

The Truths Behind the “Animal Welfare Act”: An Uncomfortable Reality That Demands Action, Not Excuses

Las verdades de la “Ley de Bienestar Animal”: la realidad incómoda que exige acción, no excusas

As verdades da “Legislação sobre Bem-estar Animal”: a realidade que exige ação, não desculpas

Natalia Pérez Muñoz

Animalista malagueña (Comares)

<https://orcid.org/0009-0007-1356-7523>

Jagalskardig.33@gmail.com

Abstract

Law 7/2023, of March 28, on the protection of animal rights and welfare, could be considered a significant step forward in the protection of animal rights and welfare in Spain, introducing an innovative legal framework that recognizes animals as "sentient beings." Its main objective is to define the regulatory framework that allows for the greatest possible protection of animal rights and welfare, as established in Article 2. The legislation focuses on eradicating animal abuse and abandonment, promoting responsible pet ownership through a series of prohibitions and obligations that affect the lives of companion animals. Beyond a minimal legislative analysis as a methodology, the question arises: Are people actually complying with the Animal Welfare Law? This paper aims to contribute to this debate, with some examples, like an analysis of Royal Decree 666/2023, of July 18 (which regulates the distribution, prescription, dispensing and use of veterinary medicines), and an experience in a small municipality in the Axarquía region of Málaga -with a feline colony-, with truths to decipher for future research such as: do these laws really improve animal welfare, or is much more than specific regulations needed?

Keywords: Animal, domestic animal, animal welfare, animal rights, essay, Law 7/2023, of March 28, on the protection of the rights and welfare of animals, critical thinking.

Resumen

La Ley 7/2023, de 28 de marzo, de protección de los derechos y el bienestar de los animales, podría considerarse un avance significativo en la protección de los derechos y el bienestar de los animales en España, introduciendo un marco legal innovador que reconoce a los animales como "seres sintientes". Su objetivo principal es definir el marco normativo que permita obtener la mayor

protección para los derechos y bienestar de los animales, tal como establece en su artículo 2. La legislación se centra en erradicar el maltrato y abandono animal, promoviendo la tenencia responsable mediante una serie de prohibiciones y obligaciones que afectan la vida de los animales de compañía. Más allá de un mínimo análisis legislativo como metodología, hay que plantearse: ¿Hacen caso a la Ley de Bienestar Animal? Este escrito pretende contribuir a dicho debate, con algunos ejemplos concretos, del Real Decreto 666/2023, de 18 de julio, por el que se regula la distribución, prescripción, dispensación y uso de medicamentos veterinarios, y de una experiencia en un pequeño municipio de la Axarquía de Málaga, con una colonia felina, con verdades a descifrar para futuras investigaciones del tipo: ¿estas leyes realmente mejoran el bienestar animal, o hace falta mucho más que normativas puntuales?

Palabras clave: Animal, animal doméstico, bienestar de los animales, derechos de los animales, ensayo, Ley 7/2023, de 28 de marzo, de protección de los derechos y el bienestar de los animales, pensamiento crítico.

Resumo

A Lei 7/2023, de 28 de março, sobre a proteção dos direitos e do bem-estar animal, pode ser considerada um passo significativo para a proteção dos direitos e do bem-estar animal em Espanha, introduzindo um quadro jurídico inovador que reconhece os animais como "seres sencientes". O seu principal objetivo é definir o quadro regulamentar que permita a maior proteção possível dos direitos e do bem-estar animal, conforme estabelecido no artigo 2.º. A legislação centra-se na erradicação do abuso e abandono de animais, promovendo a posse responsável de animais de companhia através de uma série de proibições e obrigações que afetam a vida dos animais de companhia. Para além de uma análise legislativa básica como metodologia, surge a questão: Será que as pessoas estão realmente a cumprir a Lei do Bem-Estar Animal? Este artigo visa contribuir para este debate, com alguns exemplos, como uma análise do Real Decreto 666/2023, de 18 de julho (que regulamenta a distribuição, prescrição, dispensa e utilização de medicamentos veterinários), e uma experiência num pequeno município da região de Axarquía, em Málaga -com uma colónia de felinos-, com verdades a decifrar para futuras pesquisas, tais como: estas leis melhoram realmente o bem-estar animal, ou é necessário muito mais do que regulamentos específicos?

Palavras-chave: Animal, animal doméstico, bem-estar animal, direitos dos animais, redação, Lei 7/2023, de 28 de março, sobre a proteção dos direitos e do bem-estar dos animais, pensamento crítico.

Introduction

Spain's Law 7/2023 of March 28, on the protection of animal rights and welfare (hereafter, the Animal

Welfare Act or Law 7/2023), represents a major shift in how animals are regarded within the Spanish state. In my view, it is more than a law—it is a mirror reflecting a change in societal thinking, one that recognizes animals as sentient beings, with needs and rights that must be protected.

The central aim of this law is to ensure that animals under human care live well, while also preventing abuse and abandonment in order to promote coexistence. For the first time, in my opinion, the law establishes explicit obligations for those who keep animals and extends protection not only to traditional “pets” such as dogs and cats, but to many other species as well. It also creates national registries for animals and animal protection groups, regulates breeding centers, and bans the sale of pets in stores.

One of its core principles is the prohibition of euthanizing companion animals, except under the circumstances laid out in the law and always carried out by a veterinarian. Animals can no longer be euthanized because of location, age, lack of space, or institutional convenience. This is significant in a country where abandonment still occurs on a massive scale every year (Martín, 2025): countless dogs and cats—especially newborn litters—are discarded simply because their guardians refuse to spay or neuter them, or do not want to take responsibility for them.

However, despite the positive image projected, the legislation contains gaps, contradictions, and negative consequences at both social and economic levels. Rather than reflecting broad consensus about the care of living beings, the law has sparked disputes among citizens, experts, and authorities themselves (Díez, 2025).

One of the most widely noted shortcomings is the law’s lack of precision and the ambiguity of its language. Various sections are written in unclear terms, creating legal uncertainty and potential conflict when put into practice.

Another highly criticized aspect involves the economic burden placed on pet guardians, breeders, veterinarians, and small businesses (Garnelo, 2024). Many professionals have protested that the law imposes excessive bureaucracy, unreasonable restrictions, and disproportionate penalties—implicitly suggesting that an animal’s life is less important than rigid procedures (Ratia, 2024).

The law was also drafted with limited consultation of animal welfare experts, veterinarians, and stakeholders in agriculture. For example, certain animals used for entertainment, experimentation, or commercial purposes are excluded from its protections—a clear moral contradiction. Ordinary citizens may face harsh sanctions for minor violations, while large industries continue practices that inflict suffering on animals (Bautista, 2023).

A major obstacle is the lack of sufficient funding to enforce the law. Municipalities often lack the

resources needed for monitoring, oversight, and enforcement, rendering many of its provisions nothing more than promises on paper (Díaz, 2024).

The profound disconnect between what the law proclaims and what actually happens on the ground generates frustration—not only among those dedicated to protecting animals, but for the animals themselves, who remain unprotected despite the legislation meant to safeguard them.

Key Points of the Animal Welfare Act

As indicated in Article 30.3 of the regulation, in the case of dog ownership, and throughout the animal's entire life, the guardian must take out and maintain in force civil liability insurance for damages caused to third parties. This insurance must also cover the individuals responsible for the animal, with an amount sufficient to cover possible expenses arising from such damages, as will be established by regulation. Section 2 of the law, titled "Sanctions," includes Articles 76, 77, 78, and 79, describing minor infractions punishable with a warning or a fine ranging from five hundred to ten thousand euros, and very serious infractions punishable with fines ranging from fifty thousand and one to two hundred thousand euros.

Article 26, "Specific obligations regarding companion animals," item (i), requires the identification via microchip and mandatory surgical sterilization—yes, we read that correctly—of all cats before six months of age, except those registered in the identification registry as breeding animals under the name of a breeder registered in the Companion Animal Breeders Registry. Article 38.2 extends this requirement to community cats, and Article 51 confirms that dogs, ferrets, and birds must also be identified—dogs, ferrets, and cats by microchip, and birds through banding from birth. All companion animals must be registered in the Companion Animal Registry of each autonomous community.

The fourth additional provision stated that, within three months from the entry into force of this law, the government must present a draft bill on great apes. This could be considered yet another false promise—or a delay of more than two years (Robaina, 2025).

The abandonment of one or more animals (Article 74, k) is considered only a serious infraction, not a very serious one. Article 58 states that animals available for adoption must have received the required preventive or curative treatments, be identified, and be sterilized—or have a commitment to sterilization within a set period if there are health reasons that make immediate sterilization inadvisable. These mandatory sterilizations, which appear not to have been debated, certainly should be.

Leaving any companion animal unsupervised for more than three consecutive days is prohibited; in the case of dogs, this period cannot exceed twenty-four consecutive hours... according to Article 27(i).

How could such a provision be enforced? The law does not specify. Another false promise? Would local police, civil guards, or similar authorities even respond if we called to report animals left alone not for one day, nor three, but for weeks, as often occurs in rural properties or farmhouses?

Public and private transportation services must allow the entry of companion animals that do not pose a risk to people, other animals, or property, without prejudice to public health regulations, municipal ordinances, or specific rules. However, taxi drivers may allow animals in their vehicles at their discretion, except in duly justified circumstances, according to Article 29.1. The Dictionary of the Royal Spanish Academy defines discretionary transport as “a transport service that is not subject to any obligation of regularity.” In short, it seems they may do as they please—just like public and private establishments, hotels, restaurants, bars, and any other venue where food and drinks are served. If they do not allow animals, they must display a visible sign indicating this from outside the establishment.

Within Article 29, the hierarchy is clear: Access to transportation, establishments, and venues covered by this article shall not be discretionary for assistance dogs or dogs belonging to the Armed Forces or Security Forces, nor shall such animals be counted within any access quotas that may exist.

The second transitional provision, “Prohibition of certain species as companion animals,” is also of particular interest. It prohibits keeping as companion animals any arthropods, fish, and amphibians whose bite or venom may pose a serious risk to the physical integrity or health of people and animals; venomous reptiles and all reptile species that, in adulthood, exceed two kilograms in weight (except chelonians); all primates; wild mammals that exceed five kilograms in adulthood; and species covered under other national or EU sectoral regulations that prohibit their captivity. All of this would remain in force until the approval and publication of the positive list corresponding to each group (mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, fish, or invertebrates). But as far as we know, the Spanish government has not produced such a document... a simple delay of more than two years, or yet another empty promise?

The sale of companion animals continues—one only needs to check certain websites or buying-and-selling apps to find them—despite the law stating that such sales may be carried out only by professional breeders, authorized specialty stores, or animal protection centers. The law prohibits the public exhibition and display of animals for commercial purposes. One must then ask: what, exactly, are the Cártama Fair (September 23–25), SALAMAQ in Salamanca (September 4–8), the Agro-Livestock Fair of Villanueva del Trabuco (June 7–8), or the XVII Almachar Livestock Fair (June 20–22)? Not to mention the infamous “slaughter festival” in Ardales. Dogs, cats, and ferrets may only be sold by registered breeders—in other words, they remain objects of consumption.

Article 3(z) defines euthanasia as the killing of an animal by means of veterinary assessment and

intervention using non-cruel and painless clinical methods, with the aim of preventing unnecessary suffering resulting from severe and ongoing illness without the possibility of cure, certified by a veterinarian. Article 27 states that euthanasia is justified only under veterinary criteria and control, with the sole purpose of preventing suffering caused by non-recoverable conditions that seriously compromise the animal's quality of life. It must be accredited and certified by a licensed veterinarian—either private or affiliated with a public administration—and must be carried out using methods that guarantee humane conditions.

The law prohibits: all forms of mutilation or permanent bodily modifications (no functional or aesthetic justification of any kind is permitted, and any exception must be accredited through a report issued by a licensed veterinarian or a veterinarian from a public administration, and recorded in the corresponding identification registry); animal fighting or training for such practices or similar ones; inciting aggression toward other animals or people outside regulated activities; keeping animals tied up or roaming public spaces without the physical supervision of the person responsible for their care and behavior; breeding practices that result in serious health problems for the animal; the use of companion animals for human consumption; and the use of any handling tools that may cause injuries to the animal—particularly electric, impulse, prong, or choke collars. Yet, as seen earlier, this provision is disproven instantly in practice: all types of such collars can be purchased online with a single click.

As stated in the preamble, Chapters VII and VIII establish obligations for territorial administrations, including the requirement to have protocols for handling animals in emergency situations—protocols that are often forgotten, resulting in negative consequences for guardians—as well as the obligation to maintain public animal protection centers, either municipal or contracted. The intent is to ensure that local governments take responsibility for animal protection rather than leaving all such work to private, non-profit organizations. Each reader living in Spain may verify whether this is true—or simply another falsehood.

Chapter VI establishes the legal framework for managing free-roaming feline populations—colonies originating from abandoned, lost, or unsterilized roaming cats, as well as the litters that result from them, all products of irresponsible ownership. The law introduces the concept of the community cat, the free-living cat that coexists in human environments and is not adoptable due to lack of socialization. It mandates an integrated, non-lethal management approach based on the CER/TNR method (Spanish: *Captura, Esterilización y Retorno*; English: Trap–Neuter–Return), with the goal of progressively reducing colony size while preventing the arrival of new individuals through the mandatory sterilization of owned cats.

Article 1.3 defines which animals will continue to be tortured and killed: bulls; what are called “production animals,” as defined in Law 32/2007 on the care of animals during farming, transport,

experimentation, and slaughter throughout their life cycle (unless, after losing their productive use, their owner registers them as companion animals under the present law); animals subjected to atrocities under the justification of scientific experimentation; hunting dogs; pack hounds; and auxiliary hunting animals.

Article 57—aside from being easily disproven with a simple internet connection—appears to contradict itself (and it is not the only one). In section 1, it prohibits the direct sale of any type of companion animal through the internet, websites, or any telematics medium or application. Yet in section 2, it states that any advertisement of animals through media outlets, magazines, equivalent publications, and other dissemination systems—including the internet (was it not prohibited in the previous section?)—must include the breeder's registration number or the zoological license of the establishment, as well as the identification number of the animal, when applicable. Platforms must verify the accuracy of the data provided by the seller. At present, anyone can upload animal sales ads in multiple places without any platform verifying anything. No one reports them. A fake registration number can easily be invented.

Law 7/2023 does not establish a formal figure of “certified caregiver” for the general welfare of companion animals, but it does define the responsibilities of guardians and of the State in their care. The law does regulate assistance dogs and other animals in professional contexts, and it specifies municipal responsibility for collecting and caring for abandoned animals, as well as obligations of city councils and community associations regarding the management of cat colonies.

Article 30, concerning dog ownership, requires that individuals wishing to register as dog guardians must complete a training course on dog ownership, valid indefinitely. The course must be free of charge, and its content is to be determined by regulation... when, and by whom? No one knows. Is it a delay, or simply an invention?

Bureaucracy and government: The example of Royal Decree 666/2023 of July 18, regulating the distribution, prescription, dispensing, and use of veterinary medicines

Sanitary bureaucracy is putting animal health at risk (AnimaNaturalis, 2025). The Spanish Veterinary Business Confederation informed the Director General for Animal Rights of the possible consequences of Royal Decree 666/2023—issued by the Ministry of Agriculture—“on animal welfare and environmental health... the problems that this controversial decree has created for animal health, the emotional well-being of veterinarians, and the growing concern of consumers” (2025).

It can be stated clearly—based on the available data, and on the absence of real, tangible usefulness—that we are dealing with “legal and budgetary inefficiency” (Expósito-López, 2025). Still, it is important to recognize that, within the Spanish legal system, the foundations for recognizing

animals as “sentient—or better, sensitive—beings” rest on: Law 17/2021 of December 15, which amends the Civil Code, the Mortgage Law, and the Civil Procedure Law regarding the legal status of animals; and on Law 7/2023 (Caballero, 2025, p. 11).

On a personal level, my view is clear: this regulatory shift initially made sense, but its implementation has revealed significant problems. In my opinion, the combination of the good intentions of Law 7/2023, Royal Decree 666/2023, the clinical realities of bureaucracy, “special” companion animals (unidentified animals, community cats, etc.), and pet mobility exposes tensions that are not being adequately addressed.

The analysis by Qualitas Alimentaria (“When Bureaucracy Kills Veterinary Medicine”) argues that the near-total prohibition of dispensing medications in clinics, along with the obligation to separate diagnosis from dispensing, increases costs, causes delays, and complicates therapeutic continuity (Rueda, 2025).

To all this, we must add the issue of unidentified animals, which appears repeatedly. The regulation requires prescriptions or clinical records to include the animal’s identification number when the species requires it (dogs, cats, etc.). But in clinical practice, veterinarians receive abandoned, lost, free-roaming, or colony cats without microchips. What is to be done with them? The Ministry’s explanatory note addresses this (Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food; Ministry of Social Rights, Consumer Affairs, and Agenda 2030, 2025), but the mere need for such a note shows that the decree did not properly account for this reality.

The bureaucratic burden—registering in PRESVET (the Central Information System for the Control of Veterinary Antibiotic Prescriptions), justifying each prescription, conducting visits, completing clinical records, etc.—is broadly perceived as an overload that obstructs veterinarians’ work and delays crucial treatments. The Veterinary Crisis Committee, which unites all sector associations, “has submitted a letter to the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, Luis Planas, requesting his immediate resignation due to his handling of the Royal Decree regulating the distribution, prescription, dispensing, and use of veterinary medicines” (Velasco, 2025).

A sense of continuous surveillance may also be perceived. Chapter X of Royal Decree 666/2023, “Monitoring and Sanctioning Regime,” establishes inspections and precautionary measures. Public administration staff performing inspections—upon identification—are authorized to enter freely and without prior notice, at any time, any entity or establishment regulated under the decree. If the inspection is to take place in a constitutionally protected private residence, explicit consent or a prior judicial warrant is required.

Especially in rural or hard-to-reach areas, the measure prohibiting in-clinic dispensing—or requiring

the use of an external pharmacy—can become problematic: delays, lack of availability, treatment abandonment, and more. In my view, this creates a real tension between the veterinarian's clinical judgment and the rigidity of the regulation.

I believe that veterinary professionals must have room to maneuver, grounded in their training, the specific case of the animal, the urgency of the situation, and so on—and what I continue to observe is that many voices in the sector feel that this margin has been entirely overlooked.

It is evident that the well-being of vulnerable animals is put at risk by administrative or interpretative barriers. For example, if a community cat becomes ill and the regulation requires identification data that do not exist, there may be delays or uncertainty about how to proceed.

That the animal-health system faces practical difficulties in small towns, in shelters, in mobile veterinary work, and so forth—and that the regulation does not include sufficient adaptations for these “special cases”—demands action, not excuses.

Is the Animal Welfare Law actually being followed?

When the Animal Welfare Law (Law 7/2023) was approved, some of us truly believed that Spain was finally taking a firm step toward a more empathetic, fair, and consistent society—one that recognizes that animals feel, and that they are not mere objects of companionship or entertainment. It was announced with enthusiasm, celebrated across social media, framed as the beginning of a new era. But more than two years after its enactment, the reality is very different: the law is not being effectively applied.

Yes, the law exists—on paper—but it remains trapped in a legal limbo. It is a law without regulations, without the mechanisms needed to put it into motion. A law that was voted in, but without real tools to protect those it was meant to protect. Worst of all, it has become a political weapon rather than a driver of social change.

A large portion of the legal text depends on regulations that still do not exist. The mandatory course for dog owners, for instance, was presented as a flagship measure to promote responsible ownership. Today, there is no curriculum, no official platform, and no defined date for the supposed exam. What was promised as a requirement is, in practice, impossible to fulfill.

The issue is similar with the civil liability insurance required of dog owners. The law clearly mandates it, but the regulation defining scope, coverage, and deadlines never materialized. As a result, citizens are confused, insurance companies invent their own versions of coverage, and the authorities remain silent.

The long-awaited Positive List of Species—intended to determine which animals can legally be kept as companions—remains unpublished. Without this list, all animal control and registration processes remain suspended. And the National Animal Protection Registry, essential for shelters, breeders, and professionals, functions poorly, failing more often than it works. The law, as it stands, only exists in the Official State Gazette.

On the ground, the picture is bleak: local and regional authorities—key actors in implementation—lack the resources, training, and tools needed to enforce the law. There is a serious shortage of trained inspectors, uniform protocols are nonexistent, and many municipalities have no idea how to apply even the most basic components of the legislation.

In everyday life, little—if anything—has changed. Abandoned dogs remain visible on the streets, stray cats roam without control, animals continue to be exploited on social media, and shelters are overwhelmed and chronically underfunded, while public awareness remains low. Meanwhile, the relevant institutions stay stuck in a cycle of endless meetings and draft documents.

Animal protection organizations, which for years have filled the gap left by the State, decry the lack of support and the total absence of coordination. The law that promised to recognize their work and offer legal protection has left them operating on volunteer labor, donations, and goodwill.

A crucial challenge is the extreme fragmentation of governmental responsibilities. Animal welfare falls simultaneously to the State, the autonomous communities, and the municipalities. The result is an enforcement and interpretation of the law that each actor handles as they see fit.

Some regions have taken the lead, implementing their own regulations, while others—shockingly—have done absolutely nothing.

This disparity creates legal uncertainty and unequal treatment: what is considered a serious offense in one area may be completely ignored in another. Meanwhile, animals—who do not understand administrative borders—remain unprotected.

Adding to this inaction is a deafening silence. Since the law passed, the Ministry of Social Rights and the 2030 Agenda has offered almost no clear explanations about regulatory timelines. Promises that the regulations would be ready “soon” have been repeated for months, but without evidence.

The result is a complete loss of credibility. People now see this law not as progress but as an empty, baseless promise. And that is the worst fate for legislation created to transform public consciousness: to become a forgotten piece of paper.

While desks fill with yet more drafts and headlines fade, animals continue to suffer the consequences

of inaction.

Every day, for every monster who abandons or abuses an animal without consequences, there is a shelter on the brink of collapse receiving no support; a vulnerable animal left without protection; and a negligent owner who walks away unpunished.

A law that never comes into effect offers no protection; a regulation stuck in place provides no solutions; and a society that ignores it and allows its violation reveals that, at its core, the care of animals remains a secondary concern.

The Animal Welfare Law (Law 7/2023) was conceived as a promise—one meant to shape a nation more humane toward animals. Yet now, more than two years later, what we have is a stalled, unfinished law that generates disappointment and distrust.

It was approved with great fanfare, but without real planning (Cruz, 2023). And a rule without implementation or funding ends up as a beautiful storefront that is empty inside.

Therefore, until the regulations move forward, until municipalities align, and until resources and specific responsibilities are assigned, genuine animal welfare in Spain will not exist. There will be elegant words, yes, but no concrete action.

And despite the silence surrounding it, animals still await the legal promise—one that is slow to take full shape. These beings, without a voice, patiently wait for an egalitarian law to finally become reality.

My Reality with the Feral Cat Colony

We have spent years—both the author and her mother—caring for animals, especially stray cats, in a small town in the Axarquía region of Málaga. I want to explain how difficult it has been to receive even a small amount of support, to be heard, and for this issue—so invisible to many—to be taken seriously.

It all began five years ago, right when the pandemic started. That morning, the atmosphere in Comares (Málaga) felt strange; there was unusual commotion, something rare in such a quiet town. Shortly after, we understood why: in different corners of the village, dead cats began to appear, one after another, poisoned. In total, forty cats and two dogs died. One of those dogs belonged to my neighbor; the poor animal died in front of us, with her unable to do anything more. It was one of those moments that stays with you forever, that time cannot erase. Similar events have occurred in Málaga city, Casares, and elsewhere (Ayuntamiento de Casares, 2018; San Martín, 2018).

There had been poisoning incidents before in Comares, but never like this—never with such cruelty or

so many deaths. For those of us who love animals, it felt like living through a nightmare. In the midst of the chaos, a foreign resident decided to contact SEPRONA (the Nature Protection Service) to seek answers. Some neighbors joined forces to figure out what type of poison had been used and whether there was any way to prevent this from happening again. But despite everyone's good intentions, no help ever arrived. We received no clear information, no support, and no solutions.

Tired of the inaction, my mother held on to the one idea that felt right and fair: she started speaking with neighbors and collecting signatures. The idea was simple—protect the cats, avoid another tragedy, and secure a safe, structured space where they could be sterilized. But putting that into practice was anything but easy.

After persistent insistence, the town council finally agreed to provide a small piece of municipal land to establish a cat colony. We became fully responsible for cleaning the area, feeding the animals daily, monitoring their health, seeking help for sterilizations, and solving any problem that came up. All of this without receiving a single euro of institutional support. The only thing keeping us afloat were donations from kind people who, even if they couldn't contribute much, wanted to help in some way.

The CER/TNR method that I mentioned earlier could not be applied officially at that time because the response was always the same: "There's no budget for that." Such a short sentence, yet one that closed countless doors. Losing access to grants and aid was frustrating, but even so, we kept going. Through effort, sacrifice, and many invisible hours of work, we have managed to sterilize more than fifty cats and feed them day after day.

We also help another shelter in a different town, and we act as a foster home for them—an association facing struggles as serious as ours. Sometimes we feel like we can't take on any more, but then we look at the cats, and the exhaustion fades. We always say that helping costs nothing, that even the smallest gesture can change an animal's life.

Fate intervened when one day my mother met two people from an organization dedicated to supporting other animal-protection groups. They gave us the push we needed and encouraged us to formalize the colony and create our own association, "*Los Gatos de Bastet*." It was a big step, one that filled us with renewed hope. Even though some people who had supported us at the beginning no longer did, we chose to move forward. We knew it was the right path.

Thanks to that progress, we are now in conversations with the town council to sign an agreement that would allow the CER/TNR method be applied officially and to create new cat colonies in different areas of the village. It is a slow process, full of bureaucracy, but for the first time, it feels like there is something worth fighting for.

Our goal is simple and enormous at the same time: for the town's cats to live well, without fear and without suffering. We want to show that coexistence between animals and people is entirely possible when there is willingness and empathy. The fight is hard, but we will continue—because they depend on us.

Conclusions

When the Animal Welfare Law was enacted, I was filled with hope. It finally seemed as if animals would be seen for what they truly are—sentient beings full of love and deserving of rights. Exciting progress was promised: an end to abandonment, a ban on euthanizing pets simply because there was no funding or because there were too many litters. And yes, now dog guardians must have liability insurance, and all cats, dogs, and ferrets are required to be microchipped.

But if we look honestly, this law is a disaster. It is nothing more than an empty framework, stuck in legal limbo. What is the point of a beautifully written law if many of its key measures—like the mandatory course for dog guardians or the Positive List of permitted companion species—are stalled because no one has yet written the implementing regulations?

The saddest part is that the ones paying the price are the animals. Municipalities claim they lack the money and personnel to monitor or provide support. Meanwhile, the new wave of administrative burdens placed on veterinarians is making their work even harder. Today, a veterinarian can find themselves in a difficult position when trying to help a sick community cat or when unable to comply with a rule that requires registration data that simply do not exist. In short, the law was approved without a real strategy. It is nothing more than a polished façade with no real substance behind it.

From the bottom of my heart, I hope that—with the ongoing work and persistence of so many of us who refuse to give up, who fight every day for animals—we will eventually achieve something real, not another performative gesture or a law created to look good, only to be forgotten the moment it becomes inconvenient.

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