

2014.03.10

# Galgos

Keywords: Animal Law; Animal Welfare; galgos; animal mistreatment

On 12th March the Congress of Deputies will have a session dedicated to presenting the latest statistics on the situation for galgos in Spain, entitled “Galgos, Spain before the world”.<sup>[1]</sup> During the session the documentary “Febrero, el miedo de los galgos” (February, the fear of the galgos) will be played, and various interventions are expected.

The pitiful situation for galgos, both during and after the hunting season, becomes more visible in February, when the season comes to an end and over 50,000 licensed hunters decide whether the galgo that has been with them during the season is fit enough for the following season. If the galgo is “sucio para la caza” – that it is not good enough to chase the hare – they dispose of it in such cruel ways as hanging, abandonment, dropping it down a well... actions that, most of the time, go unpunished, or exceptionally, and with great difficulty, receive the punishment they deserve, such as in the case of two galgos (Iniesta and Bola) that were hung in Fuensalida, awarding the first criminal sentence in Toledo in October 2013, about which we published an article on our website later that year.<sup>[2]</sup>

The practice of these executions is so widespread in many towns that these events are not reported and the neighbours of the villages where these deaths take place don't give them the consideration they deserve - simply put, they are used to what happens, and likely look the other way. But now it is time for them to look (for us to look!) towards where the law indicates – the Criminal Code – in the same way that they look towards the same Criminal Code when somebody robs them, assaults them, or commits some offence contrary to the laws that protect them. Because the life of an animal, of a galgo, regardless of whether it serves for hunting or not,<sup>[3]</sup> is a legally protected good and, as such, must be respected.<sup>[4]</sup>

There are many atavisms that prevail over certain behaviours, and such is the case for those relating to animals, ascribed the condition of “things” of property, which covers them with our current regulations.<sup>[5]</sup> However, the law that safeguards the welfare of animals and treats them as “sentient beings” is still being ignored; an obligation as imperative as respecting traffic signals, of which one must continue to take notice of, and which we would not do without. As confirmed a few months ago by the European Commissioner for Health and Consumer Policy Tonio Borg,<sup>[6]</sup> animal welfare and its effective safeguarding by the policies of each Member State of the European Union is a priority of European politics. After all, these animal welfare protection policies, which should also be about prevention, include galgos.

In July 2013, a written petition<sup>[7]</sup> on special protection for Spanish Galgos was presented before the European Parliament. It did not receive the reception that had been hoped for, but it remains a good initiative that could pave the way for the new Parliament that

emerges from the next European elections.

There are many private associations that work in favour of galgos and that try to rescue them in cases of abandonment, mistreatment, aggression, and ultimately cruelty. There are thousands of anonymous people that offer their time, energy and money to help these precious dogs that have a gaze of kindness. Among these associations, I want to mention Galgos 112,[8] which since 1st February 2014 has rescued 91 dogs from certain death: 41 males and 50 females, with nothing more than the courage and the enthusiasm of its volunteers and the tireless work of Nuria Murlà, who when asked for recent statistics on the galgos rescued by her association, sent me a long list not of numbers, but of names,[9] along with her own words which I transcribe:

I have written their names because normally we speak in numbers, but behind the numbers are these individuals. It is very important for us to immediately give names to the dogs that arrive here, even when we know that they will die, or we find them already dead, because when they have a name, they become someone.

I can find no better words with which to end this month's editorial, which is a declaration on sensitivity, respect and love for galgos.

THE EDITOR

Teresa Giménez-Candela

Professor of Roman Law

Professor of Animal Law

Autonomous University of Barcelona

Follow me on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/editora.da>

[1] [Organised by APDDA, LIBERA, SOS Galgos and the independent "Waggingtale Films"](#).

[2] I recommend rereading the Sentence Commentary that Garcia-Valle made in his time, GARCIA-VALLE, S., [Caso de los galgos ahorcados en Fuensalida, de nombre Iniesta y Bola, de 5 y 22 meses](#). Sentence 289/2013, of 15/10/2013, at Toledo's nº1 Criminal Court .

[3] Vid. the extensive commentary by CAUDEVILLA, O., [Diez horas de caza](#), on the novel of the same name by VERNE, J., Dix heures en chasse. Simple boutade (Paris 1881).

[4] Vid. broadly chapter I: El delito de maltrato a los animales domésticos from the monography of C. REQUEJO CONDE, La protección penal de la fauna. Especial consideración del delito de maltrato a los animales (Seville 2010).

[5] Vid. GIMÉNEZ-CANDELA, T., [A la búsqueda de un régimen jurídico animal](#).

[6] Vid. BORG, T., [Intergroup on the Welfare and Conservation of animals, Parlamento Europeo](#) (18.9.2013).

[7] [PR-DCL \(2013\)0006](#).

[8] [Galgos 112](#), based in S. Feliu de Guixols.

[9] Males: Damon, Ferrari, Flock, Jazz, Copérnico, Edgar, Günther, Gustavo, Heiko, Saki, Newton, Pepillo, Xue, Lyon, Kiko, Orfeo, Monje (who needed surgery after being shot and left to die in the street), Bruno, Cherokee, Albert, Chico, Rey, Huesito, Faber, Olfo, Lloni, Oliver, Marcel (deceased), Paul, Oscar, Duque, Rabbit, Walker, Orión (admitted in a critical state), Polvorín, Polvorón, Aslan, Pepe, Rodi. Hembras: Telma, Alice (deceased), Celia, Daniela (she needs orthopaedic surgery), Helga, Kawa, Mafalda, Marcela, Morgana, Aline, Nicole (she has needed surgery to reconstruct her crushed thorax), Sandal, Loeb, Jeanine, Kinoa, Bimba, Sofia, Cora, Anima, Odil, Marla, Rosita, Mia, Uca, Zoe, Nora, Puka, Amparín, Tundra, Sunny, Cori, Tiza, Nube, Trompa, Bona, Usa, Romina, Consuelo, Dubai, Shirley, Thais, Ara, Katia, Diana, Linda.