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7 Years of the Animal Law Website

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The Animal Law Website is an innovative page. Is this because it deals with animals? No, certainly not, for there are many websites that deal with animals.

It is the first Spanish website that, for **seven years** now, has dealt with Animal Law and Animal Welfare from a viewpoint of rigorous and scientific legal analysis and scientific advances regarding animals and it has done it – and continues to do it – from a purely academic-legal perspective. These reasons give purpose to its publications and its continuation.

What we are trying to do is to bring Animal Law closer to all the people who want to embrace it from a rigorous, serious, and at the same time sensitive, clear and feasible standpoint. The Animal Law Website has not wanted to be a means of expression for animal activism, a movement that has already had, and continues to have, an impact through other means.

Why can we find websites specialised in Environmental Law but none that specialise in Animal Law? Because the other disciplines (or branches) are respected and recognised by the law, while Animal Law, for its niche character, is not even studied in a generalised way, as it should be. Our contribution in this field is important and has already been recognised. The website is referenced by the official websites of the UAB, the Faculty of Law at the UAB, the Department of Public Law and Historical-Legal Sciences at the UAB, the website of Michigan State University (edited by Professor David Favre), and by many websites in Latin America. The site is the future of legal information in this new field of Law that is Animal Law, and is already taking effect among professionals and society.

The Animal Law Website tries to alleviate the deficit of information that has existed until now and, while ensuring not to limit itself to being merely an academic portal, additionally aims to have an impact on the public through the publication of news, legal rulings and events that will interest jurists and non-jurists alike. Evidence of this impact is the amount of visits that the website has received in the last year, an ever increasing amount, and the ‘likes’ on the Facebook page that have been received in the short space of time that the website has been linked to social media platforms.

What makes us different is:

- The publication and peer-reviewing of written material. We don't publish works that have been cut or copied from other sites.
- The continuous updating of information. We are the only legal website dealing with animals that ensures up-to-date legislation on this topic. Other websites only have a section of legal information that, in addition to being incomplete, is not updated, and for which reason cannot guarantee reliable information, neither to the public, nor the average reader.
- We have created the first and only legal database for the Law and Animals. We are a role model. This is confirmed by the many citizens, students, legal and veterinary professionals that consult the

website and comment: you can always find the information you're looking for, in a straightforward way, and it is always up-to-date.

- The website is contributing towards creating a collective consciousness and respect for animals. We neither use sensationalism, nor divulge violent images. Our strength is persuasion through clarity, verified information and calm reasoning. What inspires us – our mission – is to work harder and better for the main benefactors of our efforts: animals.

- The position of the website both in and outside Spain is, day by day, strengthening exponentially

- The birth of the website was overseen by an Editorial Council, formed of globally-recognised figures in this specialised field. All of them publish articles that are referenced in our space. The value of this contributions is that, from the beginning, we have wanted to be a website that is strong, recognised and respected. And we are.

- The Animal Law Website is the best instrument for training and accessing information for the Animal Law and Society Master programme that runs both in person and online. Until now we are the only European Master for this topic and the first to be created in the world. The Master at the Lewis and Clark University was created in 2012.

We will always remember that the Affinity Foundation took a gamble with this website, when it didn't exist as it exists now; an enthusiastic team of volunteers capable of making it a reality. A gamble that was made when Animal Law was not spoken of. This is a great contribution by the Affinity Foundation and of the UAB: having believed it to be possible and having supported this initiative.

If we were asked what goals we have, and how way me improve, I would refer to just three aspects, and they are as follows:

- Firstly, we want to increase our following. We want to be a website that continues to offer a service to animals and that is close to those who require our "expertise". It is clear that, for this, we need to have a team that is permanent, or at least constant.

- Secondly, we want to use the website to strengthen the links between professionals - experts of Animal Law that have studied the Animal Law and Society Master - and other professionals, so as to create networks and increase, through this strong link, the work by and for animals, from a professional standpoint. This is the trend that is becoming established throughout Europe, and since then, in the US, Canada and Australia.

- Thirdly, we want to grow in size and influence. Our motto is "know more in order to work better for animals".

In recent years we have seen a change in public attitudes towards animals, idemonstrated by the increase in reports of animal abuse – as reported by our News Bulletin for the Courts and Legislative News- and by the appearance of new initiatives in favour of animals, above all from the Associations of Lawyers in the creation of new Commissions of Animal Law, which have multiplied efforts by improving local and autonomous legislation, by promoting public policies in defence of the interests of animals, and has led to the birth of a new dialogue between the Law and the Science of Animal Welfare, which we have promoted since our beginning. All this is having an impact on the science of Law on a new scale, which is the integration of animals as **sentient beings** within the current legal system.

Personally, I am no fan of *blowing smoke*. At the beginning we did not present the website as it did not seem appropriate. However, I think now that after seven years of work, this is the moment to present ourselves to the legal world and to the public.

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