

Mr. Pedro Sánchez Pérez-Castejón, President of the Government
Mr. Francisco Javier López Álvarez, Spokesman of the Socialist Group in
Congress
Mr. Luis Planas Puchades, Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food

Subject: SIGNATURES AGAINST THE EXCLUSION OF DOGS AND OTHER ANIMALS USED AS HUNTING TOOLS FROM THE DRAFT ON ANIMAL PROTECTION LAW

We, the undersigned, wish to express our total rejection to the exclusion of dogs and other animals used for hunting or guarding livestock, as well as in other specific activities, from the scope of application of the Animal Protection Bill.

It is shameful that on the same day that the Government registered the Draft Law in the Congress of Deputies, it announced an amendment with the intention of reducing its scope of application, which was already minimal in itself.

The Draft Bill was approved by the Council of Ministers, mostly from the Socialist Party. What kind of a bad joke is this?

Spanish society will not forgive them for it, although they seem not to be aware of it. Over the last few decades an unstoppable movement of awareness and sensitisation about the defence and protection to animals has been generated in Spain.

There is no longer any doubt that they are endowed with physical and mental sensitivity, and therefore should be treated in a way that guarantees their maximum wellbeing. This has been recognised, fifteen years behind the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, in our Civil Code, by means of an amendment that was submitted and approved in January by this same government.

Do dogs feel less if they are in the hands of hunters than in the hands of people whose sporting hobby is not killing animals?
Indeed, they feel less affection, less attention and less respect.

It is because of leaders like you that we continue and will continue to be a country internationally recognised for its cruel traditions and celebrations with animals as well as for the mistreatment and abandonment suffered by those who are used as tools in activities such as hunting.

In November 2021, the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, Mr. Luis Planas, publicly asked himself, in reference to dogs used for hunting and guarding livestock, whether they were companion animals, adding that he considered them to be an "element of the farm". This consideration is quite astonishing, coming from a minister of the same party that had submitted a bill to amend the Civil Code so that animals would no longer be considered, precisely, "elements". Mr Planas also stated at the time that "the use of 'rehala' dogs in hunting must be given special consideration".

Mr Planas, Spain is the only country in the European Union where hunting with 'rehalas' is still allowed, and sadly the dogs that are forced to be part of them are already subjected to a singular treatment: at the end of the season every year, thousands are abandoned and some are killed in terrible ways; hanged, thrown into pits, burnt...

Furthermore, the conditions in which many hunters keep these animals are terrible: permanently tied to short chains, drinking unhealthy water and sleeping on their own excrements.

This was also denounced by the European Parliament's Intergroup on Animal Welfare and Conservation in the open letter sent to the Spanish Government in March 2021, where the MEPs were concerned about the treatment of animals used as hunting tools in our country.

Don't you find it shameful that the European Union had to draw your attention to the fact that Spanish legislation has fallen so far behind Spanish society's awareness of animal protection and welfare? That you had to be reminded that Article 13 of the Lisbon Treaty requires Member States to adapt their legislation so that it complies with the consideration of animals as sentient beings, and that the treatment they allow animals to be treated is in contradiction with European values?

We find shocking that Spain has the highest rate of animal abandonment in Europe and that the Intergroup had to explain to our government that there is no justification for giving animals used as hunting tools a different legal protection, that they are not being protected from suffering, abandonment and mistreatment by those who exploit them.

The MEPs also found it inconceivable that in other European countries hunting methods such as "montería con rehala" are banned because of their extreme cruelty but in Spain they are protected and promoted through subsidies and declarations such as "bien de interés cultural" (cultural interest).

It is time that these and other extremely cruel practices towards animals are eliminated in Spain, such as clay pigeon shooting that originally was banned by the Bill and the PSOE also aims to eliminate the prohibition through this amendment.

We, the undersigned, demand that they withdraw and vote against any amendments that may be tabled along the same lines, and that not only should these animals not be excluded from the Protection Bill, but also that it should include a ban on the use and exploitation of animals as tools for hunting or guarding, be they dogs, ferrets, birds or any other animal.

They are still in time to withdraw and change the meaning of their amendment, proving to be the progressive party they claim to be, as not even the right-wing parties have differentiated these animals in the regional animal protection laws, or excluded them. For the Socialist Party to do so in 2022 would be devastating.