



Campaign: Greenlandic dogs

A perspective for Greenland's Dogs and Children

In Greenland many of the 21.000 sled dogs live under very poor circumstances.

Marion Löcker set out to East Greenland in August 2007 to document the suffering of the dogs. A shocking video shows that these are not individual cases.

Lonely dogs on chains, dogs without water, and skeletal dogs with their legs bound together, the rope that acts as a collar, still around their necks.

The puppies must lie on bare ground even in the rain, although puppy huts are required by law, but nobody obeys the rules. What's even worse is that the chains of the mothers are attached very close beside the puppies. The mother runs up and down, scrubs the chain over the little ones, the puppies cry every time because of the pain, but nobody cares. Often, the mothers cannot reach one of the puppies, because the chains are already so entangled that the dogs cannot even move half a meter.



Although buckets or vats are placed everywhere they are mostly empty. It is no exaggeration to say that more than 90% of the animals have no water, or at least only very rarely. Many dogs are almost insanely thirsty even though the water passes by in small runlets, but they cannot reach it because the chains are too short... In the remote villages that can only be reached by boat, the full extent of the tragedy becomes really visible. In every village there live at least 150 dogs, all under adverse circumstances. Some up to the almost total immobility entangled with the chains, without water, without food. In summer the dogs are fed only once every 3-4 days maximum, often only once a week and then only seal intestines, and occasionally a little fish.

The consequences:

The dogs are often skeletal what is unfortunately not always immediately detected because of the thick fur, and totally undernourished. This could be easily solved by feeding the dogs at least from time to time a whole seal so that the nutrient requirements would be covered. Instead, seals decompose unused next to the houses, only caught for the sake of catching.... In every village there is the "Dogshooter" waiting with the rifle on his shoulder. He is only there and also paid for to shoot dogs, dogs, which had somehow escaped, dogs, which the animal doctor declares so ill that only more death brings salvation, because medical care is not existent, or rather, no one would spend money for it.



Why should they? There are puppies born permanently, even if many of the puppies die, enough remain. At the age of six months the young dogs must pull the sled, no matter how much it harms them in the growth phase and after two years they are usually shot.

Unfortunately, many dogs are purely kept for reasons of tradition. These dogs do not even have the rare, even exhausting variety of pulling the sled; they remain chained for their whole life.

Almost unbelievably therefore, how friendly these dogs are, all waggle, lick ones hand, jump up on someone and want to make you play with them. Some of them can immediately be patted on the belly; virtually none of them is aggressive.

One can see how sad these dogs are, by the desperation in their eyes, their grief at the slopes of their ears; even the puppies already have a sad facial expression. All dogs sit on rocks, garbage dumps, between glass, dirt and beverage cans. Mother dogs try to build a nest for their puppies out of bits and pieces of grass, dogs desperately whine for help when they see someone from whom they think they would help them. At every checkup dogs are shot, sometimes up to 60 animals, dogs, which easily could be maintained healthy, because the greenlandic dogs are extremely tough. The veterinarian told, that sometimes the dog's teeth are punched in, so that they cannot break free.

Many are abandoned throughout the summer on islands, and left to their own devices; they feed on their dead comrades. Those who survive are brought back before the beginning of winter.

The veterinary is meticulously recording everything that is wrong and writes reports for the police. They should ultimately punish the owners; at repeated offence a ban to keep dogs can be put into action. But as you see, paper is also patient in Greenland, the laws that dictate water, food, puppy huts and a minimum chain length of at least three meters are being ignored without sanctions.



The video footage is shocking. For this reason a film crew from Pro 7, Germany, took off in December 2007 again with the assistant of the Austrian Animal Protection Association to Greenland, this time to the West.

There was a meeting with the **Greenland Minister of Agriculture Silverth Heilmann**.

The Minister agreed that there are problems in keeping the dogs and granted the permission to produce an educational video for schools.

Ambition:

Improvement of basic living conditions of the sled dogs

1. Constant access to water
2. Regular feeding
3. Huts for puppies and adult dogs
4. Regular monitoring of the dogs health (lactating female dogs)

5. Daily control of the chains

A comprehensive education for dog owners on these important points.

Create a connection between the dog as a sentient being and the dog owner who is responsible - here lie the greatest opportunities in the schools as means to education.

Awareness campaign:

An educational video will be produced for the children in the schools if it is wanted.

Furthermore, the tourists will have to be elucidated what they should be aware of when booking a dog sled ride in Greenland. In the worst case the tour should not be carry out when they see how bad the dogs are treated.

People have to be explained how the dogs actually have to be treated on site and therefore it is important that the tour operators are being informed and educated.



Our proposal:

A vision for Greenland's children

Unfortunately, Greenland has a high suicide rate among young people.

The Animal Protection Associations NOAH and Robin Hood understand animal welfare also as human welfare. Therefore we want to put the sled dog project also in the service of young people.

Our idea:

Bringing the matter of animal protection to Greenland, initially the issue of the sled dogs. The educational video could be introduced in schools together with lectures; exemplary dog owners can educate young people how to accommodate sled dogs appropriate to the species.

The Animal Protection Associations NOAH and Robin Hood will build an animal shelter for stray- sled dogs with the help of international sponsorship. Young people could find a workplace for example as keepers.

The idea is to establish several of these animal shelters across Greenland, in cooperation with greenlandic experts.

It is clear that this is not a solution for all young people in Greenland, but we see it as a small contribution for a better future.

Implementation:

Of utmost importance to this project are interested and committed politicians in Greenland. Furthermore, the establishment of contacts with schools in Greenland, dog owners and veterinarians.



Maybe a solution together with authorities and supporters:

Long term: A youth employment program

In combination with the suffering of the sled dogs it would be useful to involve young people without job opportunities into the concept.

Young people, while obtaining unemployment benefit, may suffer from a certain lack of prospects-therefore it is an important acknowledgement for them to be good at work and to make it right.

If this project can prove that young people can learn from it, and also gain experience, wouldn't this be worth supporting? The whole sled dog issue is a challenge where the assistance has to happen on-site. What would be more appropriate, then involving young people from the respective villages where the dogs are kept? They know who keeps the dogs and where they are kept, they might have a neighborly relationship with the dog owners.

NOAH and Robin Hood will take care for the whole fundraising for the pilotproject. All we ask for is your support for contacts with politicians, dog keepers, veterinarians, schools and media.

About feedback we would be very grateful!

With kind regards.

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NOAH

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