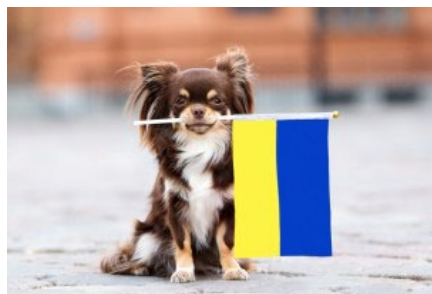


Just Like Its Citizens, Ukraine Pets Are in Dire Straits, too.



By Amy Fernandez

Empathy is inseparable from our sport which defines our lives. Without that fierce love for another species, this whole game falls apart. My point is that when dog people see suffering, especially canine suffering, we basically switch to autopilot. AR propaganda endlessly proclaims that “show breeders don’t do rescue”. Maybe not by their definition, simply because we don’t bother to label basic kindness as cause célèbre or attempt to profit from it. Raise your hand if you happen to be a show breeder who does NOT currently have at least one oddball, misfit dog living with you simply because it needs a good home.

We do this stuff instinctively, which is why the question of the moment is how to help all those poor dogs in Ukraine. The immediacy of this catastrophe is magnified by the fact that so many Americans have working relationships with Ukrainian breeders. From our perspective, it’s personal. For weeks leading up to February 24th, Ukrainian breeders had been frantically trying to relocate their dogs outside the country because they knew what was coming. And it’s been tough. On top of all the travel and shipping complications caused by covid, the CDC has banned most foreign dog importations since last July. (And that federal ruling is solely due to numerous instances of rescue groups importing rabid dogs into the US). The CDC import ban covers almost one hundred countries that are considered high risk for rabies. These countries include Russia, Ukraine and all the neighboring countries. This temporary ban is scheduled to be reevaluated and partially lifted in November, but in the meantime the CDC has issued a temporary waiver in response to this unprecedented wartime crisis. An update recently posted to their website states:

CDC is working to expedite import permit requests for dogs that originate in Ukraine and surrounding countries for persons wishing to import their personally owned pet dogs. Dogs are still required to meet all of CDC’s entry requirements during the suspension.

Okay, this is good to know but getting from there to here is an extremely dicey proposition at the moment. In the prewar scramble, EU countries were taking most of these dogs, but even that wasn’t so easy. The Pet Passport has vastly simplified Customs regulations at most EU borders. But it still entails extensive health and ID requirements—to ensure that diseased animals don’t enter the country.

Up to this point international bureaucracy has made for slow going. On the other hand, in about five minutes the internet was swarming with Ukrainian relief scams offering to collect your charitable donations to save these poor, defenseless pets. It’s a guaranteed hook. We are confronted with 24/7 images of this ongoing devastation including plenty of gruesome pictures of dogs and cats. No HSUS made-for-TV tearjerker will ever compare to the image of that poor dog hopping around the rubble with its leg blown off. So, as much as we want to do something right now, we need to think twice about where we send our donations—because there truly are legitimate groups getting help to where it is needed.

Several national organizations are strongly urging people to “do their homework” prior to opening their wallets. For more information on tools to do this research visit the BBB or Charity Navigator websites. Both have posted pages warning of the myriad Ukraine assistance scams. These and other watchdog groups rate charities according to a series of well-defined, transparent accountability standards.

But for now, America’s purebred tribe has been getting the job done. I’ve previously recounted the multifaceted success story of AKC Reunite. What started out as the dog breeders alternative to overpriced, commercialized microchipping has blossomed into AKC’s finest achievement in recent decades. I’ve said it before; this program does not get nearly enough PR coverage. Their disaster relief program has been on the scene of countless natural disasters around the country, enlisting competent, grassroots support from local dog clubs and AKC resources to help pets caught in all kinds of dreadful situations. Although recent images from Ukraine reaffirm this fact of life, countless disasters have proven that owners are extremely reluctant to abandon their animals under any circumstances. Effective logistical help requires on-the-ground solutions. AKC has had its share of missteps, but it does possess the international reach necessary in this case. They recognize the complexities of this horror show, and they have the advantage of a global platform to get results. AKC Reunite has sent Animal Rescue Poland 1000 microchips—which are required for pets crossing EU borders. They’ve also donated \$25,000 to equivent.org, a charitable vet clinic based in Romania. As such, its focus on mobile vet care has been the vital solution for animals trapped in this warzone.

But that’s not the only high powered purebred group working on this. M&E just announced a \$10,000 donation. It will be split between the Ukrainian organization for homeless pets, Happy Paw, which is coordinates relief for 60 shelters across the country and Four Paws, an international group that is working with shelters in Ukraine, Moldova and Romania to shelter refugee pets and eventually reunite them with owners. Kennel clubs in neighboring countries have also been coordinating shipments of food and supplies for refugee pets and those still in Ukraine. The Ukrainian Kennel Union has posted information on their website to send direct wire transfers via SWIFT to support these relief programs. Their site, at www.uku.com.ua, provides an English translation.

FCI has also mobilized relief efforts on multiple fronts via neighboring kennel clubs. In addition to sending tons of food and supplies directly into Ukraine they are arranging logistical help for dog owners seeking to transport their animals into other FCI countries. Visit www.FCI.be to donate or view their ongoing Ukraine assistance updates. Needless to say, they’ve also suspended Russia’s privileges as an FCI member.

So, think twice before you donate and give your old, wonky dogs an extra treat tonight.



Like 2

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