



Republic of San Marino

National Bioethics Committee

Law January 29, 2010 n. 34

***ANSWER TO THE REQUESTED OPINION ON
ETHICAL ISSUES REGARDING ANIMAL
MANAGEMENT IN RELATION TO COVID-19
PANDEMIC***

APPROVED ON MARCH 25, 2020

Translated by Luisa Borgia

The National Bioethics Committee (CSB) of Republic of San Marino received from APAS (San Marino Animal Protection Association) a request to express an Opinion on ethical issues related to animal management in relation to the Pandemic COVID-19.

The following Opinion was drafted by a dedicated group represented by Luisa Borgia, Vice chair, Francesca Piergiovanni, member of the Bioethics Committee, and Pasqualino Santori, external expert and President of the *Institute of Bioethics for Veterinary and Agrifood-IBVA*.

The Opinion was then submitted to the evaluation of the entire Committee and approved. Therefore,

The National Bioethics Committee unanimously agreed to issue the following Statement:

During its mandates, CSB has paid attention to Bioethics for animals, proposing a reflection on the moral relevance of the animals, legally considered properties, even if with a particular *status*, given the nature of "sentient beings"¹.

In particular, CSB addressed this specific sector of Bioethics in two documents: **Bioethics of Disasters** (2017) and **Decision-making process in taking care of the sick person at the end of life** (2019), in which all aspects of the delicate management of animals in case of disasters/emergencies and in end of life of the owners are deepened, while always respecting a clear value distinction between man and animal; therefore, the Opinion that was requested can only refer to the founding principles of Bioethics for animals, expressed in the documents we just mentioned.

CSB reiterates that the management of animals in emergencies and catastrophes also has significant socio-economic and hygienic-sanitary implications, as well as complex bioethical issues..

However, the current health emergency caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, as a phenomenon that simultaneously affects entire continents, has introduced further elements of reflection, including those relating to the necessary containment measures that many countries, including the Republic of S. Marino, have adopted with specific regulatory acts.

The COVID-19 pandemic does not concern animal health², however the emergency has a significant impact on the lives of domestic animals, who share work, space and time with humans and depend on them.

¹ The condition of "sentient beings" is attributed to animals by the European Union, through the *Treaty of Lisbon* amending the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty establishing the European Community (2007/C 306/01), art. 13: "In formulating and implementing the Union's agriculture, fisheries, transport, internal market, research and technological development and space policies, the Union and the Member States shall, since animals are sentient beings, pay full regard to the welfare requirements of animals, while respecting the legislative or administrative provisions and customs of the Member States relating in particular to religious rites, cultural traditions and regional heritage".

² At current state of knowledge, there is no scientific evidence of the transmission of the virus from pets to humans. For further information on this, see: WSAVA (Global Veterinary Community) Scientific and One Health Committees, **Advisory Document: Updated as of March 20, 2020. The New Coronavirus and Companion Animals – Advice for WSAVA Members** (https://wsava.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/COVID-19_WSAVA-Advisory-Documents-Mar-19-2020.pdf)

Even in the context of extreme emergency, even before considering the concept of sentience, the fundamental distinction must be kept in mind between human activities aimed at "non-living" objects and activities aimed at "living" beings, for which inscrutable biological needs exist, frequent and mandatory.

CSB, therefore, expresses concern for all those quarantine or illness situations of the owners, in which caring can become extremely complex.

The organizational and health related difficulties deriving from the management of animals both pets and zootechnical together with the unmotivated fear that animals could act as vehicles for contagion, could constitute grounds for abandonment.

It must therefore be considered that

- alongside the satisfaction of nutritional and health needs that cannot be postponed, only temporarily extendable services, such as vaccinations, are to be assessed, in order to avoid infectious resurgence or sterilization to prevent stray animals;
- in case of illness or quarantine of the owner, it will still be necessary to guarantee the necessary assistance (cleaning, feeding, milking and birth assistance, etc.).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CSB, taking up what has already been said in the previous document "**Bioethics of Disasters**", reiterates how, even in emergency conditions, all possible actions must be put in place to guarantee the health and well-being of the animals, despite the due distinction between values the latter and man.

With reference to the specific health emergency from COVID-19, CSB believes that actions to safeguard animals must necessarily be implemented in compliance with the precautions dictated by legislation and common sense, so that the health of the individual citizen is protected and, at the same time, that of the community.

Therefore, CSB recommends that:

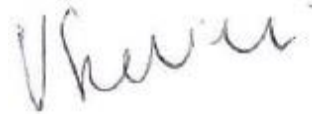
- the animal care and care activities are assessed as necessary and not postponable, therefore also taken into consideration in the economic support plans, given the difficulty in which they can be exercised;

[2020.pdf](https://www.oie.int/scientific-expertise/specific-information-and-recommendations/questions-and-answers-on-2019novel-coronavirus/)). For updates on information relating to COVID-19 and animal health, see the website: <https://www.oie.int/scientific-expertise/specific-information-and-recommendations/questions-and-answers-on-2019novel-coronavirus/>

- movements and operations concerning animal care, the supply of food and materials necessary for livestock breeding and the life of pets are allowed;
- services related to the care of farm animals are considered necessary and workers are put in a position to work safely; provide for emergency interventions in case of impossibility of work by the owner or staff;
- interventions of the same kind are envisaged for house animals where the owner is prevented from doing so;
- the veterinarians are the reference and orientation figures, also for the guidelines for the formulation of the restrictions relevant to animal health and care;
- the *"One Health"* approach is widespread in emergency management and public preventive medicine programs;
- news about animals are disclosed with ethical rigor by the press, making the necessary and usual use of the appropriate checks before proceeding with publication.

The Chairman of the National Bioethics Committee
of Republic of San Marino

Virgilio Sacchini

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Virgilio Sacchini', is positioned below the printed name. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial 'V'.

Attachments: opinion on ethical issues regarding animal management in relation to COVID-19 pandemic.



Spett.le Comitato Sammarinese di Bioetica

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Egregio Presidente del Comitato Sammarinese di Bioetica,

date le "MISURE URGENTI DI CONTENIMENTO E GESTIONE DELL'EMERGENZA DA COVID-19 (CORONAVIRUS)" contenute nel Decreto Legge n° 51 del 2020, che regolano e limitano gli spostamenti a circostanze di "comprovate esigenze lavorative o situazioni di necessità ovvero spostamenti per motivi di salute o per il rientro presso il proprio domicilio, abitazione o residenza"; data l'impossibilità del Decreto Legge di scendere nel dettaglio di ogni singola necessità; data la sensibilità dimostrata dal Comitato di Bioetica verso la questione del benessere animale; data la rilevanza già riconosciuta all'interno del documento dello stesso comitato "*Bioetica delle catastrofi*" e resa esplicita nel capitolo "*Bioetica degli animali nelle catastrofi*"; siamo a chiedere al Comitato Sammarinese di Bioetica di indicare i principi bioetici per la gestione dell'attuale emergenza in relazione al benessere animale anche alla luce delle normative a loro salvaguardia, che fungano da guida per cittadini e verificatori, affinché il benessere animale trovi il proprio spazio all'interno della tutela della salute pubblica.

In particolare l'Associazione Sammarinese Protezione Animali intende portare all'attenzione del Comitato alcune perplessità sul benessere degli animali in situazioni di emergenza sanitaria come quella in corso, dal momento che il Decreto Legge 14 marzo 2020 n° 51 non chiarisce alcuni aspetti, affinché sia cura dello stesso Comitato inoltrarli all'attenzione dell'Organismo preposto alla gestione dell'emergenza

In particolare:

- La possibilità di provvedere all'accudimento dei gatti di colonia e degli animali detenuti in luoghi non adiacenti alla propria abitazione (cani, animali da cortile, cavalli ecc).
- La possibilità di assicurare accoglienza agli animali di affezione delle persone affette da Coronavirus.
- La possibilità di garantire gli approvvigionamenti necessari per quegli animali i cui alimenti non vengono reperiti presso i supermercati (mangimi, granaglie, prodotti alimentari specifici per animali da cortile).

Ringraziando per l'attenzione porgo

CORDIALI SALUTI

San Marino 15 Marzo 2020

A.P.A.S.
ASSOCIAZIONE SAMMARINESE
PROTEZIONE ANIMALI

Emanuela Stolfi

Presidente APAS