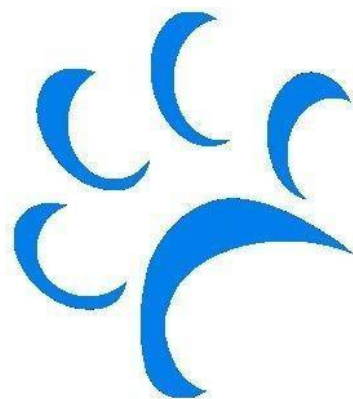


ANNUAL REPORT

2016



Annual Report 2016

Office of the Commissioner for Animal Welfare

Annual Report 2016

The year 2016 was a very hectic one for my Office. However taking into account the limited staff of only, one full time Promotional Officer, an Inspector for Animal Welfare and another person who joined my office only recently, we managed to make it a successful year all the way through.

In this current year a lot of promotion on animal welfare was provided for Year 6 students in the state, church and other private schools. This initiative that we embarked upon from last year, that is, the delivery of a brief lecture with a powerpoint on the subject and the distribution of a copy of a book namely ***“L-Imħabba Tagħna Lejn L- Animalali Obbligi- Ligijiet- Regolamenti ”*** was an enormous success among students and adults alike. The ten thousand books that were printed last year were all distributed and this year we placed another order for fifteen thousand books so we can be able to continue this promotion in both Malta and Gozo. My Office this year once again collaborated with the Animal Welfare Directorate and took part in *Skola Sajf* with regards to animal welfare promotion.

This year we have catered for the demands by parents, asking us to publish a book for younger students. Therefore a new publication, a workbook entitled *“Il- Hbieb Tagħna L-Animalali ”* was printed by my Office for younger students and was also distributed among all attendees of *Skola Sajf* and all Year 5 students in Primary Schools.

On the 28th May 2016 I was invited by the F.O.I.P.N. to deliver a speech in a well-organised Conference on Animal Welfare that took place at the Corinthia Palace Hotel & Spa, in Attard. In my speech I explained in detail the mission and purpose of the new Office of The Commissioner for Animal Welfare. Several questions were raised regarding animal welfare by quite a number of attendees while I answered to all their queries. A speech with regards to more improvements on animal welfare in Malta was also delivered by the Honourable Dr. Simon Busuttill M.P, the Honourable Dr. Marthese Portelli and the Honourable Mr. Mario Galea . In this conference a number of promotional Animal Welfare books were also distributed.

On the 18th November 2016 another well-organised Animal Welfare Conference, *“ Rights for the Voiceless ”* was held by the Honourable

Annual Report 2016

Mrs. Marlene Mizzi at the Corinthia Palace Hotel & Spa, in Attard. The main aim for such a Conference was to discuss the standards of animal welfare and the well being of animals in Malta and in the European Union, in the upcoming E.U. Presidency in Malta. In this Conference the speakers invited to deliver a speech were the Honourable Mr. Roderick Galdes M.P, the European Commissioner for Health and Food Safety Dr. Vytenis Andriukaitis, who although not present he delivered a recorded video message. Also present were the Director of Eurogroup for Animals Ms. Reineke Hamelers, Ms. Moira Delia, Ms. Barbara Cassar Torreggiani, from SPCA Malta, and myself. In my short speech I strongly recommended an overhaul in the Animal Welfare Directorate; Personnel should not be in charge of keeping cats and dogs, but instead it is recommended that the Director of Animal Welfare heads a team of Animal Welfare Officers to enforce the Animal Welfare Act. I strongly believe that with good enforcement we can convey better animal welfare in Malta.

In this Conference I also wanted to take the opportunity to mention my disapproval when it comes to the minimum standards for enclosures, especially for the keeping of wild animals in zoos, in most European Countries. I emphasized for a revision of the minimum standards especially regarding size for the keeping of animals in zoos. This will help to improve and at least reflect their Five Freedoms.

On the 8th June 2016 I was invited for the opening of a new Cat Cafe at St Vincent De Paule residence. This excellent initiative materialised for the benefit of the stray cats in this Old People's residence after several meetings that my Office held with the Chief Executive Officer Dr. Josianne Cutajar M.D. With regards to this *Cat Cafe* Dr. Cutajar took the initiative to use this project also as an Animal-Assisted Therapy Centre for the elderly. The Animal Guardians Malta made an agreement with the C.E.O to take care of the said Cat Cafe. Therefore what seemed to be a problem with stray cats, my Office managed to turn it into a positive outcome for all involved.

Throughout this year we received four hundred and twenty reports from Maltese Citizens and foreigners. These complaints were handled by my Office accordingly; some of them were passed on to the Animal Welfare Directorate or the Veterinaries Department, while those that required an investigation were handled by my Office. There were various reports that

Annual Report 2016

merited a court action. I also gave witness in court in several animal welfare cases. One of them was about the keeping of animals in “MonteKristo” at Hal Farruġ Malta.

One of the reports that hit the news was the case of the beautiful cat named Masha that was always in Melita Street Valletta. This report which was investigated by myself was made public in the media and uploaded on my website as required. With regards to this case I was satisfied with the work done by the Animal Welfare Officers and an improvement was also made from the Directorate in the handling of animal welfare cases.

In other cases several verbal and written complaints were made to my office by the general public regarding the Veterinary Department. Some of these complaints relating to procrastination and the lack of enforcement were justified while others were not.

A few surprise inspections at the Animal Welfare Directorate at Ghammieri Government Farm proved very satisfactory. When it comes to enforcement I strongly recommend more inspections to be done by Animal Welfare Officers and Veterinaries in PetShops, Farms and inspect dogs for the microchip. A small number of anonymous letters were received at my office and were fruitful to support inspections related to animal welfare issues.

Animals are voiceless, however we can hear them bark, roar, growl and so on and so forth but with their sounds they want to convey a message for us to advocate for their rights. We, the Human Beings must listen and further more implement laws and enforce the Regulations to safeguard them to live a better life.

My satisfaction with regards to my duties was the teamwork and cooperation that I always find with my very limited staff to operate such an important Office. One always hopes for the better in the new year.

Emanuel Buhagiar

Commissioner for Animal Welfare