



STATE INSTITUTE FOR
NATURE PROTECTION

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Zagreb, 19 February 2010.

**Ministry of Justice
Retsudvalget
Justitsministeriet
Slotholmsgade 10
1246 Copenhagen**

**Justitsministeriets Udvalg om farlige hunde
Justitsministeriet
Slotholmsgade 10
1246 Copenhagen**

To who may be concerned

Subject: Regulation of Act regarding prevention of dangerous dog attacks – facts and official opinion

Dear Sir/Madam,

The State Institute for Nature Protection (SINP) is an institution centrally responsible for specialized nature protection activities in Croatia. It performs a number of activities with the aim to ensure the maintenance and enhancement of nature conservation in Croatia in the long run by high quality expertise work.

Last month we received warning letter from KHKG -Danish Kennel klub with notification that the subcommittee under Danish Ministry of Justice produced a preliminary report with recommendations to the Danish parliament for including the *Tornjak dog* on the list of dog breeds marked as aggressive and banned.

Tornjak is the Croatian breed of a mountain dog, the first written traces of which lead us back to the manuscripts of the Croatian Catholic Church, and Petar Horvat, the bishop of Đakovo (13th century). They have been raised for livestock-breeding in these areas for centuries, as they are better adapted to the natural conditions of our country than any other shepherd dog, and specially inclined to the life near the herd. Today, they are modern thoroughbred offspring's of a very old kind of livestock guarding dogs. Main characteristic of *Tornjak* are: very stabile, sociable, and easily trained.

Due to their physical features and behaviour, *Tornjaks* are equal competitors to large carnivores. Namely, they constantly inspect and mark areas of daily movement and thus create a protected territory to which predators enter only in special conditions. In such cases, *Tornjak* firstly alarms people, but if necessary he chases away the intruders.

Training of *Tornjak* as a good livestock guarding dog starts between the age of 7 weeks and three months, in condition which will prepare him for the future role.

These facts were the main reason why State Institute for Nature Protection decided to donate the *Tornjak* dogs to livestock breeders in the area of wolf presence.

State Institute for Nature Protection implemented the Project "*Conservation and Management of Wolves in Croatia (2002 – 2005)*" supported from the European Commission's *LIFE – Third Countries* fund. The main objective of the project was to establish a mechanism for long-term conservation of wolves and make their co-habitation with people as harmonious as possible. Five basic activities were: institutional strengthening, monitoring of wolf population and management activities, damage mitigation, education and information and strengthening participation of stakeholder groups in decision-making. All results are available on web site www.life-vuk.hr

Damage mitigation activities included donation of *Tornjak* dogs and electrical fences to livestock breeders. Although the Project was finished by the end of the 2005, State Institute still runs all activities including donation program.

Accordingly, "Wolf Management Plan in Croatia" adopted by Ministry of Culture in December 2004, stipulates donation programme as one of the management activities necessary to ensure existence of wolf population in as harmonious as possible co-existence with humans.

Finally, we want to emphasise following results:

Until the end of the 2009 though donations programme over 200 *Tornjak* puppies were donated to livestock breeders. These dogs proved to be highly efficient, especially those older, because no new damages happened to the livestock not only of the breeders donated, but also of those living in the immediate neighbourhood. The dogs functioned successfully by warning the breeders of the presence of wolves and other animals. The breeders are very satisfied with the dogs and consequently the number of requests for new donations has considerably increased. There is no attack or signs of aggressive behaviour toward humans.

With respect toward different opinions there is possibility to find aggressive behaviour in all kind of different breeds, even in "toy" dogs if they are treated in the wrong way. We cannot describe all large guardian dogs with the same behaviour characteristic. Some of them are really dog for individuals and large open spaces (mountains) with low density of human presence. But, to describe the *Tornjak* dogs as an attack dog and to ban it and made illegal is contradictory to proven results of their performance. After all, the main reason why SINP has chosen them for donation program is their stabile character and sociability.

We hope that our explanation and results will assist you to make a sound decision regarding *Tornjak* breed.

Yours sincerely,

DIRECTOR
Davorin Marković

