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Five Years of Animal Law

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In February 2010 the first version of the derechoanimal.info website was made public. Over the following five years, we have passionately tried to follow through with the idea that caused us to begin this service for animals in the first place, from our own viewpoint; the legal. We wanted then, and still want now, [“to be a calm, verified and safe instrument of training and information that appeals as much to legal professionals as to those who do not belong to the legal world”](#).

To this end, we looked for something to distinguish ourselves from other existing websites, which was to make the tools of knowledge of the legal world in relation to animals available in an accessible, flexible, and updated way, such as animal legislation and jurisprudence, which until this point have been unfocused and unordered. From our tireless efforts it may not seem obvious, but when we started five years ago, in Europe we did not have a database of Animal Law like the one that we have created, which includes the aforementioned information from international, European, national, regional and local perspectives. The derechoanimal.info website now openly offers a unique database that makes up to date regulations and jurisprudence available to users.

In 2010 the Spanish courts of justice were rather more sparing in giving sentences relating to animals, and so there were less complaints and many such cases were closed. In this short lapse of time, there has been a clear and exponential increase in Animal Law sentences, resulting from visible social change regarding greater sensibility towards animals, evident in the extension of what I call “the complaint culture”, or “the refusal to look the other way” in cases of animal mistreatment. This greatly positive change has come about silently, but from our observation point of the derechoanimal.info website, we can reliably make this claim. We follow jurisprudential activity through a new section of the website, “News from the Courts” ([Noticias de los Tribunales](#)), which came about through this need that I have just set out, and through this we publish on a monthly basis, as with the rest of the website content. In this section we gather together all the sentences, from all levels of proceedings, in an orderly way that makes them accessible to our readers. In the same way, we initially created, through the “Legislative Updates” ([Novedades Legislativas](#)) section, a News Bulletin on laws, as well as on projects, reforms, promulgations, updates and derogations. In bringing this information together we have created an indispensable tool for not only all legal operators, but additionally our readership that includes veterinarians, administrative servicers, Security Forces, the managers of animal shelters and animal protection associations and, of course, law students taking “Law and Animal Welfare” at the Law Faculty of the UAB, as well as students of [the Master in Animal Law and Society](#).

Indeed, the expression Animal Law, while completely accepted today, five years ago seemed strange even to legal professionals. I am delighted that it is no longer this way! Animal Law is naturally written and spoken about in Spanish; in this area of knowledge I honestly believe that we are contributing towards the creation of an emerging branch of

law, in itself both transversal and international. Through the SRG, ADS-UAB (Animals-Law-Society) Investigation Group, which supports all these activities relating to Animal Law, we try to incentivise publications,[1] projects,[2] the organisation of conferences,[3] scientific meetings,[4] Doctoral theses,[5] Master theses, legal undergraduate works, and are always searching for close collaboration with veterinary science,[6] thanks to which the Law is more consciously and affirmatively covering greater elements of animal protection, and in the search for an integral approach to the health of all (“One Health”).[7]

We were born with the purpose of, by means of the Law, serving society in favour of one of its most forgotten components: Animals. We thought that everything that improves our relationship with Animals – companions in life, citizens of the same common patrimony (*patria communis*) – would help us to improve as people, as well as to improve society. This is one of the great legal challenges of the 21st century; to make it possible for the law to recognise animals for what they are, and what they have for decades stood as in European legislation – sentient beings.[8] In this sense, it delights us to echo the news of France’s decision to shortly change its Civil Code to recognise animals as “*êtres vivants et sensibles*”, in the process of which we have played a very active role from the beginning, and on which we have continued to report from time to time.[9]

Another achievement over these years has been to consolidate the original sections of the website, and to have created others. We are a vector for legal and social changes that come about regarding animals and, to this end, in making decisions we cover both scientific and educational perspectives. Over these years, our pages have been marked by globally-recognised specialists in Animal Law, such as David Favre, by who the website has currently published no less than 32 submissions, with articles,[10] videos of his classes for the Master in Animal Law and Society, interviews and collaborations for the supervision of Master Theses, and for the co-management of Doctoral Theses. Professor Favre, along with Dr. Enrique Alonso, and Professors Lluís Ferrer (Tufts University), Peter Singer (Princeton University), David Wolfson (NYU) and Steven Wise (President of the Non-Human Rights Project), form part of the Advisory Council of the website and, with their verified experience, help to maintain our mission of work in favour of Animals. Our gratitude is immense.

We publish on a monthly basis; scientific and general articles, documents of studies, sentence commentaries, book reviews, conference chronicles and up to date news articles relating to anything in the animal world, from a global perspective. Our message is always positive, but without eluding aspects that, in relation to animals, can and must improve, and we believe that we are contributing massively to these improvements. The website has many followers, who we thank for their on-going support and motivation, but we are always looking for more, and continuously work towards this. We are a young and experienced team, enthusiastic and calm, voluntary workers in a project that day by day grows and influences change for animals.

A glance at the Editorial Council can help us to appreciate the diversity of backgrounds and training of its members. To mention them individually is a duty of thanks and

recognition for a job through which we have all been growing.

Thanks to Anna Mulà, from the beginning; to Dr. Carlos Contreras, who manages our projects and is going the begin collaborating as an additional editor; to María González Lacabex, Cristina Bécares, Irene Jiménez López and Irene García Colell, who are the great team responsible for the legislative and jurisprudential updating of the website, along with Dr. José Manuel Ríos Corbacho; to Martina Pluda, our head of Communication, along with Loïs Lelanchon, Nuria Murlà and Elisabet Miras, with whose knowledge and dynamism, we have a presence on social media and stay up to date and critical, rejuvenating ourselves in the search for new topics of interest, and in the way we present ourselves to our readers; the text correctors Jessica Steffen, Carly Souther and M^a Isabel Aristizábal, great talents who facilitate critical and productive dialogue with all our collaborators that submit work to us for the website; the web correspondents, who keep us informed about news and activities relating to animals, a group that gives a global dimension to our voice for animals: Elizabeth Romero and Samuel León (Mexico), Julia Havenstein (Germany), Moe Honjo (Japan and Asia), Carly Souther (USA), Dr Tagore Trajano and Jéssica Steffen (Brazil), Juan Ignacio Sierra (Argentina), Sabine Brels (France) and Carla Campanaro (Italy). Lastly, two collaborators without whom the website would not have had the drive for growth and renovation; I am referring to Oriol Caudevilla and to Daniel Parsons, both of whom have been, at different times, a reference point for the editorial work, and I rely on them with deep gratitude. And, of course, to Fernanda Rebagliati, to whose knowledge of photography we owe the images that illustrate our website and bring it to life!

As the Founder and Editor of the website, I have enormous gratitude for the Affinity Foundation, which has made the necessary support available to enable us to move forward, and has shown its confidence and encouragement by supporting us from the beginning. Equally, the Autonomous University of Barcelona, and especially the Law Faculty, which have constantly encouraged us to continue pioneering Animal Law with institutional support toward a project to which we remain loyal: then, and now, we are to be “the website of Animals with Law” and after all the time that has passed, we can say that we are “the website of Animals as a matter of Law”.

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[1] The legal editorial "Tirant lo Blanch", pioneering in Spain with publications about legal events relating to Animals, has created the "Animales y Derecho" collection, under my direction, of which two volumes will shortly be available. More information can be found in the interview: "[Una nueva colección de 'Tirant lo Blanch'](#)" with international reach.

[2] Here with highlight, among others, the admission of companion animals in the Barcelona Metro, which began as an investigation Project funded by the Municipality of Barcelona. Vid. GIMÉNEZ-CANDELA, M., "Investigación jurídica aplicada: perros en el Metro de Barcelona"

[3] In October 2011, we organised the [Minding Animals Pre-Conference, "Animals and the Law"](#). In July 2014, in collaboration with the State University of Michigan and the Lewis & Clark University, we organised the [II Global Animal Law Conference](#).

[4] The intense activity undertaken by the members of the Investigation Group (which has acted as co-organiser of events both in Spain and abroad) can be found in the Activities/Events part of the website; we direct you to, among others, "[Enforcement of European Animal Welfare related Legislation](#)", celebrated in Brussels in June 2012

[5] In June 2014, the first doctoral thesis in Animal Law in Spain was read in the Law Faculty of the Autonomous University of Barcelona, "[Carlos Contreras, primer Doctor de España en Derecho Animal](#)".

[6] Vid. in the Activities/Events part of the website, some of the Seminars and Workshops organised in collaboration with DG SANCE of the EC and the Veterinary Faculty of the UAB. We highlight, among others, "[First Workshop for Veterinary Practitioners. Improving Animal Welfare: a practical Approach](#)".

[7] Vid. broadly, [One Health Initiative](#), of which the [Federation of Veterinarians of Europe](#) is a member

[8] GIMÉNEZ-CANDELA, M., [Introducción](#):

"Sólo tres textos constitucionales europeos (Suiza, Alemania y Austria) incluyen el bienestar animal -la consideración del animal como una parte del patrimonio común que el Estado debe proteger y conservar-, en la norma regente del ordenamiento jurídico, la que refleja los valores de una sociedad. Otros países europeos, desde hace años, han promulgado normas de relevancia en el tema que es objeto de nuestra atención. A través de esta web, pretendemos hacer llegar una información lo más exhaustiva posible del estado de la legislación sobre animales en nuestro entorno. Hoy en día, nuestros conocimientos ya no pueden quedar reducidos a un entorno próximo, porque las dimensiones del tema que nos preocupa, la mejora de la vida de los animales, es global".

[9] We have taken an active part in this process from the beginning, which has now culminated in this important declaration, as you can see from GIMÉNEZ-CANDELA, M., [A cara descubierta en favor de los animales: Francia, el Code civil y la Constitución](#).

[10] FAVRE, D., [Judicial Recognition of the interests of Animals: a New Tort: Equitable Self-Ownership for Animals](#).