

JANUARY 2003

Dear sponsors, members and other animal-lovers,

Thank you so very much for everything you contributed to our organisation last year! Our Russian and Latvian colleagues in S:t Petersburg and Riga are very grateful in deed for your support and send their greetings as well as their best wishes for the new year. We continue to concentrate on these two cities (earlier we were also active in Tartu in Estonia). But we are also keeping an eye on what is happening in Moscow and some time in the future we hope to get funds enough to support veterinarians and animal charities even there. It takes time to find new co-workers that we can trust to hundred percent and a very heavy commitment is required to make that kind of connections. Right now, we are unable to make that kind of commitment in addition to our current work, therefore it is the safest and most efficient to continue doing what we have done in the past.

This is what has happened since the last report (some of you will recognise certain things, but we are now also addressing our new sponsors):

S:T PETERSBURG:

Elena Bobrova and her colleagues at "Baltic Animal Care Russia" are still at work as usual in S:t Petersburg. In order to do this we send her 5250 Swedish Crowns each month, to cover her expense, including food to the animals, veterinary cost, medicines and petrol for the car. As you can well understand this is barely enough but at present we cannot afford more and Elena is really doing a lot for that sum of money.

She has, as usual, many homeless animals in her house that she is hoping to find homes for. As she cannot afford to buy all their food she cooks for them, which of course takes hours to so many animals. She makes a lot of stews from different types of grain, to which she adds bones that she receives for free from a factory and fish and offal that she can buy cheap in the markets. For the weak and sick animals, cats and pups she naturally buys the food they need.

Elena has sent us a video tape in which she has included an interview from a Russian news program. She is often seen in programs on the television informing about animal rights as well as being interviewed in the radio and in daily press. In this particular video she talks about the conditions for the laboratory animals at one of the medical universities in S:t Petersburg, "Pavlov's Medical Institute". For almost a year she has driven a campaign to have the people in charge improve the conditions for the animals and as much as possible replace these experiments with alternative methods.

"The animals are all very emaciated as there are no possibilities to feed that many animals regularly. Neither does anyone care to give them any exercise nor even get them some air", says Elena, among other things in the interview. The dogs are captured in the streets of S:t Petersburg and other areas nearby. Most of them are without owners but there are also many that belong to private families and have been caught "by mistake". In addition, it is impossible for the owners to get their "lost" dogs back from the institute! Even when they have seen their dogs with their own eyes on the news on the television or seen them in the

newspaper and have gone there to collect them. In our last report we wrote about Ludmila who saw her stolen collie on television where he lay in a cage. She went there every day for more than 2 weeks and got no help whatsoever.

There is no working animal protection legislation in Russia and the theft of family-owned dogs is not even considered a crime today. Elena is struggling to persuade the legal authorities to improve the law. The election of S:t Petersburg City Council was held December 8, and the party supporting Elena won, luckily enough! She considers this a great progress. Now she and some popularly elected politicians will write a letter to President Putin and stress the great need for a Russian animal rights law.

Elena also takes care of a lot of sick and injured homeless animals that people call her about. She picks them up in her car, which is now reeking (and beyond help by any kind of soap!). But many stories do have a happy end. She lately found a small homeless poodle in a sawmill, guarding a small piece of stale bread laying in front of him. He was very emaciated and his coat was very dirty and matted. Elena took him home to her place and managed to find him a home with a nice family at a big farm where he is loved and cared for.

Luckily Elena is not alone in her work. She has about 15 people that actively help her, 5 of them work just as hard as she does. Some are professional veterinarians, practising lawyers and have different fields of responsibilities like re-homing of homeless animals, information in mass media and in schools or working with the new animal right law legislation. Also, Elena and her colleagues work closely with "Lost Dog", another charity, just as established and hard working in S:t Petersburg.

RIGA:

Astrida Karklina and her "Animal Protection Group" continues to run the animal shelter in Riga which we support with appr. 5000 Swedish Crowns per month. This covers rent, bills for electric power and telephone, veterinary cost and symbolic salaries. The food to the animals is provided for free by some companies. The personnel make an effort to find suitable homes for the dogs and even follow up afterwards by telephone calls or visits.

Presently 30 dogs are staying at the shelter in 14 kennels, in addition to the personnel also offering their own quarters to get place for some extra dogs. Even cats are taken care of, although they are much harder to re-home. Still about 4 or 5 cats per month get new homes.

Most important for Astrida and her colleagues right now is finding enough funds to build a larger and more modern shelter. Preferably with 40 dogs and 30 cats, plus a small kitchen, a veterinary clinic, a room for visitations and one for the personnel (hopefully this time without dogs?). They have already been promised to rent a lot at a modest price for as long time as they want. Now the goal is to find sponsors to help them with the building, a project that probably is going to take some time.

When we talked to Astrida last time they had 27 degrees minus in Riga! But they all continue to struggle as usual. We also got the positive news that "Animal Protection Group", has been commissioned by the local authorities to take over the work to collect the homeless animals in the streets. Earlier this work was carried out by a private business. Back then, the animals

were then captured and killed without any attempts being done to find new homes for them and with very brutal methods causing much unnecessary suffering, fear and pain.

However, Astrida felt somewhat troubled faced with this heavy mission. Considering that the private firm caught 80 dogs and 200 cats per month, she realises that also she and her group will be forced to have many of them put to sleep as it is impossible to find home to so many. At the same time she knows that the animals will at least have a chance first and that they, at worst, will at least be put to death in a way that is as painless and anxiety-free as possible.

In addition, the change of management means that Astrida and the group can keep better informed and have a greater possibility to influence the local politicians. Her goal is to sometime in the near future be able to replace the euthanasia with castration campaigns and other preventive actions. Anyone interested in animal rights know that this is the most effective and humane way to solve the problem.

This mission also means that “Animal Protection Group” will run two animal shelters, their own placed a bit outside the city and the one owned by the town. The 6 persons that work as dog-catchers (in two cars) will be paid a modest sum from the communal dog-tax income, Astrida will organise the work but not ride the cars herself.

“I’m not doing this because I want to”, she says. “But I know that no private firm should take as good care of the animals as we will. Even though we’ll be forced to put some animals to sleep, they are not going to suffer as they should have done otherwise.”

OTHER:

As you already know this is a very small association, we are now only 137 members of which 82 are sponsors. Our members pay a fee of 150 Swedish Crowns per year and the sponsors become automatically members and support us with approximately 100 Swedish Crowns per month. Besides this, in addition we have also received separate donations from 42 people.

During the first 9 months of 2002 we succeeded for the first time in several years to break even. This was because we, among other things, received more separate donations than before and that we have kept the compensation to our project-countries at a steady level. Still, we do not have the means to increase our help to S:t Petersburg and Riga as we have no reserves. Earlier we compensated the Russian group in US dollars but the fall of that currency caused our Swedish Crown’s value to decrease even more, resulting in an economic loss in the end. We hope to be able to create a buffer again in the future, preventing us from being vulnerable if there comes a time when money is desperately needed.

Every month we support our Russian and Latvian colleagues with approximately 10000 Swedish Crowns. This monthly support was planned to be covered by sponsor-money which this last year amounted to about 8.500 per month. Therefore we are still very much dependent on receiving separate donations. During this year we will make an effort to get more sponsors in order to continue with the long-range work. We would appreciate very much if you would like to help us with this, e.g. by giving the additional contributing form you receive in the mail from us, to a friend.

All of us within the association in Sweden work on a voluntary basis. There are no costs for an office space, we only have a post office box address. Also, our administrative expenses are low, they consist mainly of the printing and postage of the reports that we send to you every 3:rd or 4:th month.

However, in the beginning of this year we plan to produce an information brochure in four colours. The cost will be about 10000 Swedish Crowns for 5000 brochures. This is well invested money as it gives us a great opportunity to reach out to more interested people and increase the number of sponsors. Of course we will send one to you all when they are done.

In the middle of May we will be holding the annual meeting, time and place will be posted in the next report. By then, our annual statement of account will also have been finished and examined by independent authorised auditors. Please contact us if you want us to send you one.

We still need help from more people that are willing to work for us in this non-profit association. If you feel that you want to contribute and do something meaningful in your spare time, please contact us. You are very welcome into our active little group.

You will hear from us again when the next report is ready.

Sincerely yours,

Lotta Svedberg

Chairman

Djurskydd i Östeuropa

Box 34171

100 26 STOCKHOLM

Tel: 08 99 07 40

Postal giro nr: 10 04 56-3

E-mailaddress: kontakt@djurskyddiosteuropa.org.se