

URGENT! URGENT! URGENT!

OUTRAGEOUS ACCUSATIONS AGAINST ANIMAL RESCUERS!

PLEASE POST WIDELY AND PROTEST LOUDLY!

FOREIGNERS ARE BEING ACCUSED OF ILLEGALLY 'COLLECTING' AND SENDING STRAY DOGS FROM GREECE TO GERMANY, HOLLAND, BELGIUM AND OTHER EU COUNTRIES, INCLUDING THE UK, TO BE SOLD TO VIVISECTION LABORATORIES OR TO BE SKINNED FOR THEIR FUR. GREEK ANIMAL WELFARE VOLUNTEERS HAVE ALSO BEEN CAUGHT UP IN THIS WEB OF SLANDER AND LIES.

As if to divert people's attention from the real horrors of animal abuse happening daily in Greece, malicious allegations against 'foreigners' resurfaced once again at the beginning of March. We are of course talking about the totally ludicrous AND unsubstantiated claims that stray dogs from Greece are being sent to Germany, Switzerland, Holland and other EU countries (yes, including the UK!) for 'experiments undertaken by cosmetic and pharmaceutical companies and for manufacture of furs'. What's worse, these lies were repeated on Alpha TV channel on 11 March, after a 'dramatic' seizure from the 'clutches' of well known animal rescuers of six puppies (who were being taken to Belgium for rehoming).

The TV report, emotively titled 'CRUELTY PREVENTED', deliberately focused on the 'accusers' allegations, but failed to mention they had not been substantiated with any evidence.

ALPHA TV reporter, Spyros Lambrou, was at the airport when the above incident took place, so he knew exactly what happened, yet he chose to sensationalise his report by quoting extensively one of the main 'accusers', Mrs I. Karagouni, who claimed that **puppies were intended for experiments or were to be put to sleep in order to use their furs to make shoes and clothing**. She also claimed that dogs were sent abroad without correct documents.

To find out what REALLY happened, please read the enclosed Word document: Summary of airport incident.

As a result of the above report and other related newspaper articles, suddenly everybody in Greece is talking about 'Greek strays being sent abroad for cosmetic experiments and fur trade'. If the situation were not so serious, it would be comical.

How ironic that suddenly everybody should be so concerned about the 'poor' strays, yet they barely glance at those they see on the street. A German animal welfare volunteer recently summed it up nicely in one simple sentence: ***'it's the bad people trying to make themselves look good by making the good people look bad'***. How true!!

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It's incomprehensible why anybody would make such damaging allegations against those who are trying to help alleviate some of the suffering and given a chance of a happy life to a few homeless urchins? What do these people want?

Nasty rumours spread like wildfire in Greece and people are quick to believe them; after all, it's easier to point a finger at foreigners and question their integrity than take an honest look at themselves and how they treat their animals.

PLEASE WRITE TO ALPHA TV & PROTEST AGAINST THE MALICIOUS LIES

Letter to ALPHA TV

12/3/04

Dear Sirs,

I am writing to you in response to your TV report (11 March) concerning stray dogs from Greece that are sent/taken abroad for rehoming, following the 'drama' at the airport, where 3 animal welfare volunteers attempted to send 6 puppies to Belgium. I believe some dogs from a shelter on Aegina were also stopped from being sent to Germany. The accusation that the dogs didn't have appropriate documentation and the claim that many Greek strays end up in vivisection laboratories or are skinned for their fur (if this accusation were not so serious, it would have been amusing!!), was made without ANY EVIDENCE, but it caused an uproar!! Suddenly, everybody was/is concerned about the 'poor' strays!! These same people (including yourselves!) walk past them daily on the streets and never lift a finger to help them, yet are quick to point a finger at 'foreigners'.

As a charity which has been helping animals in Greece for more than 15 years and spent/given more than a MILLION POUNDS for their rescue, treatment & care, sterilisation (and yes, also rehoming, as that is about the only chance of a happy future many of them have), we have more than proved that we care more for animals in your country than the average Greek person. Likewise, many other foreign organisations are compelled to help, when they see how inhumanely strays and even many owned animals are treated in Greece. Of course I'm generalising here, but the fact remains that Greece is renowned for poisoning of strays, puppies and kittens abandoned on the streets and even thrown into rubbish bins, abused and neglected 'guard dogs', who are kept permanently chained, dogs and cats killed on roads by speeding drivers need I go on? And this in a country which has been a member of

EU almost from the beginning, a country which rakes in millions from tourism, a country which is preparing to host the Olympics ...?

Why don't you spend your time and energy dealing with animal abuse cases which are almost on your doorstep? Why don't you help put an end to the nightmare which is on-going at Jimmy Samaras 'death row' shelter in Thessaloniki, where dogs are dying like flies from starvation and disease, where crippled and dying dogs are 'stepped over' ... why not deal with this 'animal Auschwitz' before pointing a finger at 'foreigners'? It's 2 months since ET3 programme 'The Other Day' shocked the viewers with a horrific report of the dreadful conditions at that so-called 'shelter', where around 300 dogs are literally 'waiting to die'. Even cannibalism is taking place ... What is your channel doing to help put an end to THIS tragedy, which is REAL and can be substantiated with masses of evidence??

If accusations of wrongdoing are made, then they should be substantiated with evidence ... where is your evidence that stray dogs from Greece are being sent for some sick trade abroad? If one thinks logically about this, it would hardly make any economic sense! I mean, why would anybody spend time and money treating sick dogs, having them vaccinated and more often than not, also sterilised, if they're to be 'sold' for miserly 50 Euro or whatever? If any such trade really existed, those behind it would ensure they remained anonymous (they certainly wouldn't walk into an airport, exposing their identity) and wouldn't it be much simpler for them just to go around with a van and pick up the strays as they went along? There is certainly no shortage of them, they could fill a van within hours ... no need to vaccinate them or treat them, they could simply throw them in cages and drive off !!

I sincerely hope that you will put the record straight and report true facts in a follow-up programme, which I feel should also include an apology to all those the report has slandered, intentionally or not.

In closing, I would like to say that we too have adopted dogs from Greece - six of them, five of which are disabled (two had been deliberately maimed, requiring surgery which cost over £3,000)... a legacy from their past when they were homeless strays in Greece. We have also rehomed many dogs from Greece in the UK and have annual reunions ... the next one will take place on 6 June ... why don't you join us and report on the happy event? Similar reunions of adopted 'Greekies' (as I affectionately refer to rescued strays) are taking place in Germany and Holland ... I'm sure you would be very welcome to attend those too.

I hope to receive a reply.

Yours sincerely,
Vesna Jones (Founder/President)
Greek Animal Rescue
www.greekanimalrescue.com

Letter to the (new) Minister of Agriculture

Dear Mr Tsitouridis,

22 March 2004

I appreciate that having just taken office as the new Minister of Agriculture, you are very busy, but

I hope you will give this letter your utmost attention, because it concerns a scandal which has potential to damage Greece's reputation. I am referring to the widespread allegation that stray dogs from Greece are being sent to Germany, Holland and other EU countries to be sold as experimental animals and for fur. These preposterous accusations are not only offensive, but there is absolutely no evidence that any such 'trade' exists.

As a charity which has been helping animals in Greece for more than 15 years and spent/given more than a MILLION POUNDS (UK) for their rescue, treatment & care, sterilisation (and yes, also rehoming, as that is the only chance of a happy future many of them), we feel deeply offended and hurt by the slanderous allegations and I know that other foreign organisations involved in helping animals in Greece - especially the German ones - are equally shocked by the claims. Alpha TV channel, whose 'dramatic' report, 'Cruelty prevented', aired on 11 March, fuelled the gossip by claiming that stray dogs from Greece were being sent abroad without proper documentation and that their fate was 'unknown'. The report quoted extensively from the comments of a Mrs Karagouni, who claimed that stray dogs from Greece were being used for experiments or to make SHOES [well, if anybody believes that, they'll believe anything!!]. As incredible as these allegations are, they have spread like wildfire throughout Greece and many foreign residents, who do what they can to help a few animals, have been receiving malicious phone calls [usually from those who have never lifted a finger to help an animal!]. Reputable organisations in many countries such as Germany, Holland, Switzerland, Sweden, UK, Belgium etc have been slandered and that includes the tens of thousands of members we have between us.

As if the report on Alpha TV wasn't bad enough, Espresso newspaper printed a VERY libellous article on 15 March, with the sensational but untrue headline:

Horror at the Airport

Animal lovers uncover an organized network transporting animals to European countries.

At midday on Friday at the Eleftherios Venizelos Airport the Greek police authorities came face to face with an organized network transporting animals to be used as experimental animals in Belgium and Germany.....

It may not surprise you to learn that we cannot simply dismiss these dreadful accusations and I hope you agree that we have every right to feel offended. I'm sure you also realise that this issue has the potential to cause considerable embarrassment to Greece and thus I hope you will intervene and demand that Alpha TV make a public apology for their shameful report, admitting they have absolutely no evidence [and they don't!!] that any dogs from Greece are being sent abroad illegally and used for experiments or for their skin ... Mrs Karagouni should be sued for slander and as for Espresso newspaper what a disgrace!

I hope that you will deal with this matter without delay and inform us what course of action you will take. I also hope to receive acknowledgement of my letter.

Yours sincerely,

Vesna Jones

Greek Animal Rescue (Founder/President)