

In Greece, in the year 2021, Law 4830/2021 entered into force, published in the Government Gazette, Series A, No. 169, of 18 September 2021.

This Law provides the general framework for the protection and welfare of companion animals, with particular emphasis on dogs and cats.

With regard to companion animals, Law 4830/2021 lays down a series of positive obligations on their owners, as well as on the State and local government authorities.

However, it is of particular interest that it contains provisions which afford protection—at least in the sense of prohibiting abuse—to all animals. These provisions of Law 4830/2021 have a broad scope of application and impose negative obligations on everyone: an obligation not to abuse animals, binding upon private individuals as well as upon the State, public authorities, and local government, accompanied by a strict system of sanctions.

In Article 2 of Law 4830/2021, definitions are provided for the legal terms used for its interpretation and application. Thus, Article 2 provides, among other things, that (last updated: 11.08.2025):

“For the purposes of the present Law, the following definitions shall apply:

1. “Animal”: any living organism that is sentient and moves on land, in the air and at sea, or in any other aquatic ecosystem or wetland.
2. “Welfare”: the good physical and mental condition of the animal in relation to the conditions in which it lives and dies. An animal lives under conditions of welfare if:
 - (a) it has secure access to comfortable, safe, hygienic and suitable accommodation, adapted to its natural way of life,
 - (b) it does not suffer from conditions such as pain, fear and distress, and
 - (c) it is able to express behaviours which are important for its good physical and mental condition.

The rules of animal welfare ensure the following principles:

- i. Freedom from hunger and thirst, with access to food and water, appropriate in quality and quantity.
- ii. Freedom from unnecessary suffering and fatigue, with safe and clean housing and resting accommodation, providing protection from adverse weather conditions.
- iii. Freedom from pain, injury and disease, with appropriate care and veterinary treatment.
- iv. Freedom from fear and distress, through appropriate behaviour and handling.
- v. Freedom to express normal behaviour, through appropriate living and socialisation conditions.

3. “Companion animal”: any animal kept or intended to be kept by humans primarily within their home, for reasons of animal companionship, or listed in Annex I of Regulation (EU) 2016/429 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 9 March 2016 on transmissible animal diseases and amending and repealing certain acts in the area of animal health (L 84). Where provisions of the present Law refer to specific companion animals, such as dogs and cats, these are stated expressly. Assistance dogs, working dogs, as well as therapy animals, are also considered companion animals. Wild fauna species may not be kept as companion animals.

4. “Owned companion animal”: the companion animal that has an owner. The direct offspring of an owned dog or cat shall automatically be considered owned animals, with the owner being the owner of the female parent.
5. “Stray companion animal”: the companion animal that does not have an owner.
6. “Owner”: the natural person who keeps a companion animal, primarily within their home, under their direct supervision and care. This person is also indicated on the animal’s identification document.

[...]

10. “Small companion animal”: the companion animal whose weight does not exceed ten (10) kilograms.
11. “Assistance dog”: the trained or undergoing training guide dog for the blind and the assistance and protection dog for persons with disabilities or illnesses.
12. “Working dog”: the dog under the active guidance of its handler and with an auxiliary role in carrying out the duties or purpose of its handler, which is used for hunting (hunting dog), guarding flocks (shepherd dog), guarding premises (guard dog), the search and rescue dog, the dog detecting poisoned baits, as well as the dog used by the armed forces, the security forces, the Hellenic Coast Guard, and the enforcement authorities of the Independent Authority for Public Revenue (I.A.P.R.) and of the Ministry of Finance.
13. “Therapy animal”: any animal used for therapeutic purposes for the benefit of an individual, in particular an individual with a disability, including physical, sensory, psychiatric, intellectual or other form of mental disability, which has received or is receiving specialised training and carries the certificates required by law.
14. “Offenders’ Register”: the electronic register maintained at the Athens Public Prosecutor’s Office, which is updated under the responsibility of the locally competent public prosecutors and in which those who have an irrevocable criminal conviction for a violation of the provisions concerning the abandonment and abuse of animals are recorded. This Register interoperates with the [National Companion Animal Register] and the registration of the offender in it precludes their registration in the [National Companion Animal Register] as owner or foster carer of an animal or as person responsible for the welfare of an animal on behalf of a legal entity.
15. “Circus”: the temporary outdoor installation, the stage or the tent, in which, for profit-making purposes, music, dance and acrobatic performances or other similar events are held for the entertainment of people.
16. “Variety troupe (varieté)": a group of persons, which, in a permanent or temporary establishment, holds, for profit-making purposes and in alternating sequence, entertainment programmes, performances, amusing short comic theatrical acts, songs and dance of varied content.
17. “Protected species of wild fauna":
 - (a) the mammals, reptiles and amphibians of the species listed in Annex IV of Article 20 of Joint Ministerial Decision No 33318/3028/11.12.1998 by the Ministers of Interior, Public Administration and Decentralisation, National Economy and Finance,

Development, Environment, Spatial Planning and Public Works, Agriculture, Merchant Shipping and Culture (Government Gazette B' 1289), (b) the species of Annex I not included in Annexes II/1 and II/2 of Article 14 of Joint Ministerial Decision No 37338/1807/E.103/1.9.2010 by the Ministers of Finance, Economy, Competitiveness and Shipping, and Environment, Energy and Climate Change (Government Gazette B' 1495), (c) the species listed in Annex I to the Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and contiguous Atlantic area, ratified by Law 5011/2023 (Government Gazette A' 9)."

According to Article 23 of Law 4830/2021, the use of animals (of any species) in shows and performances is, in principle, prohibited. This provision stipulates in particular, among other things, the following (last updated: 11.08.2025):

1. The participation, in any manner and for any purpose, of any animal in a program or performance held in a circus or by a variety troupe is prohibited.
2. The participation, in any manner and for any purpose, of any animal in all types of performances is prohibited, including educational performances. Events involving the participation of animals as part of the observance of folk or local traditions are permitted exclusively if the welfare of the animals is ensured and with the compulsory presence of a veterinarian throughout the duration of the event. The abuse and slaughter of animals in this context is strictly prohibited. [...]. An event involving the participation of an animal or animals shall be authorised by decision of the municipal council of the municipality where the event is to take place. The supervising veterinarian shall draw up a report before the event, which shall be submitted to the municipal council prior to the approval of the event and shall form an integral part of the municipal council's decision. The supervising veterinarian shall draw up a new report after the conclusion of the event, in which it is confirmed that the welfare of the animal or animals that participated in the event was not violated.
[...]
4. The following are excluded from the performances of paragraph 2: (a) displays of equestrian skill and the conduct of equestrian sports, which include show jumping, dressage, and equestrian triathlon; or (b) exhibitions referred to in the second sentence of paragraph 1 of Article 22; or (c) cases of cinematographic films and generally audiovisual educational material, provided the animal is not abused.
5. The breeding, training, and participation of animals in any type of fighting is prohibited. The breeding, export, and use of dogs, cats, equidae, and ferret species (*mustela putorius furo*) for the production of fur, leather, meat, or for the preparation of pharmaceuticals or other substances are also prohibited.
6. The competent authority for the implementation of paragraphs 1, 2, 3 and 4 is the local government authority (Organismos Topikis Autodioikisis) which issues the licence for the operation of the enterprise or the holding of the event, pursuant to Article 81 of Law 3463/2006 (A' 114).
7. In cases where a licence for operation is required for profit-making, entertainment or artistic performances, musical or dramatic or other art, or other similar artistic or entertainment events or programs as referred to in paragraphs 1, 2, 3 and 4, the applicant

for the licence is obliged to submit to the competent licensing authority a solemn declaration under Law 1599/1986 (A' 75) stating that they do not keep animals on their premises for the purpose of using them in any way in the program or event, subject to the exceptions of Article 16.

8. The competent authority of paragraph 6 is entitled to carry out an on-site inspection at the location of the enterprise or the event at any time, before or after the issuance of the licence, in order to ascertain compliance with the present provisions. During the inspection, the competent authority may request the assistance of the police authorities if it deems it necessary. The enterprise is obliged to assist the competent authorities during the inspection. In the event of obstruction of the inspection, the licence for operation shall not be granted or, if it has already been granted, it shall be revoked.

9. The authority of paragraph 6 is responsible for receiving and examining complaints concerning violations of this article. In the event of a complaint, the competent authority is obliged to carry out an immediate on-site inspection no later than the following working day from receipt of the complaint.

10. Lotteries, raffles, and competitions with companion animals as prizes are prohibited.

11. The present article shall apply without prejudice to Article 22, as well as to the special provisions regarding racehorses and horseracing.”

Very important and pioneering is the provision of Article 24 of Law 4830/2021, which prohibits any form of abuse of any animal without exception.

This provision stipulates, among other things, the following (last updated: 11.08.2025):

1. Without prejudice to more specific provisions of European and national legislation, [...] the following are prohibited:

(a) the abuse, ill-treatment and cruel treatment of any species of animal, such as in particular: the drastic and non-iatrogenic restriction of normal movement (indicatively, hobbling), non-permissible training methods, work not envisaged for the species of the animal, unlawful reproduction, the intentional injury causing minor bodily harm; and

(b) the killing and torture of animals, through the intentional infliction of intense physical pain or physical exhaustion dangerous to their health, in particular by poisoning, strangulation, hanging, drowning/suffocation, causing burns, heatstroke, electrocution, frostbite, crushing, mutilation (non-therapeutic), shooting (causing injury or death of the animal), intentional injury (serious or dangerous bodily harm), dog fighting and any kind of animal fighting, bestiality, sexual abuse of an animal by the use of objects for the sadistic gratification of the perpetrator, and the abandonment of newborn animals.

The sterilisation of an animal, as well as any other veterinary act for therapeutic purposes, shall not be considered mutilation.

2. With the exception of cases of cinematographic films and, more generally, audiovisual material of an educational nature, the possession, sale, trade, presentation, as well as the distribution via the internet, of any audiovisual material—such as video or any other form of cinematographic or photographic material—in which any act of violence against an animal is depicted, as well as sexual intercourse between animals or between an animal and a human

being, for the purpose of gain or the sexual gratification of persons watching or participating in such acts, is prohibited.

The above prohibition also includes the case of animal fighting.

3. In the event of injury to an animal in a road traffic accident, the person responsible for the act shall be obliged to immediately notify the competent municipality or the Hellenic Police, in order for the injured animal to be provided with the necessary veterinary care by the competent services of the municipality concerned.”

Law 4830/2021 also provides for a system for the submission and management of complaints concerning animal abuse. In Article 25, it is stipulated, among other things, that (last updated: 11.08.2025):

“1. For the more effective handling of incidents of animal abuse, a digital application and website may be developed within the General Secretariat for Information Systems and Digital Governance (G.S.I.S.D.G., <https://www.gsis.gr/en>), for the reporting of incidents of animal abuse, as well as for any violation of the present Law.

2. Complaints may also be submitted anonymously. When a complaint is anonymous, it shall be investigated only if it contains specific information that provides a sufficient basis for its investigation.”

The above provisions prohibiting the abuse of any species of animal are complemented by the very important and practically effective provisions of Article 33 of Law 4830/2021, according to which (last updated: 11.08.2025):

“1. In consideration of the interests of the animal, the competent public prosecutor shall temporarily or permanently remove the companion animal or animal of another category from the possession of the offender of points (e) and (g) of paragraph 1 of Article 9 and of Article 24, and the animal shall be delivered to a stray animal shelter. The management and care of the animal, for as long as it resides in a stray animal shelter, shall be undertaken by the operator of the shelter. The public prosecutor may prohibit the acquisition of another animal by the offender. Specifically, with regard to point (b) of paragraph 1 of Article 24, the removal shall be permanent. The offender shall be obliged to bear the costs associated with the restoration of the health of the animal, its veterinary care, and its upkeep, as evidenced by supporting documents and certified by the competent municipality. The temporary removal of a companion animal may also be decided, in exceptional circumstances, by the inspection and infringement-certifying bodies referred to in paragraph 6 of Article 3.

2. Without prejudice to stricter provisions, the competent public prosecutor, when acting upon a publication or a complaint, may, with an on-site inspection and the assistance of a veterinarian of the competent regional authority, ascertain the conditions prevailing in any stray companion animal shelter, lodging facility or breeding establishment. If such conditions are not in compliance with the present Law, as well as with the specific provisions governing the operation of the aforementioned facilities, he/she may, by means of an interim order, determine the measures to be taken by the person responsible for the operation of the shelter, lodging facility or breeding establishment, and the time-limit within which compliance must be achieved.”

The obligations and prohibitions laid down by Law 4830/2021 are supplemented by the provision of severe criminal and administrative sanctions.

Thus, Article 34 provides, among other things, for the following criminal sanctions (last updated: 11.08.2025):

2. Offenders of point (e) and of the first sentence of point (g) of paragraph 1 of Article 9, of points (c) and (d) of paragraph 10 of Article 8, of paragraph 4 of Article 22, as well as of point (a) of paragraph 1 of Article 24, shall be punished with imprisonment of at least one (1) year and a monetary penalty of up to three hundred and sixty (360) daily units, the amount of each such unit being set from ten (10) to fifty (50) euros.

Offenders of paragraph 5 of Article 23 and of point (b) of paragraph 1 of Article 24 shall be punished with imprisonment of up to ten (10) years and with a monetary penalty of up to five hundred (500) daily units, the amount of each such unit being set from fifty (50) to one hundred (100) euros.

3. Offenders of Article 23, with the exception of paragraph 5, shall be punished with imprisonment of up to two (2) years and with a monetary penalty of up to three hundred and sixty (360) daily units, the amount of each such unit being set from ten (10) to fifty (50) euros.

[...]

6. In the cases of paragraphs 1 to 5, the infringement confirmation report drawn up by the competent authority shall be forwarded within ten (10) days to the competent municipality for the imposition of the administrative sanctions and fines provided for.

7. In cases of offences under the present Law, any non-profit animal welfare association or animal welfare organisation, operating at local or national level and registered in the Register of Animal Welfare Associations and Organisations of the [National Companion Animal Register], may independently be a civil party in support of the prosecution only, regardless of whether it has suffered property damage. The relevant declaration may be made either during the pre-trial stage or at the hearing, in accordance with Article 84 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (Law 4620/2019, Government Gazette A' 96).

By way of exception, until the Register of Animal Welfare Associations and Organisations of the [National Companion Animal Register] referred to in Article 4 is fully operational and in any case for a period not exceeding six (6) months from the entry into force of the present Law, the declaration in support of the prosecution may be made by any non-profit animal welfare association or organisation operating at local or national level without the requirement of prior registration in the said Register.

The requirement in the first sentence regarding registration in the Register of Animal Welfare Associations and Organisations of the National Companion Animal Register shall not apply to associations and organisations which do not include among their statutory purposes the care and collection of stray companion animals.

8. In the event that the criminal acts referred to in points (a) and (b) of paragraph 1 of Article 24 are committed against protected species of wild fauna as defined in paragraph 29 of Article 2, the penalties of paragraph 2 shall be imposed.

Furthermore, Law 4830/2021 also provides for severe administrative sanctions (fines) for offenders, which, indicatively, amount to:

- €40,000.00 for each animal that is bred, trained or participates in a fight (dogfighting, etc.);
- €50,000.00 for each dog, cat, ferret or equid that is bred, exported or used for the production of fur, leather, meat or for the preparation of pharmaceuticals or other substances; and
- from €5,000.00 to €15,000.00 for each animal, of any species, that is abused or subjected to ill-treatment or cruel treatment.

In the event of the killing or serious torture of an animal, of any species, a fine from €30,000.00 to €50,000.00 is provided for each animal and for each incident.

The detailed list of such administrative sanctions is set out in Article 35 of Law 4830/2021. Moreover, it is stipulated that, in the case of repeated infringement, the fines shall be doubled each time (Article 35, paragraph 3 of Law 4830/2021), and that the revenue from such fines shall accrue to the competent municipality and shall be used exclusively for purposes connected with the aim of Law 4830/2021 (Article 35, paragraph 9 of Law 4830/2021).