



END OF YEAR REPORT 2021

THE OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER
FOR ANIMAL WELFARE

Alison Bezzina (MA Lond)

COMMISSIONER'S OPENING NOTE



“If you're going through hell, keep going.”
Winston Churchill

My first year as Commissioner for Animal Welfare prove to be more challenging, more satisfying, and incredibly more heartbreaking than I had ever imagined.

In my previous role as an animal activist and advocate, I heard and wrote about animal-related stories on a weekly basis, and the cruelty I narrated to the public was sometimes mind-blowing and soul-crushing.

As Commissioner, however, the frequency of such reports tripled, the gravity of some situations was sometimes so gruesome, that the mere helplessness that I experienced even with the title and authority of Commissioner under my name, was very often overwhelming.

The temptation to give up was real, in fact, it was something I contemplated on a daily basis, but then I'd experience a small win, friends would offer a word of encouragement, we'd manage to save an animal's life, I'd see the authorities act on my Office's recommendations, and most significantly I'd notice people's mindsets changing slowly. All this helped me resist, so instead of giving up to protect myself from the daily pain and anguish, I hugged my dogs tighter, bought them more toys and more treats, and kept fighting, kept insisting, kept knocking on doors, and kept going.

As this report reflects, the situation at hand clearly requires the endurance of an ultra marathonist and not of a sprinter, so as heartwrenching as it might be to keep fighting for the voiceless, we must!

I strongly believe that a huge difference has already been made and that slowly but surely we can get our country to where every animal-loving person wants it to be. But we can never stop. No matter how tired, no matter how slow, we must keep moving and rowing upstream. TOGETHER.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read 'Alison Bezzina'.

Alison Bezzina (MA Lond)
Commissioner for Animal Welfare



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CHANGING THE WAY WE WORK

Since my initial appointment as Commissioner was only for one definite year and with no assurance of an extension thereafter, it was important to me that no time was wasted, and that as much difference was achieved in the shortest time possible.

For this reason, instead of one yearly report, I chose to present regular quarterly reports with a set of 5 recommendations in each. The three quarterly reports that were presented during 2021 can be found [here](#).

The rationale behind this decision was to give the authorities time to act on the recommendations made, to provide my Office the opportunity to follow up on each recommendation, and to act and advise on topical situations as they arose.

Despite a few setbacks, including a global pandemic, throughout the year I witnessed a lot of goodwill, hard work, and commendable initiatives from many stakeholders. I also witnessed important communication channels finally opening for discussion, and authorities being more receptive to suggestions and recommendations. Whilst, practical changes, implementation, and execution remain excruciatingly slow to come through, many recommendations made it to full or partial implementation and many others are in the process of being implemented.



MAIN DIFFICULTIES

Although I feel that this strategy was effective and efficient, unfortunately, during the first six months of my appointment, the Animal Welfare Directorate was operating without a Director and without an Operations Assistant Director. I felt that this situation significantly stunted my Office's pace of work because, despite the Ministry's best efforts, there was no one with authority at the Directorate to liaise with on day-to-day issues as well as long-term strategies.

In fact, many practical suggestions were put on hold until the new Director was appointed in April 2021. These included suggestions on how to improve the 1717 service, the existing cattery, as well as the enforcement and ambulance services.

The lack of a Director at The Animal Welfare Directorate also contributed to the existing public confusion between my role as Commissioner and that of the Director of The Animal Welfare Directorate. Although I dedicated a lot of airtime and media space to explain the difference between the two roles, most still confuse the two positions and their functions.

Work that required the input of, and liaising with, the Directorate for Veterinary Services was also completely on hold until March 2021 because until then, the position of Director at the DVS was vacant.



MOST CRUCIAL TAKE-AWAYS - PEOPLE & SPACE

Accelerating the recruitment process to fill the long-standing need for more competent personnel at The Animal Welfare Directorate is crucial and yet remains painstakingly difficult and slow.

Although some key posts have been filled and the process of recruitment for other posts has been kickstarted, there remain many staffing issues, especially those involving carers, cleaners, and customer care agents.

Without proper and timely recruitment of these staff members, both the enforcement and rescue operations of the Directorate cannot function properly.

In addition to competent human resources to fill the various posts, **SPACE is of the essence**. For the last couple of months of the year, the Directorate could not operate as it should because of the lack of space to house more dogs and cats. The Directorate's shelter in Ghammieri as well as all sanctuaries were full to the brim, to the point that uninjured stray dogs were not being taken in and non-urgent inspections were put on hold.

The Ministry has assured my Office that during the first quarter of next year (2022) an extension will be developed to accommodate more dogs at Ghammieri.



STATUS OF COMMISSIONER'S 15 RECOMMENDATIONS

Throughout 2021 The Office of The Commissioner for Animal Welfare submitted 15 recommendations to The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Food and Animal Welfare. None of the recommendations were rejected outright, some are still under discussion, some have been fully or partially implemented, and some are in the process of being implemented. These were the recommendations and their progress to date :



Still under discussion



In process of implementation



Fully or partially implemented

Recommendation 1 : Enable the Director of AWD and VRD to temporarily ban someone from keeping more animals after a confiscation. The ban would apply until the court decides otherwise or confirms a decision.



Whilst this recommendation was accepted in principle, implementing it without breaching the right of being presumed innocent until proven guilty, proves tricky. As a workaround, an amendment to the current CAP 439 (Animal Welfare Act) will shortly be presented to Cabinet, in which it will be proposed that the law be amended so that pending court proceedings, the prosecution may ask the Magistrate to ban a person from keeping animals until the Court decides the matter.

Recommendation 2: Increase the sizes of dog enclosures that are legally acceptable by law.



This recommendation has also been accepted in principle but is still under discussion. The recommendation is to at least double the minimum dimensions of enclosures.



STATUS ON RECOMMENDATIONS

✓ **Recommendation 3 : Amend the law to give the court a wider possibility to ban people found guilty of animal cruelty from owning other animals.**

This recommendation was fully implemented as announced by The Commissioner, on Friday 26th March 2021 during a press conference with Hon Refalo and Hon Zammit Lewis.

✓ **Recommendation 4 : Dogs not to be kept permanently on roofs, garages and yards.**

It is unlikely that a change in legislation is required for this to be implemented, so the first step in making it a reality is to train enforcers to enforce the current law. The new Local Council animal stewards, as well as AW inspectors, will start to advise owners that isolation is a form of cruelty and to make amends accordingly. Enforcement via admin fines will be the next step in the process of enforcement.

✓ **Recommendation 5: Stop cub petting in zoos**

Following a public consultation exercise that was concluded in December 2020, The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Food and Animal Welfare commissioned an impact assessment to further study the impact of this recommendation. My Office was contacted by the impact assessment company in December 2021. The outcome is still pending.



STATUS ON RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 6: Animal Trainers, Groomers, and Pet Sitters – to be regulated and licensed.



This recommendation has been accepted and The Office of The Commissioner for AW has been consulted and feedback has been provided on draft legislation that's being proposed to regulate groomer, boarding and pet sitter establishments. The Office of The Commissioner for AW is also informed that the regulation of groomers and animal trainers (as operators) will be managed and drafted by the Veterinary Surgeons Council. In a separate investigative report, the Commissioner strongly recommended that the VSC prioritizes this task and the Ministry advised the Council accordingly.

Recommendation 7: Humane treatment of unowned farmed birds, pigeons, and wild birds.



A new project by Malta's Local Councils Association will see pigeons administered with contraceptive feed which won't result in their death. In addition, the Animal Welfare Directorate is now assisting in the rescuing of wild pigeons and The Veterinary Regulations Department can be called for assistance with other unowned farmed birds such as ducks and geese.



STATUS ON RECOMMENDATIONS

✓ **Recommendation 8: More human resources for The Animal Welfare Directorate to cope with the ever-increasing load.**

Lack of competent and enough staff can be felt in almost all areas of The Animal Welfare Directorate, and although my Office did not delve as deeply into the situation of the Veterinary Services Directorate, initial findings show that the problem of lack of personnel is being felt there too. Although some posts have been filled, others are being sourced. Some roles might need to be sub-contracted due to a lack of staff availability.

✓ **Recommendation 9: Expressly outlaw Bestiality.**

On the 23rd November, 2021 Minister Edward Zammit Lewis announced in Parliament that bestiality will now be outlawed and anyone found guilty will be liable to a maximum prison sentence of three years and a fine of between €2,000 and €6,000. (at the time of writing the bill was in its second reading but no objections are envisaged).

✓ **Recommendation 10: Right for police to enter private property to save an animal.**

As things stand the police do not feel that they have the right to enter private property even if an animal's life is in imminent danger. The Ministry is still seeking legal advice on how best to amend the law to implement this.



STATUS ON RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 11: A state-funded neutering campaign for dogs and cats.



In November 2021, it was announced that The Budget 2022 will allocate €125,000 for the neutering of stray cats. A state-funded neutering campaign for dogs was not included in 2022 budget plans.

Recommendation 12: Better, stricter, and enforced regulations on the breeding of dogs.



New legislation to regulate the breeding of dogs is being drafted by The Animal Welfare Directorate based on consultations with The Animal Welfare Council and my office. It is expected that the new legislation will be presented to Parliament at the beginning of 2022.

Recommendation 13: Obligatory electronic microchipping of pet cats



This recommendation is still under discussion.



STATUS ON RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 14: Improving and increasing dog-friendly beaches



A full report on the current situation together with suggestions for new dog-friendly beaches was published by my office in August 2021. The full report can be accessed [here](#).

The recommendations made are still under consideration by The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Food and Animal Welfare.

Recommendation 15: A central online portal to kickstart all adoptions



This recommendation has been accepted in principle by the Ministry, and my office will be looking into the best way to implement it in 2022.



INVESTIGATION INTO A NUMBER OF DOGS THAT WERE EUTHANISED BY THE ANIMAL WELFARE DIRECTORATE

Upon the request of The Ministry for Agriculture, Fisheries, Food and Animal Welfare, on 20th August 2021, The Office of The Commissioner for Animal Welfare launched an investigation into a number of dogs that were euthanised by The Animal Welfare Directorate between January 2021 and August 2021. The decision was based on the allegation of severe aggressive behaviour.

The investigation conducted in-depth research into what led to the euthanasia of the dogs in question, and whether the Animal Welfare Directorate acted according to law and according to approved and established Operating Standard Procedure. The investigation board also investigated public opinion and concern, consulted with experts in the field, and finally provided several recommendations for best practices.

After weighing all the evidence, sentiments, and professional positions, this report presents several conclusive observations as well as 10 recommendations for consideration by The Ministry for Agriculture, Fisheries, Food, and Animal Welfare. The full report can be found [here](#)



STATUS OF THE 10 RECOMMENDATIONS MADE BY THE BOARD OF INVESTIGATION AS PART OF THE INVESTIGATION INTO A NUMBER OF DOGS THAT WERE EUTHANISED BY THE ANIMAL WELFARE DIRECTORATE



Still under discussion



In process of implementation



Fully implemented

1. The Dangerous Dogs SOP 2019 should be updated to include:

-The minimum amount of time that a dog should spend at AWD before euthanasia for aggressive behaviour is considered (recommended not less than four months to serve as ample time for the dog to have adapted well within its new environment).



Still under discussion

-The minimum number of aggressive incidents that a dog should be involved in before euthanasia for aggressive behaviour is considered (recommended not less than two).



Still under discussion

-That the deciding committee should consult with a qualified and experienced behaviourist before any decision to euthanise a dog for reasons of aggression is considered.



Fully implemented

-That until behaviourists become licensed, a second vet should sign off on cases of euthanasia together with the existing committee of three.



2. A fenced open space at Animal Welfare (Ghammieri) should be provided for the dogs to run freely, blow off steam, and serve for observation and training purposes prior to rehoming. This would reduce the need for so many dog walks, for so many volunteers, thus reducing frustration and ultimately avoid certain incidents.

✓ Fully implemented

3. Employees working with animals should be recruited more discriminately. Besides meeting certain criteria on paper, they should pass an aptitude test and be given an induction and regular in-house training. Volunteers should be assessed for experience and given some in-house training before being allowed to have contact with the animals.

✓ In process of implementation

4. AWD should not be relying on volunteers to provide basic necessities such as dog walking. Volunteers should only serve as a bonus after basic staffing requirements are met. The rehoming officer should have more reliable and consistent help from employees. In the current situation, too much work is falling on the same person's lap – a situation that is not tenable in the long term.

✓ In process of implementation



5. Dogs with a history of aggression should only be walked by experienced volunteers/staff members who should be wearing a visibility vest which indicates to passers-by to 'stay away'. Wherever possible such dogs should be assigned two people and wearing a muzzle.

✓ In process of implementation

6. A qualified and experienced dog behaviourist/trainer should be brought in on a regular basis, and not just when the need arises to observe the dogs and identify any issues, prior to an incident occurring. Adjusting minor issues such as pulling, or lunging would also increase adoption rates.

✓ In process of implementation

7. Given the urgent nature and the need for this, the Veterinary Surgeons Council should prioritise the regularisation of behaviourists and trainers under The Veterinary Services Act CAP 437 (4)(1b).

Referred to VSC for consideration

8. The Animal Welfare Directorate should have its own online presence to communicate with the public. This is the only way to improve trust levels through transparency. A well-maintained website and Facebook page should be the start. These portals are to be manned properly, updated with news, used mainly to push adoptions, and to reply to queries and questions from the public.

✓ In process of implementation



9. A long-term goal should be that of creating a rehabilitation centre to cater specifically for aggressive and temperamental dogs. A centre where aggressive dogs can live out their lives in comfort (not in a small pen), with an indoor and outdoor area and where qualified staff can interact with them and where rehabilitation programs can take place at a slower and longer pace.

Being
considered for
long term
implementation

10. The breeding of dogs in general should be tightly controlled and the law amended to avoid loopholes and curb irresponsible breeding. With immediate effect it is recommended that the Minister exerts his right as per CAP439Art43(1) to strictly control (if not temporarily stop) the breeding and importation of Pitbull and bully breeds, at least until the situation improves, breeders can be properly assessed and licensed, and the country is in a better position to cater for such breeds.

✓ In process of
implementation



OTHER INITIATIVES & ACTIVITIES

SCHOOL PUBLICATIONS



During 2020/21 The Office of The Commissioner of AW published and distributed 10,000 educational books to year 4 and year 6 students in all schools including public, Church, and private schools. To accompany the publication, we produced a video message which teachers could show to their students before or after distributing the free book.

Click on the images below for the digital versions of the books.



OTHER INITIATIVES & ACTIVITIES



DOOR TO DOOR FLIER - FIVE FREEDOMS

10,000 fliers explaining the five freedoms of animals were distributed door-to-door in some localities.



Dawn huma l-Hames Libertajiet tal-Annimali It-trattament xieraq tal-annimali jdur ma' dawk li nsejjuhom il-hames libertajiet tal-annimali, bi-Ingliż jissejhu, <i>The Five Freedoms of Animal Welfare</i>. Dan ifisser illi s-sidien tal-annimali huma obbligati li jkun jafu x'inhu u japplikawhom.	01 KULL ANNIMAL GHANDU JKOLLU ACCESSIBBLI lila frisk u ikel bnin sabiex saħħtu tkun iksurata tajjeb. 03 KULL ANNIMAL GHANDU JIGI EZAMINAT għal xi mard minn veterinarju.	02 KULL ANNIMAL GHANDU JKOLLU DAK IL-POST addottat fejn jistrieħ u jgħidni milli-elementi naturali tat-temp. 05 KULL ANNIMAL GHANDU JKUN ZGURAT LI JINZAMM f'kundizzjonijiet xierga, li ma jsofrix dweġġat mingħajr bżonn, u ma tkunx se ssirli ħsara mentali.	Lista ta' Lokalitajiet fejn insibu Parks għall-Klieb fil-Gżejjer Maltin Ta' Qali Marsaskala (Sant'Annin Family Park) Maz-Zabbar San Gwann Żejtun Nadur (Għawdex) Lista ta' bajjiet fejn jistghu jghumu l-klieb Il-bajja tar-Rinella, Kalkara Xall is-Sajjeda, Marsaxlokk Tigne Point, Sliema Torri L-Abbad, Armler Bahar ic-Cagħaq (wara Splash & Fun) Il-bajja tal-Implebah, Selmun Dahlet ix-Xmajjar, Armler Zonqor Point, Marsascala Tregget Mgarr ix-Xini, Għajnsielem (Għawdex) Ta' Xwejni, Marsalforn (Għawdex)	L-Identifikazzjoni Elettronika tal-Klieb L-identifikazzjoni elettronika, tal-klieb hija waħda mill-modi kif jiġi identifikat l-annimal. L-identifikazzjoni elettronika (Microchip) tal-klieb hija cippa żgħira hafna (bejn wieħed u lehor fha daqs rossa). Din tingħata mill-veterinarju f'forma ta' injezzjoni. Fiha jkollha numru ta' identifikazzjoni uniku għal kull klieb jew kelba. Kull min għandu, jew kull min igib klieb, huwa obligat bil-ligi sabiex jassigura li l-klieb issiriu din l-identifikazzjoni elettronika. Meta persuna tinstab haġja li kisret din il-ligi, tista' teħel multa ta' €300. L-identifikazzjoni elettronika hija utli hafna għax b'dan il-mod, meta klieb jahrab bil-sidu, jew is-sid jabbanduna l-klieb tiegħu, bi-identifikazzjoni elettronika jista' jkun identifikat min hu sid il-klieb.
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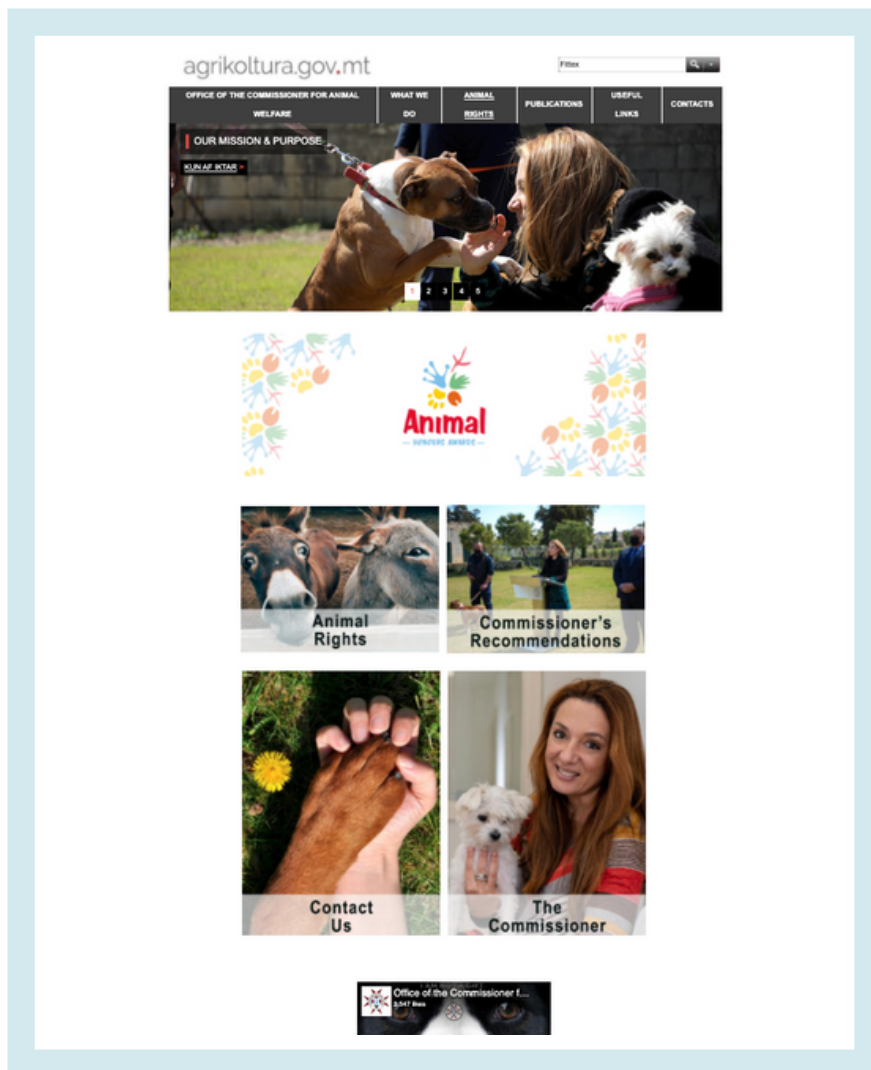
OTHER INITIATIVES & ACTIVITIES

REFRESHED WEBSITE -



WWW.COMMISSIONERANIMALWELFARE.GOV.MT

A website for The Office of The Commissioner for Animal Welfare was created and populated with useful and interesting information. On this website one can now find all the Commissioner's recommendations, recent news, FAQs, important links and contact numbers as well as annual reports.



OTHER INITIATIVES & ACTIVITIES

NEW SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS



The Office of The Commissioner for Animal Welfare, now has a Facebook Page, an Instagram Profile and a YouTube Channel. The intention is to raise awareness in the most modern way possible – by using social media. Since opening the profiles the office has posted more than 300 posts reaching thousands of people every day with different messages of animal welfare awareness.

CLICK ON THE ICONS TO VISIT THE PAGES



LEGISLATIVE CONSULTATIONS



The Office of The Commissioner for Animal Welfare contributed its advice, to the legislative consultation on the regularisation of Boarding Facilities, Pet Sitting Facilities, Dog Breeding Legislation, Bestiality Legislation, and various amendments to the Animal Welfare Act (CAP439) and Veterinary Services Act (CAP437).



OTHER INITIATIVES & ACTIVITIES

EXTENSIVE EDUCATIONAL VIDEO CAMPAIGN



A video campaign consisting of 10 short (30second clips) and 6 long (2-minute clips) was produced and aired on national TV stations as well as social media channels. The clips were produced in Maltese with English and Maltese subtitles. The subjects varied eg. Responsible dog ownership, responsible horse and cat ownership, the work of the animal welfare directorate, what animal welfare means as a concept etc. All clips can be viewed [here](#).

	Microchipping and Tagging of Dogs Office of the Commissioner for Animal Welfare 1:19
	L-Identifikazzjoni Elettronika tal-Klieb (Microchip) u l-I.D. Tag Office of the Commissioner for Animal Welfare 1:19
	Animal Welfare - frazi li nisimgħu ta' spiss. Xi tfisser? Office of the Commissioner for Animal Welfare 1:53
	Animal Welfare - a term we hear on a regular basis. What does it mean? Office of the Commissioner for Animal Welfare 1:53
	The role of the Animal Welfare Directorate Office of the Commissioner for Animal Welfare 2:30
	L-irwol tad-Direttorat għall-Harsien tal-Annimali Office of the Commissioner for Animal Welfare 2:30
	What do dogs love the most? Office of the Commissioner for Animal Welfare 1:30
	Il-klieb xi jhobbu l-izjed? Office of the Commissioner for Animal Welfare 1:30



OTHER INITIATIVES & ACTIVITIES

PR AND MEDIA EXPOSURE

- ✓ In print and online The Office of The Commissioner for AW featured directly in more than 50 articles. Another 50 + published articles dealt with issues of animals and animal welfare in general. We also participated in more than 20 TV programmes and 10 radio programmes.

ANIMAL WELFARE INSPECTIONS

- ✓ Throughout the year The Office of The Commissioner for Animal Welfare submitted hundreds of requests for inspections by the Animal Welfare Directorate's Enforcement Unit and was actively involved in many cases of abuse and breaches of the Animal Welfare Act.

PUBLIC ASSISTANCE AND INVOLVEMENT

- ✓ Daily assistance was also provided to individuals and local councils who contacted the office for practical advice and intervention in the management of stray cats and other animals in their neighbourhoods. The Office invested in more cat traps that are being loaned to feeders to trap stray cats for TNR (Trap, Neuter, Release) purposes.



OTHER INITIATIVES & ACTIVITIES

REPORT ON THE PETTING FARM IN TA' QALI

The Office of The Commissioner was alerted by the general public to several issues at The Petting Farm in Ta' Qali. Some of the issues were brought forward directly to the office via email, whilst others were shared on social media, causing public outrage.



Upon inspection, the cases that were brought to our attention never turned out to be cases of negligence or mistreatment, but since the petting farm is open to the public, The Office of The Commissioner for Animal Welfare prepared a report to improve the animal's overall environment through enrichment and to better the communication of the farm with the visiting public. The full report can be found [here](#).

MEMORANDA OF UNDERSTANDING

The Office of The Commissioner for Animal Welfare is in the process of signing an MOU with Ponte Ferries whereby a working understanding of the new vessels' pet-friendly areas was reached. The Office also signed an MOU with Kommunita' Malta in order to help contribute financially to the upgrade of the cattery at The Animal Welfare Directorate.



OTHER INITIATIVES & ACTIVITIES

SCHOOL SESSIONS

The pandemic did not allow for the usual frequency of live school events and sessions, but a few live sittings were still delivered in schools and summer schools by the promotional officers within the Office of The Commissioner for AW. To make up for the loss of live lessons we collaborated with The Ministry of Education to issue a circular to all heads of schools. This included a link to a 5-minute educational message from The Commissioner of AW and was delivered by teachers during online and physical lessons. Teachers could also use a recorded lesson within the PSCD teleskola recorded lessons.

At the beginning of June, educational officers ran an awareness and educational campaign at St. Ignatius College, about the importance of tagging our pets. During this event, hundreds of pet tags personalised with the students' pet names and contact numbers were distributed.



OTHER INITIATIVES & ACTIVITIES

REPORT ON DOG-FRIENDLY BEACHES IN MALTA & GOZO

The Office of The Commissioner for Animal Welfare conducted an extensive exercise to throw some insight into the matter of dog-friendly beaches in Malta and Gozo, because not only is there a severe lack of such beaches but information about the existing ones is also very confusing.

- ✓ The conclusion of this exercise is that whilst health should always come first, undoubtedly, Malta, and especially Gozo, need more dog-friendly beaches. If we truly expect people living in the Maltese Islands to treat their dogs as family members, it cannot remain so difficult to take dogs swimming with the rest of the family. The full report can be found [here](#)

LEGAL AND POLICE INVOLVEMENT

- ✓ The Office filed several police reports which involved the mistreatment of animals and attended many court sittings either to provide testimony or as observers to assist the prosecution. Together with The Animal Welfare Directorate and The Police Force, we initiated the first prosecutions involving dogs with cropped ears (CAP 439 Art 9 and 10).



OTHER INITIATIVES & ACTIVITIES

THE FIRST ANIMAL HONOURS AWARDS

✓ The firsts Animal Honours Awards were launched to celebrate the island's most brave and beloved four-legged and feathered friends as well as the people who care for them. Organised by the Animal Rights Ministry in collaboration with the Commission for Animal Welfare, the Animal Honours Awards were held on World Animals' Day 4th October 2021.



The event, which will hopefully become a regular one in our national calendar, aims to raise awareness, and bring animals and their welfare to the forefront of the national agenda while celebrating the success stories of notable animals.

SEE WEBSITE & WINNERS [HERE](#)

VIEW COMMISSIONER'S SPEECH [HERE](#)

ASSISTANCE TO THE ANIMAL WELFARE DIRECTORATE

✓ In order to somewhat alleviate the issue of space in the dogs' area at Animal Welfare (Ghammieri), the Office of the Commissioner for AW financed the temporary rental of a number of private kennels to house rescued dogs until more space becomes available at Ghammieri.



OTHER INITIATIVES & ACTIVITIES

QUALITY CONTROL MYSTERY SHOPPING EXERCISES

During the second half of 2021, The Office of the Commissioner for Animal Welfare conducted a mystery shopping exercise on AWD's 1717 service - primarily on the telephone service and its efficiency levels. Findings and recommendations were passed on to The Animal Welfare Directorate.



Another mystery shopping exercise was conducted by The Office of the Commissioner for Animal Welfare to evaluate the adoption success rate of the Animal Welfare Directorate. The Office requested a list of all dog and cat adoptions that took place from Animal Welfare during 2021 and a random percentage of the adoptions were selected and contacted as a follow-up. In all cases it was found that the adoption had taken place successfully, and in all but one case where the animal had passed away, all animals were still with their adoptive families.

CENTRAL BANK ACCOUNT



An account in the name of The Commissioner for Animal Welfare opened in 2017 and now contains €17,500 in donations is held at Central Bank of Malta. The plan is to use this money effectively to create additional space for more dogs that are taken in by the AW directorate.



OTHER INITIATIVES & ACTIVITIES

CO-OPERATION

As with everything, co-operation with other entities in the field is key. Throughout 2021, The Office of The Commissioner held meetings with various stakeholders to share ideas, discuss and persuade. These are to mention a few:

Għaqda Kucciera Tal-Karozzini Maltin, Malta Society for the Protection and Care of Animals (MSPCA), Farmers' Representatives, Association for Abandoned Animals (AAA), RMJ Horse Rescue, The Veterinary Surgeons Association, Għaqda Produtturi tal-Fniek, Vegan Prism, The Exterminator (Arnold Sciberras), The Local Council Association, Dog Behaviourist Robert Spiteri, HSBC CSR unit, MCAST, Time for Change, Data Protection Commissioner, and Voluntary Organisations Commissioner.

A meeting was also held with The Commissioner of Police and his deputies to further align operations when The Animal Welfare Directorate requires police intervention.

The Office of the Commissioner of AW also held a meeting with Minister Michael Farrugia and Dr. Lydia Abela to discuss the possibility of pet adoptions by senior citizens.

Two meetings were also with The Parks Malta Directorate were held to discuss improvements to Ta' Qali's Dog and The Petting Farm.



COMMISSIONER'S FINAL NOTE

I was appointed Commissioner for Animal Welfare in the last week of November 2020. With ample background information, insight and experience gained through my activism and advocacy in the same field, I hit the ground running with lots of motivation and enthusiasm.

A lot was achieved and a lot still remains to be done, but undoubtedly nothing would have been possible without the proficiency, collaboration, and motivation, of my fantastic team as well as the much-appreciated advice and insights provided by my predecessors, ex-Commissioners Mr Emmanuel Buhagiar and Mag Denis Montebello. I also thank the so many devoted animal activists whose dedication to the cause is commendable.

Throughout the year I consulted with many animal-loving professionals whose different expertise proved invaluable. Many offered their time and knowledge free of charge, and out of the goodness of their hearts.

Finally, I thank the animal-loving public whose support, especially in times of baseless intimidation, was indispensable to keep me going.



Alison Bezzina (MA Lond)
Commissioner for Animal Welfare

