

# Animals in Finland

*Keeping animals in Finnish society*

## **A pet is a member of the family in Finland**

In Finland, most dogs and cats live indoors as family members, and pets are cared for very carefully. The most common pets in Finland are cats, dogs and rabbits.



## **The law protects animals**

**F**inland has comprehensive animal welfare legislation. The legislation is enforced, and if animals are mistreated, the matter is addressed.

The law applies to all animals. The animal welfare legislation is currently being reformed. The goal is that the new law would protect animals not only from unnecessary pain and suffering but also from harm to their welfare. The purpose of the law is also to increase the respect for and good treatment of animals.

According to the law, the welfare of an animal must be ensured at least once a day. That is why, for example, a cat, a dog, a bird or even an aquarium fish must not be left unattended for more than a day.

The law obliges that a sick animal be cared for. In addition, the law stipulates that if an animal cannot be cared for and is suffering, it must be euthanised appropriately. Not just anyone can euthanise an animal, but care must be taken that the animal does not have to suffer when it is killed. The law also states by whom and in what way an animal can be killed.

### ***An animal must be allowed to be an animal***

The law defines what kind of space pets can be kept in. For example, a dog or a cat may only be kept in a cage temporarily. Even a dog on a

chain or in a yard enclosure must be allowed to move around outside. .

The legislation also applies to animals kept for food production. These animals also need to be able to meet their species-typical behavioural needs. There are different regulations for keeping different species of animals, which take into account the needs of that particular species.

In addition, the future legislation specifies that an animal must be able to meet its essential species-typical behavioural needs. Species-typical behavioural needs mean that the animal is able to carry out the kind of natural behaviour that is necessary for its welfare. For example, a bird must be allowed to fly and flit from one perch to another, and a dog must be allowed outside every day.



A pet is not a child's toy; an adult is always ultimately responsible for the pet and its care.



## **All animals are equal**

**ALL ANIMALS** have intrinsic value. Intrinsic value means that an animal is valuable in itself, and that all animals are equally valuable. The value is not related to how an animal benefits humans. An animal's intelligence, size or appearance does not affect its value. An animal's life must be respected as such.

# An animal in distress must be helped

## If you suspect that an animal needs help, take action.

It is in all of our interests that you report your concern, even if you are not sure whether the law is being broken. It is up to the animal welfare authority to decide whether the report gives grounds for action.

## If you suspect that an animal's welfare is at risk, contact the animal welfare authorities.

Animal welfare authorities include, for example, municipal **supervising veterinarians** and **the police**.



**Supervising veterinarian**

You can find the contact information of supervising veterinarians by searching for “eläinsuojelu” or “eläinlääkäri” on the website of the city/municipality or by calling the municipality’s switchboard.



**The police**

You can find the contact information of the police on the website: [www.poliisi.fi/en](http://www.poliisi.fi/en).

**If the situation requires immediate intervention, call the emergency number 112.**

Call the emergency number 112 if the situation requires immediate intervention. Such situations include, for example, if

- an animal is facing violence;
- an animal is in trouble in a place from where it cannot get out; or
- public safety is significantly endangered, such as in a collision with an elk.



**If you do not know what to do, ask for advice from**

- a SEY animal protection counsellor  
→ [seyn.fi/elainsuojeluneuvojat](https://seyn.fi/elainsuojeluneuvojat);
- the local animal welfare association  
→ [seyn.fi/jasenyhdistykset](https://seyn.fi/jasenyhdistykset); or
- our helpline  
→ 09 3158 6580 mon-fri 10–18

You can contact an animal protection counsellor, the associations or the helpline anonymously.



**IF YOU COME ACROSS** an animal that is sick, injured or otherwise in need of help, you must help the animal.

## What is a puppy mill?

A puppy mill refers to the regular breeding of animals for sale, where the needs of the animals are neglected in order to maximize financial profit. In a puppy mill, the animals are not well cared for and are kept in excessively cramped conditions, for example. The animals are often sick. There are puppy mills both in Finland and abroad.



## Getting a pet requires consideration

**B**efore getting an animal, you must obtain reliable information about the species of animal you are interested in. It is important to know whether the animal is a herd animal or a solitary animal and whether it is diurnal or nocturnal, for example.

In Finland, dogs and cats cannot be bought from pet shops. When getting a dog, a cat or any other pet, attention must be paid to not supporting puppy mills.

For example, online sites are not a good place to purchase an animal. Many animals bought from online sites are not in good health. One good way to get a pet is to offer a home to a homeless animal. You can look for a new family member through, for example, animal welfare associations or organisations that help homeless animals.

Remember that all dogs living in Finland must be registered in the dog register.

### ***Before getting an animal:***

- Obtain information about the species of animal and their needs.
- Find out where you can get the pet you want.
- Go see the animal and make sure it has been raised in good conditions.
- Get everything you need for the animal before the animal arrives at your home.
- Never buy an animal caught from the wild.

# Finland is free from many infectious diseases

**M**any infectious diseases transmitted from animals to humans that are found in several other countries are not found in Finland. If necessary, the Finnish border authorities also monitor that pets have the appropriate vaccination protection for entering the country.

In order to prevent diseases from spreading in the future, it is important that pets are vaccinated regularly. Vaccinations are also needed against diseases that can be transmitted from one animal to another. For example, parvovirus is often fatal for dogs and can lead to the animal's death.

If you bring a dog, a cat or a ferret to Finland from abroad, the animal must have been vaccinated against rabies, among other things. Dogs coming to Finland are also required to be treated with Echinococcus tapeworm medication.

In addition to vaccinations, dogs and cats should be regularly dewormed, if necessary. Deworming, i.e. parasite removal, helps to prevent the harms caused by parasitic infections. You should discuss the need for deworming with a veterinarian.

## ***A sick pet must be cared for***

If an animal is sick, it must be taken to a veterinarian. It is not always easy to notice when a pet is sick because the animal often tries to hide the signs of illness.

### **A pet may be sick if it:**

- sits in a hunched position;
- has discharge coming from its eyes or nostrils or is coughing;
- does not move normally;
- bites or is angry;
- loses weight or does not eat;
- has diarrhoea or vomits;
- scratches or licks itself; or
- is drinking more than before.

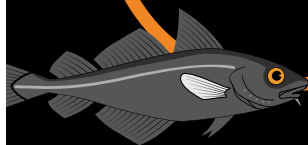
An old pet often needs special care. Giving up a beloved pet can be difficult and sad.



# An animal must be treated and trained well

## **Fish feel pain too.**

That is why fish have to also be cared for, and you cannot leave them unattended while on a holiday trip, for example. The pain and stress of the fish must also be considered when fishing.



## **The size of an animal does not affect how the animal experiences the world.**

When handling all animals, care must be taken not to accidentally cause suffering or pain to the animal.



## **If you encounter difficulties in training an animal, you should ask an animal trainer for help.**

A good animal trainer trains by rewarding, never by forcing or punishing, such as hitting or tugging on the leash.

## **An animal learns most easily when an action is repeated in the same way and the reward is pleasing to the animal.**

Most animals learn and get used to new things best when young. You should start teaching a dog or a cat as soon as the puppy or kitten has moved home.



## **SEY works for the benefit of animals**

This guide was produced by SEY Animal Welfare Finland. SEY is the largest animal welfare organisation and animal protection expert in Finland. SEY has been at the forefront of Finnish animal welfare for over a hundred years.

SEY strives to prevent animal welfare problems and help animals in need. Animal protection work is carried out by around 40 member associations, 80 animal protection counsellors and 1,000 other volunteers.

**SEY**  
SUOMEN ELÄINSUOJELU