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Knesset News

March 5, 2024

Israel Kennel Club: Criminal elements involved in dog breeding beyond the Green Line

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The Education, Culture and Sports Committee, chaired by MK Yosef Taieb (Shas), convened on Monday for its first meeting on a proposed amendment to the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Law that would prohibit the breeding and sale of dogs and cats, unless the dogs are raised to become guide dogs or dogs at the service of the security establishment.

Separate bills on this matter, sponsored by MKs Hanoch Milwidsky (Likud) and Yasmin Fridman (Yesh Atid), were merged into one bill that is meant, among other things, to reduce the number of abandoned dogs and cats in Israel. In addition, the bill's sponsors suggest that in cases where a dog is mated to produce puppies, and the puppies are sold

without authorization, the municipal veterinarian will issue an order to spay or neuter the dog and the puppies. Cats will apparently not be included in the legislation, apart from a prohibition on publishing ads about cats for sale. "Just like cigarettes – purchasing is permitted, but advertising is prohibited," MK Fridman said.

MK Fridman said 1,500-2,000 dogs are imported to Israel every year, and they are sold for thousands of shekels each. "I do not want to see animal trade. The Ministry of Agriculture claims there are difficulties in proving that an offense has been committed, but that is not a reason not to ban it in law," she stated. "There are also those who argue that [the bill] violates the breeders' freedom of occupation, but freedom of occupation does not override the harm that is caused to animals, so it is not relevant here, just like the High Court of Justice's ruling on livestock fattening."

MK Milwidsky said, "In the dog mills, dogs are being bred in terrible conditions for the sole purpose of making money. They do not provide the most basic conditions to the animals."

Deputy Minister of Agriculture MK Moshe Abutbul (Shas) said, "There should be a consensus on the issue of animal welfare. Politics has nothing to do with the wellbeing of animals. It is enshrined also in the laws of the Torah."

Dganit Ben-Dov of the Ministry of Agriculture said, "The bill misses the purpose and cannot be enforced. Based on our familiarity with what happens on the ground, it will be impossible. There are pirate breeding facilities that are very hard to reach. Some operate without a business license, without receipts, and in violation of the Law for the Regulation of the Supervision of Dogs, the Rabies Ordinance, and more. The local authorities are in charge of enforcement when it comes to businesses licenses. If the Animal Welfare Law is violated, we have the authority to seize the animal, and we have done this, but some work secretly, so it can be difficult to locate certain breeding facilities. In some cases, we arrive together – representatives of the veterinary services and the local authority, accompanied by the police, if needed. Over the past few years we have shut down 5-6 dog and cat breeding facilities. We do not know how many exist."

Committee Chair MK Taeib said, "I will advance the bill and ask the Ministry of Agriculture to find solutions so that we will be able to move forward. I will not enact a law that cannot

be enforced."

Dr. Liat Morgan of the Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals in Israel noted that in 18 European countries there are laws that restrict the breeding and sale of dogs. "We do not have to invent the wheel. We can simply bring the legislation to Israel," she said.

Dr. Gerassi Lazar, Deputy Chair of the Israel Kennel Club, said "The criminal world is involved in this. They are outside Israel's borders, beyond the Green Line. They learned that it is cheaper not to breed here. The bill states that the municipal veterinarian will visit each facility to examine how the breeding is done, but this is not sustainable." He said some 15 breeding facilities are registered with the Kennel Club, and that some 3,000 puppies are born each year as a result of breeding.

Dr. Avi Zarfati, Chair of the Association of Veterinary Doctors in the Local Authorities, said "The trade is carried out online, and our ability to enforce is very limited. You will never be able to reach the breeding facility. You'll meet the breeder at a gas station, after he changed addresses three times. This demands full enforcement by the local authorities and the Ministry of Agriculture at the breeding farms. Entering these complexes is not easy, particularly if there are criminal elements there, mainly in the [Arab] sector. There is not enough cooperation with the Ministry of National Security."

The representative of the Ministry of Agriculture expressed her objection to excluding therapy dogs from the bill, saying "There are tens of thousands of these dogs. Everyone will say that their dog is a therapy dog."

Israel Police representative Superintendent Keren Diskin said, "What happens if someone takes his dog, and his friend's dog, to the park, and the dogs mate? The [bill] would make this person a criminal." MK Fridman said in response: "Then the female dog should be spayed beforehand. He should walk the dog with a leash. People have to be responsible. We want to reduce the number of dogs in the country."

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