibilities, the exact role of IRN 144, the capacity of partner organizations, the quality of people and processes, central control and networks, and registration.

