



Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri

NATIONAL BIOETHICS COMMITTEE

CAUDECTOMY AND CONCHECTOMY

(5th May 2006)

abstract

The document, which tackles the issue of the lawfulness of tail docking - caudectomy – and ear cropping - conchectomy - in some breeds of dogs, asserts first of all that animals deserve care and respect by man and condemns any form of cruelty towards animal life as bioethically unacceptable. It also stresses that any possible subordination of the interests of animals to those of human beings must never be presumed, but always undergo rational reasoning.

The opinion highlights how, in the name of the bioethical principle against acts of cruelty, caudectomy and conchectomy, carried out for purely aesthetic reasons, appear ethically non-admissible insofar as they can be considered harmful to dogs in the real sense of the word. In some cases these operations are justified by the need to correct specific defects or pathologies in typical breeds of dogs. Caudectomy in particular is justified by the need to prevent the risk of accidents, quite frequent with the elderly and small children, caused by the extremely soft strong tails of the molossoids. Nevertheless, the analysis of these quite exceptional cases, in which caudectomy and conchectomy could be morally justified, the opinion of a veterinary surgeon is always called for. The vet, by virtue of his medical competence, works to foster a relationship of responsible collaboration between man and animal and ensures the respect of the laws that aim at protecting the wellbeing of the latter.

There is then the question of sterilisation – considered a mutilation that is even more serious than caudectomy and conchectomy – with respect to which the greatest attention is needed for each single animal before it is carried out. This in fact can be justified in particular circumstances like for example stray dogs, sometimes posing a threat to humans.

In support of its positions, the opinion refers to the European Convention for the protection of pet animals (1987).