

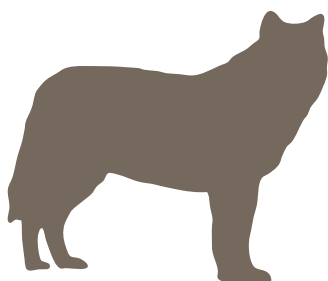
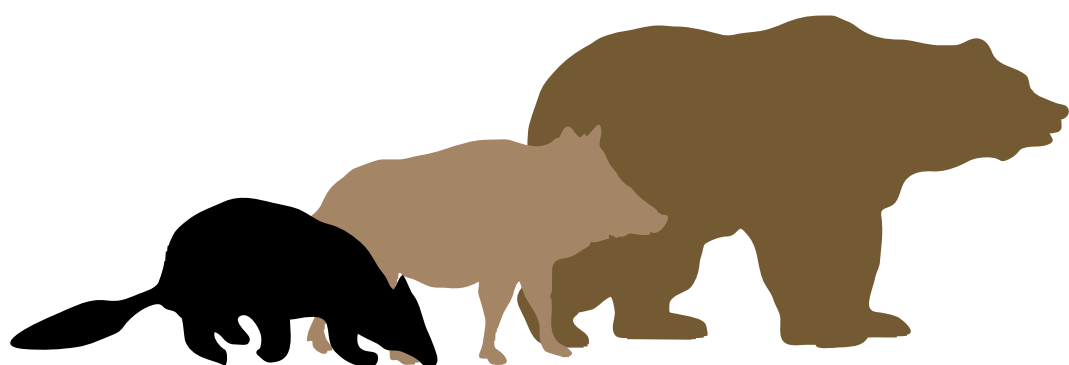
# The baiting of wild animals in Russia



A One Voice exposé of hunting dog training stations

REPORT

November  
2013



# FOREWORD

## THE BEAR, THE SYMBOL OF RUSSIA?

You could be surprised if the answer to this question were «yes», given how bears in Russia seem to have become symbolic of how humans trample over Nature. This is what is revealed by this terrifying report, which shows how Europe's former king of the animals is caged, chained up, abused and humiliated.

Is Dmitri Medvedev referring to this animal which has had its rights taken away when he speaks of bears as *a subject which unites Russians and is understood by most of them*? Is it this humiliated being which symbolises the union of the Russian people around its image? Is this what appears on Olympic Games logos and mascots?

Of course not. The bear, as the symbol of Russia, is not the real animal, but a propaganda and marketing image based on timeless links between the Russian people and the bear population.

Indeed, bears are very dear to Russians. Russians share the same physical habitat as these animals and identify with their strength and their bravery, to such an extent that they see bears as their very own ancestors, still worshipped in certain ethnic groups in western Siberia. They feel that that killing a bear is nothing to be proud of.

The respect engendered by bears can be seen in the taboo surrounding its name. The term *medved'* which refers to all bears is a metaphor that means «honey eater». The Yakuts still refer to the bear as Great Grandfather or the Old man, or even the affectionate diminutive *Batiuchka*, Little Father\*.

Until the XII<sup>th</sup>-XIII<sup>th</sup> centuries, the bear was considered across Europe as the king of the animals \*\*. In Russia, the bear was called the Tsar of the forest whose strength was envied by warriors.

Measuring yourself against a bear was the very peak of bravery. At this period, humans did not use rifles and the bear was not considered as a prey but an adversary, who was admired and respected.

The enthusiasm with which the Russians adopted the jibe of «the bear» which the British started using in the XVII<sup>th</sup> century to describe their country and which is now used by all of Russia's neighbours shows how they have always identified with this animal. And yet, at the beginning there was nothing positive about this name, which referred not to the bear's strength but to its legendary gluttony. The British referred to the «greed» of the Rus-

sian empire's expansion. But if they chose this animal in particular, it was certainly due to the huge bear population in Russia.

As for the Russians themselves, they could not fail to be flattered by being given a name like this!

The bear, this mysterious creature of the forest, which is so close, both physically and in the collective consciousness; so big, so strong, so brave...

How can they accept that the real animal is now hunted, put on show and abused?

How can they stand this creature that symbolises their country being turned into a joke in circus after being tortured in training, as told by Deriabkine, a former bear trainer who is now sorry for what he has done. How can they sell off this symbol by offering it as prey to hunters from around the world?

Because the offences committed against bears in dog training camps are a new step in the exploitation of bears for commercial purposes.

This legal barbarism is not worthy of the image of Russia that bears reflect. Are the Russians not abandoning part of their soul here? Is this not happens when they destroy their heritage?

Nature has already given a warning with the threat of extinction for polar bears. True, measures have been taken, but at the rate at which brown bears are being destroyed, it is probable that future generations will face the same threat.

And perhaps they will face an even bigger threat, that of the disappearance of the natural environment. Because the bear, the host and king of the Russian forests, is also the symbol of wild, untameable and free world, which is home to wild boar, badgers and all creatures that are paying for man's instinct to destroy.

For now, as long as these shameful practices exist, the bear symbolises the way mankind is vandalising Nature.

The Russians must demand that the bear is given back its full dignity... The purpose of this report is to make people realise just how much its dignity has been stripped from it.

(\*) J.-D. Lajoux, *L'homme et l'ours*, 1996.

(\*\*) *The Bear: History of a Fallen King*, 2007



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# Summary

There can be no greater contrast to the 21<sup>st</sup> century images of Olympic torch bearing cosmonauts that the world will see in November in advance of the Sotchi Winter Games, than those witnessed by One Voice investigators of wild animals being set upon by dogs in Russian hunting dog training stations in encounters that should belong only to medieval history.

A variety of wild animals are used in these stations to train and test hunting dogs, including badgers, bears, boars, foxes, marten and raccoon dogs. Taken from the wild, confined in cages, deprived of everything that would make life worth living, they are penned or chained to provide living targets for the assessment of the instincts and abilities of hunting dogs.

One Voice investigators visited four hunting dog training stations and found issues of serious animal welfare concern in each location. They saw bears, badgers and boars that were suffering because of the conditions in which they were kept and because of the attacks of dogs to which they were exposed. In Russia these events are described as field trials or 'tests'. In many other parts of the world they would be described as animal baiting.

There are reports ranging from dozens to hundreds of these establishments across Russia<sup>1</sup>. They are legal. Hunting and dog breeding associations sanction the training and testing of hunting dogs on captive wild animals<sup>2</sup>. Hunting dog training stations are advertised on roads, in newspapers, in magazines and on websites<sup>3</sup>. They are promoted as a holiday destination for the whole family when hunting is out of season<sup>4</sup> and as a means for owners to see how their dogs react in different situations and to teach them how to treat game animals and learn obedience<sup>5</sup>. There are organised regional, interregional and national championships<sup>6</sup>. Dogs that do not perform satisfactorily in field trials are not issued with pedigree documents valid for breeding<sup>7</sup>.

In the field trials judges assess dogs on how they track, find, bring and hold their target to bay. Aggressiveness is rewarded, for example, a dog does well in terms of points for biting hard at a bear's thighs, heels and rear but loses points for retreating from a counter attack<sup>8</sup>. With a typical hunting dog 'test' lasting ten minutes, and

with many dogs a day being evaluated, a wild animal may be used as a target over and over again.

The entry fee for a ten-minute test is 200 - 400 rubles, about 5 - 10 euros<sup>9</sup>. It's a highly affordable 'sport' with the real cost being paid in pain and suffering by Russia's wild animals.

The complete and utter disregard of the nature and needs of wild animals revealed during One Voice's investigation into Russia's hunting dog training stations is out of step with international understanding of the importance of wildlife protection and of animal welfare.

The past thirty years have seen tremendous advances in our understanding of animals not only through scientific discovery but also through cameras that have brought the lives of wild animals such as bears, badgers and foxes into homes around the world.

Animal welfare science has confirmed that animals are sentient beings, that is to say, individuals capable of experiencing a range of feelings, sensation and emotions including pain, fear, pleasure and joy. In recognition of increased understanding of the importance of animal welfare 178 countries, including Russia, have approved guiding principles for animal welfare established by the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) that include the statement "the use of animals carries with it an ethical responsibility to ensure the welfare of such animals to the greatest extent practicable"<sup>10</sup>.

Many countries have introduced policies and legislation to prevent animal suffering and to promote animal welfare. Bear and badger baiting, baiting of other animals, dog fighting and cock fighting are all examples of unacceptable harms that many countries no longer permit.

One Voice's aspiration is that this report will raise awareness of the need for Russia to turn its attention to protecting its wild animals from practices akin to bear and badger baiting that have been long outlawed in many countries.

# Introduction

Baltic Animal Care, an organisation based in St Petersburg, alerted one Voice to the plight of wild animals in hunting dog training stations. The activities described amounted to the baiting of wild animals by dogs and One Voice was dismayed to learn that such cruelty to animals was legal. An investigation was decided upon in the hope that international exposure might assist moves to win greater protection for animals in Russia.

As the bear is the national symbol of Russia, and is a symbol for the 2014 Olympic Winter Games, One Voice decided to focus its investigation into hunting dog training stations with bears. Researchers visited four regions of Russia, finding seven bears in four hunt dog training stations. They took photographs and video footage of Laika dogs being 'tested' on some of these bears and interviewed hunting station workers, judges and experts. The investigators also documented one event involving Laika dogs and badgers and one event involving Laika dogs and boars.

The training, field trials and competitions held in Russia's hunting dog training stations take place with the support of various authorities, for example, city and regional governments, cynological and hunting organisations <sup>11</sup>. They are organised to determine the hunting instincts and abilities of a number of different hunting dogs. The events are meant to replicate hunting and involve the dogs being tested, either individually or in pairs, against wild animals. The dogs receive points for a number of components including scenting, tracking, barking, aggression, courage, rigour in the work, skills and dexterity.

To receive pedigree documents valid for breeding dog owners must ensure that their dogs perform satisfactorily in field trials on a variety of wild animals. Russian dog experts describe high class breeding quality dogs as including those dogs, which "have passed field trials conducted under supervision of three certified experts and awarded certificates for best performance" <sup>12</sup>.

There are varying reports of the numbers of hunting dog training stations in Russia ranging from hundreds <sup>13</sup> to dozens <sup>14</sup>. A wide range of wild animals are used including brown bears, boars, badgers, foxes, martens, raccoons, raccoon dogs and squirrels. The animals are caught from the wild, although bears may also be purchased from circuses and zoos or from Internet advertisements <sup>15</sup>.

This report is aimed at opening the doors of Russia's hunting dog training stations to the world. It presents the findings of One Voice's investigation that focussed on the testing of Laikas on bears, explores the welfare of bears and other animals seen in the hunting dog training stations and includes information about hunting in Russia, the history of field trials and their links to pedigree breeding status.

# Hunting in Russia

There are said to be some 250 species of animal hunted in Russia and a reported 2.8 million Russian hunters of whom 1.8 million are members of military or civil hunting societies and the Russian Union of Hunters and Fishermen <sup>16</sup>. The other million are individuals, who have state-issued hunting licenses or permits <sup>17</sup>. 30,000 of the 2.8 million hunters are reported to be professional hunters making a living from hunting for fur and meat <sup>18</sup>.

The vast wilderness of Russia and the huge range of species attract hunters from around the world. Internet searches reveal many companies offering to organise all kinds of hunts, including bear hunts.

## Russia's brown bears

It is estimated that the range of brown bears covers around 70 per cent of the Russian Federation, or around 12 million km<sup>2</sup> <sup>19</sup>. In ancient times bears were revered as masters of the forest and adopted as symbols by kings because of their strength and courage <sup>20</sup>. As we know they were also adopted as a symbol for Russia. In Russia as in the rest of the world the animals have played an important role in history and folklore. As historian Michel Pastoreau pointed out in his history of bears: "Humans and bears have always been inseparable, united by a kinship that gradually moved from nature to culture, and they have remained so down to the present" <sup>21</sup>. In recent years brown bears have appeared as Russia's Olympic symbols <sup>22</sup>.

Hunted to extinction in some European countries, endangered in others, brown bears are protected under the Bern Convention, to which Russia is not a party, and are listed on Appendix II of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). The hunting of brown bears is permitted in the Russian Federation under licence, and is not believed to put the species at risk <sup>23</sup>. Some estimates put the Russian brown bear population as high as 160,000. Lower estimates of between 100 to 125,000 <sup>24</sup> and 130,000 have also been given <sup>25</sup>. In recent years some 10,000 brown bears have been hunted annually <sup>26</sup>.



## Bear hunting

Bear hunting dates back to ancient times with the animals being sought after for many purposes. In Siberia, for example, their skin was used for mattresses, caps, gloves, blankets and collars for sled dogs, their fat and meat were eaten, their intestines used to make windowpanes and their shoulder blades provided sickles for cutting grass <sup>27</sup>.

Methods of bear hunting advertised currently in Russia include stalking, shooting from high stands along oat and barley fields and hunting with dogs <sup>28</sup>. Den hunting was a traditional method but in 2011 it was effectively outlawed following a long campaign focussing on the cruelty of waking hibernating bears and killing them, sometimes leaving orphaned bear cubs. The 2011 new Rules of the Hunt exclude the winter season when bears are hibernating in their dens and make it illegal to hunt bears that are less than one year old and females with cubs under one year <sup>29</sup>. However, in the vast Russian wilderness it is difficult to enforce wildlife protection laws, and One Voice investigators reported people at hunting dog training stations mentioning winter den hunting as a means of obtaining bears.



The classic method of hunting bears with dogs has been described as “simple”: “The hounds are taken to good bear country, and when they find a fresh trail, they are let loose to chase the bear. The hunters follow. When the bear is brought to bay – usually against a fallen tree, in thick brush, or by an upturned stump or rocky outcrop – he stands his ground and fights off the hounds, frequently mauling or killing some of them, until the hunters close in, from upwind, to take a shot <sup>30</sup>.”

A reference book ‘Hunting Laika Breeds of Russia’ explains that to bay a bear correctly a Laika should be agile, well-coordinated and aggressive as well as having quick reactions. It should threaten to attack the bear, by running around it, biting it on its flanks and on its rear so that it avoids counterattacking front claw strikes and bites. This behaviour is aimed at keeping the bear from running until the hunter arrives to kill it. The author Vladimir Beregovoy reports: “A pair of mature bear-aggressive Laikas does the best job, because two dogs coordinate their action helping each other by attacking the bear from opposite directions and preventing its escape <sup>31</sup>”.



## Badger hunting

Badgers have long been hunted in Russia for meat and fat. Hunters consider them to be “a formidable and dangerous opponent” for a dog requiring “a powerful, bold and vicious Laika” <sup>32</sup>.

The method described to hunt badgers in Russian hunting references involves using dogs to track them at night when they leave their burrows. The dog finds the badger and attacks to keep it in place until the hunter arrives. The hunter is advised to rush upon hearing the dog barking, as the badger will defend itself, attacking the dog and inflicting serious injuries <sup>33</sup>. On arrival the hunter is advised not to rush to shoot as the animals will be fighting. It is suggested that rather than shooting and possibly hitting the dog that a hunter might hit the badger with a stick on the nose and the ear before stabbing it with a hunting knife. <sup>34</sup>

## Boar hunting

Dogs have been used to hunt boar for many centuries around the world. The danger these animals represent to hunter and dog alike is recognised in a Russian proverb: “If you go after a bear, take some straw; if you go after a wild boar drag a coffin with you <sup>35</sup>.”

A boar is armed with tusks comprising upper canines that curve out and upwards. The animals’ lower canines rub against the upper canines and in so doing are kept as sharp as razors. A boar with tusks can “stab, rip and cut with such force and skill” that if struck no animal can “withstand or remain unharmed <sup>36</sup>.”

When hunting boar the role of the dogs is to track, find and bring the animal to bay, cornering it so that the hunter can catch up to make the kill. Hunting accounts advise that it is important for the dog to bite the boar on its ears, thighs and sides <sup>37</sup>. In field trials a boar is bayed by attacks from the front and on its flanks <sup>38</sup>.



# Laikas



Laikas originate from aboriginal dogs and were used historically for hunting and as watchdogs<sup>39</sup>. In Russian the word 'Laika' originates from the verb 'layat' meaning to bark and literally means a dog that barks. There are four established Russian breeds, the Karelo-Finnish, the Russo-European Laika, the Western Siberian Laika and the East Siberian Laika<sup>40</sup>. The latter three are listed as standard breeds with the Federation Cynologique Internationale (FCI), an international federation of kennel clubs<sup>41</sup>. The Karelo-Finnish Laika is a close relative of the Finnish Spitz and in 2006 the breeds were merged into a single breed.

The Karelo-Finnish is the smallest of the Laikas, the Russo-European is medium size, the Western Siberian is medium to large size and the East Siberian is the largest Laika<sup>42</sup>. All are described as being suitable to hunt a wide variety of animals<sup>43</sup>. A Laika expert advises that the dogs help hunters by bringing animals to bay: "Like wild canids, Laikas use their natural wisdom and agility using dash-in-dash-out tactics dealing with big and aggressive animals. During this kind of battle, the dog is keeping the pressure on by biting hard at every opportunity while avoiding being bit or caught. ... A major task of a Laika is to keep a big and dangerous animal from running away and/or hiding and thus, facilitate a chance for a hunter to come up for a sure shot<sup>44</sup>."

In order to receive pedigree documents valid for breeding Laika and other hunting dog owners in Russia must ensure their dogs perform to a satisfactory standard in required field trials<sup>45</sup>. Laikas can be assessed for classification in four breeding classes that require certificates for hunting tests, including on captured bears<sup>46</sup>. The four classes are described in an article by on the website of the Russian branch of the International Society for the Preservation of Primitive Aboriginal Dogs (R-PADS) as follows:

1. Class Elite and Great Gold Medal, which requires amongst other elements, two certificates for single dog hunting test; one certificate of II degree for furbearing game, hoofed game and birds; one certificate for trials with captured bear, duck retrieving and blood tracking.
2. First Pedigree Class and Minor Gold Medal, which requires amongst other elements one certificate of II degree for furbearing game in single dog hunting test and for hoofed game, grouse and captured bear; or two certificates of III degree, one of which is for the same game in single dog hunting test; certificate of III degree for captive bear hunted in a pair.
3. Second Pedigree Class and Great Silver Medal, which requires amongst other elements one certificate of any degree in single dog hunting test or two certificates of III degree hunted in a pair for wild boar, hunted in a pair for bear and blood tracking.

4. Third Pedigree Class and Minor Silver Medal, which requires amongst other elements one certificate of III degree for wild boar hunted in a pair, bear hunted in a pair; or any certificate for blood tracking.

## Training Laika to hunt

Some Laika experts advise that the dogs do not need to be trained to hunt as they are natural, eager hunters. They believe it is sufficient for a hunter to spend time with the dogs walking with them so they become familiar with different kinds of habitat and terrain <sup>47</sup>.

One hunting reference book refers to a method to train dogs on bears that took place “in earlier years” <sup>48</sup>. The method recounted involved setting a trap to catch and hold a bear by one of its front paws. The hunter would then approach the trapped bear with his dog on a leash, shoot the bear in its pelvis or lower back to immobilise its legs before releasing the dog, which would then attack and bite the bear’s behind. The report states, “with a broken back, and holding his paw in a trap, the bear was safe”. The hunter would finish off the bear once he noticed his dog becoming ‘weak’. After having this experience on two or three trapped bears, the dog’s training was ‘done’.

It has been reported that individual Laikas have different attitudes towards bears. Some may be fearful, others indifferent or aggressive. A report of field trials held by the Russian Game Society involving Laika on captured bears advises that 15 – 20% of the dogs were judged to be relatively aggressive as they harassed the bear by barking from short distances of 2 – 3 metres away. As a result they were deemed to be useful for hunting and locating bear dens. Only a small percentage of the dogs (2 – 3%) were judged to be more aggressive because they bit the bear while attacking <sup>49</sup>.



## Brief history of field trials

Reports of field trials of Russian hunting dogs on bears date back to the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century <sup>50</sup>. In 1927 the first rules for scoring a test of dogs on bear were developed comprising a 40-point assessment including 10 points for ‘anger’ and 10 points for the ‘manner and tactics of the attack’ <sup>51</sup>.

During the 1930s a 100-point system for a number of different species was developed including specific rules for various hunting dog breeds tested on a variety of game species, for example, bear, boar, ermine, sable. The rules also established three degrees of Diploma with the first degree being awarded for a dog achieving at least 80 out of 100 points, the second degree for not less than 70 points and the third degree for achieving at least 60 points.

Currently field tests and competitions are held in specially designated areas of hunting grounds or in stations for tests on captured animals. Dogs are allowed to compete from the age of 8 months to 10 years of age and there are different rules for different species of dog on different types of game <sup>52</sup>. Sick dogs are not allowed to compete and dogs must have a veterinary certificate that includes an up-to-date vaccination against rabies. There is no limit on the number of tests a dog can enter in a year but a second examination on the tests of the same type must not be earlier than the day after the previous one <sup>53</sup>.

The rules provide for an evaluation of the dogs by a specially appointed judicial commission, comprising a minimum of three people <sup>54</sup>.

## ***Pedigree breeding documents dependent on field trial success***

Hunting dog shows in Russia are organised by regional hunting societies belonging to the Russian Hunting and Fishing Union (RORS). RORS is an official partner of the Russian Cynological Federation (RCF), through one of its founding bodies, the Russian Federation of Hunting Dogs Breeding (RFOS). The RCF is a member of the Fédération Cynologique Internationale (FCI), a federation of kennel clubs from around the world. Each kennel club member of the FCI issues its own pedigrees and trains its own judges. In Russia only hunting breeds officially recognised by FCI and/or the Russian Hunting and Fishing Union and enrolled in formal hunting field trials are admitted to participate in hunting dog shows.

In Russian hunting dog shows a rating system called bonitation (bonitirovka in Russian), deriving from the Latin word bonitas, meaning high quality, is used for judging. Bonitation came into practice in 1951 to determine breeding value and involves assessing dogs with respect to their conformation, origin (pedigree), quality by offspring and working qualities. Three of these four elements have requirements relating to certificates for field trials with wild or captured animals. Dogs without field trial certificates cannot pass bonitation and cannot be included in a breeding class <sup>55</sup>.

## Rules for Laika trials on bear, badger and boar

During their visits to four hunting dog training stations, One Voice investigators were given copies of the rules and scoring systems for the tests of Laika on bears, badgers, boar and marten <sup>56</sup>. The maximum points available for each test is 100 points spread across a number of different elements. Judges arrive at a final score by deducting points when the dog's performance is considered to be inadequate.

### ***Bears***

The rules for a field trial using one or two Laikas on a captive bear state that the bear must weigh at least 80kg and a male is preferred. The bear must be tied to a line at least 8 to 10 yards long and the ring that slides along the line must be covered with a material to eliminate noise when the bear moves. The judges have to be about 40-60 steps away from the bear but one should position himself close to the bear's track to assess the dog's tracking work. The dog owners are not permitted to encourage their dogs. The following explanation for scoring of an individual dog or pair of dogs on six different areas is reproduced from the rules shared with One Voice investigators and from an expert account of the "Rules of Rating for Hunting Laikas Tried on Bear" <sup>57</sup>.

*"The experts we interviewed were professionals. They saw themselves as participating in an important competition in which real skills were being demonstrated and evaluated. It was incongruous to hear them speaking so enthusiastically about rules calling for dogs to bite wild animals hard and to inflict pain."*

One Voice investigator.





**1.** Reaction to the tracks of wild animals – A maximum 10 points are available and the dog “should be self-confident and begin the work from the very first minute”. Dogs are eliminated if they do not begin tracking the bear during the first five minutes. If there is a delay in starting to track, 5 points are lost. Dogs that start reluctantly and return to their owner after they have started to track lose 5 – 10 points. A dog that barks whilst tracking loses 8 – 10 points.

**2.** Courage and the way dog(s) barks – A maximum 20 points are available and the dog is required to approach the wild animal with courage, to bark intensively and to attack and bite the bear on various parts of the body at every opportunity. 8 - 10 points are lost if a dog maintains a long distance from the bear. 10 -12 points are lost if a dog barks weakly from a long distance. 8 - 10 points are lost if a dog tracks well but doesn't bark at the bear until the owner arrives. No change to the last sentence, which is, If a pair of dogs is involved and the bear attacks one dog, the other dog must attack the bear immediately or lose 10 – 12 points.

**3.** Aggressiveness and how the dog(s) grips the wild animal – a maximum point 30 points are available for the way in which the dog approaches the bear. A dog should bark intensively and attack the bear with painful grips to change its behaviour. As often as the dog can it should give “painful grips”. The only parts of the bear's body a dog is not permitted to bite are the head and the neck. If the bites are weak the dog will lose up to 8 points. If a dog barks but does not bite the bear, 10 points are lost. 10 – 15 points are lost if a dog does not bite a bear whilst it is running away.

**4.** Voice – a maximum 5 points are available for a dog that barks intensively, loudly and regularly at the bear.

**5.** Rigour in the work – a maximum 20 points are available for a dog that is persistent in baying the bear until he is called off. A dog that stops barking, or becomes distracted and leaves the bear loses 6 - 8 points. A dog that stops baying and ignores the bear will lose 9 - 10 points.

**6.** Skills, dexterity – a maximum 15 points are available for a dog that avoids the attacks of the bear and easily changes direction. A dog that is clumsy and that does not attack and bite a bear quickly whilst avoiding counterattacks loses 8 – 12 points. If two dogs are being tested and they do not coordinate their attacks and interfere with each other they lose 6 – 8 points.

## ***Badger***

The rules for badgers permit a number of different breeds of dogs to participate, including Laikas, pointing breeds and terriers. The tests should take place in a hunting ground no less than a hectare in size. The badger used must weigh less than 12kg. The dogs are given time to find and track the badger and are scored for their performance in a number of areas:

**1.** Flair (nose) – a maximum 5 points are available – 1 point is lost if it takes three minutes to find the badger and 2 points if it takes four, if the search is not active 4 points are lost.



2. Ability to find – a maximum 5 points are available - points are lost, for example, if the dog makes no effort to search for the badger.
3. Courage/ferocity/attack – a maximum 30 points are available and varying numbers of points are lost if the attack is not sufficiently ferocious. A dog that gives a badger an opportunity to counterattack loses 4 – 8 points. A dog that doesn't bite hard enough to stop the badger moving and defending itself loses 9 – 13 points.
4. Voice – a maximum 10 points are available – varying numbers of points are lost if the bark is not used sufficiently or too much, if it lacks power or is croaky.
5. Thoroughness – a maximum 30 points are available and varying numbers of points are lost if the dog attacks but is distracted or gives the badger an opportunity to move away. If a dog backs five metres away from a counterattack 12 - 13 points are lost.
6. Dexterity – a maximum 15 points are available with points being lost if the dog backs away from a counterattack. If the dog is attacked and bitten and loses advantage in the attack for a short moment 3 – 4 points are lost. If a dog is bitten by the badger and gives up his attack for a moment giving the badger the opportunity to move 5 – 7 seven points are lost. If a dog gives up completely after being bitten he loses 8 points.
7. Obedience - a maximum 5 points are available and the dog loses points for being reluctant to work, for having to be urged to work and for refusing to obey.

## Wild boar

The rules for boars permit a number of different breeds of dogs to participate, including Laikas, terriers, dachshunds and beagles. The tests take place in a wood that must be no less than four hectares in area and that should include natural features. The boar used must not weigh less than 100 kg. Boar used must have had their tusks filed down and sows with piglets must not be used. A single dog or a pair of dogs may be used. Scores for a single dog test are arrived at for eight elements as follows:



1. Flair (nose) – a maximum 5 points are available and fewer points are lost if the boar is found quickly and the dog is focussed on tracking the animal.
2. Ability to find - a maximum 10 points are available and fewer points are lost if the dogs search with energy and in good places. The boar should be found within ten minutes.
3. Courage and ferocity - a maximum 20 points are available and points are lost depending on the extent to which the attack of the dog or dogs permits the boar to move. If the dog attacks several parts of the boar's body but gives the animal an opportunity to move 1 – 2 points are lost, 5 points are lost if the dog attacks several parts of the boar but the animal isn't suffering enough and can make some moves. 6 points are lost if the dog barks but doesn't grip the boar enough to hurt him or if the dog works without gripping the boar and letting it move. If the dog keeps a distance from the boar, moves away a long distance when attacked by the boar thus letting the boar gain the advantage more points are lost.
4. Voice - a maximum 10 points are available and points are lost if the dog doesn't bark during the attack, barks rarely, insufficiently, without a break or has a croaky voice.
5. Thoroughness – a maximum 15 points are available with points being lost if a dog or pair of dogs become distracted, move away from the animal for a time, stop working and then start again or stop working and move away.
6. Attack - a maximum 20 points are available and dogs that attack in a weak manner lose the most points. A dog that attacks a boar without giving grips that aren't painful enough loses 3 – 4 points, 6 points are lost if the dog surrounds the boar but doesn't give any painful grips, 7 – 8 points are lost if the dog chases after the boar without giving grips and letting the animal have an opportunity to move. A dog that barks but stands a long distance away from the wild boar and exhibits fear loses 11 – 12 points.
7. Dexterity – a maximum 15 points are available with points being lost when the dog loses advantage. Fewer points are lost if the dog starts working quickly after losing the advantage.
8. Obedience - a maximum 5 points are available and the dog loses points depending on how slow he is to obey, for example, if he doesn't obey for more than 15 minutes the dog loses 4 points.

When a pair of dogs is being tested together they also lose points for poor coordination of their attack.

*"This project has been the most difficult and dangerous that I have undertaken. Requiring the most physical and mental effort to achieve. I have left a huge chunk of my soul and my heart out there with the bears."*

One Voice investigator.

## Animal suffering

During a two-week visit to Russia, One Voice investigators visited four hunting dog training stations and found issues of serious animal welfare concern in each location. They saw bears, badgers and boars that were suffering because of the conditions in which they were kept and because of the attacks of dogs to which they were exposed whilst penned or chained. In Russia these events are described as field trials or 'tests'. In many other parts of the world they would be described as baiting.

### Station 1

The station appeared new with rustic chalets and a new timber-framed construction with wire mesh walls and a sandy floor intended for use for testing dogs on small animals.

### Bear Competition

Investigators watched as dogs were tested on a bear that they were told was about four years old and had been caught in the wild as a cub. The bear was attached by a chain on his collar to a pulley system operated using a cable stretched overhead between two trees. Station workers were positioned on each side of the overhead cable to pull the bear from one side to another. The expert judges were positioned at

a table close to the testing area and spectators were kept further way, behind a temporary barrier about 100 metres from the bear.

The investigator reports: "Before the Laika dogs started attacking the bear we thought they could have been mistaken for fluffy family pet dogs but that impression quickly changed. When they go on the attack these dogs are ferocious. Their jaws open really wide, and they have really sharp teeth. They are so quick; they dash in and out and bite the bear continuously. We saw the bear getting some really heavy bites."

"Sometimes the bear was overwhelmed by a pair of dogs and ran off until the end of the length of chain brought him to a sudden halt. Whenever the bear seemed reluctant or too exhausted to try to put up a good defence the people operating the overhead cable would drag him by the chain around his neck to stimulate the dogs into attack. On one occasion the bear managed to catch a dog with a swipe of his paw, throwing the dog into the air. As the day progressed the bear became increasingly exhausted. By the afternoon the bear was struggling, limping and obviously in pain from the continuous bites to the hind legs. It was torture to watch."

There was a lunch break and the investigators noted the bear being given some bread. The afternoon commenced with training rather than testing. In training Laika dogs that had never had any contact with bears were taken up to the bear. Dogs showing interest and aggression were advised as being suitable to start entering tests for diplomas. After the training session more testing took place and at the end of the day some of the dog owners were presented with trophies.

The investigators reported that the bear was left to spend the night still attached to the overhead cable so that he would be ready to be used again for testing the following morning when more dogs would be arriving with their owners.







## Station 2

The station comprised a complex of buildings providing accommodation for guests, an area with Laika kennels, a yard containing a bear cage, a paddock with three young boars and a bear testing area. Additionally there were some empty cages described as being used to keep small wild animals for testing.

The investigators did not witness any dogs being tested on the bear or the boars at the station but they were shown around the premises and visited the bear in his cage.

They were told that the bear had been at the station for three years and had been purchased from an advertisement on the Internet. The hunting station advised that bears cost between 50- 70,000 rubels or 1100 – 1600 euros and that they could also be purchased from zoos, or cubs could be taken in the winter after shooting a sleeping mother bear in her den.

The bear lives in a small metal cage with a covered area for sleeping and an empty dirty bath. A smaller interlinking cage was used for feeding every day at 19.00 and to attach a collar and chain prior to testing.

The side of the smaller cage could be manually wound inwards to immobilise the bear for this to be done. Staff explained the bear is walked to the testing area under the control of five or six men holding onto the chain accompanied by another carrying a gun.

The station staff advised they were unhappy with their bear as they thought he had become too big to be used for training and testing dogs. They were looking to sell him and replace him with another.

The station staff said they had three boars but only one at a time would be used for testing. The animals had been caught in the forest when they were really young. As the boars were only a year old they could not be used for competitions but they could be used to train dogs.

One investigator reported, “The staff advised us that some Laika dogs are big and can pull down a boar, so they need more than one boar at the station so they can replace those that are injured or exhausted. They said that boars are dangerous even with their tusks removed or filed down and that two or three dogs will be injured during a typical event.”





## Station 3

The station contained luxury accommodation for visitors with a fishing lake, picnic area and paddocks for horses. There was also a bear enclosure with three bear cages, paddocks for boars and horses and a small cage containing two badgers. Testing of dogs on bears and boars was taking place at the time of the visit.

There were four bears at the hunting station held in three cages. One cage contained the bear used for testing and to make it easier for the staff to move the bear to and from the testing area he was kept permanently chained. The second cage had two young bears and the third cage a bear that had been 'retired' from testing because he had grown too large.

The bear expert at the station told the investigators that all four bears had been caught from the wild. It was not confirmed how the animals had been captured. Two methods were mentioned: catching small bears in the forest in spring and shooting hibernating females and taking their cubs. The investigators were also told that bears could be obtained from zoos and circuses: zoos sell young bears that they cannot afford to keep, as do circuses if they decide that a bear is too slow to learn tricks.

The conditions in which the bears were living and the terrible state of the younger bears shocked the



investigators, who reported, "The cages were tiny. There was thick mud and waste covering the cage floors. The young bears were covered in mud. They were handed bread but struggled to find somewhere to set it down to eat. Everything was covered in mud, the youngest bear seemed quite desperate."

The investigators noted that next to the bear cages there was also a small cage containing two badgers: "A number of people brought their dogs in to see how they reacted to the badgers. The dogs barked at them. They were harassed constantly. The badgers tried to bite back at the dogs from the cage whilst they were being barked at. A child was brought into the bear enclosure to observe the bears and the badgers. We were told that the badgers were being saved for competition weekends."

*"I was offered the chance to hunt a bear they thought was too big for testing. For 1,000 euros they said they would release it and I could track and shoot it."*

One Voice investigator.



## Bear testing

The investigators watched the bear used for testing being taken out of a cage to be walked to the testing area. The bear's collar was attached to a rope held by ten men, five at each end. It took about 20 minutes walking across muddy fields to reach the bear testing area with the bear struggling to get away. The bear expert walked alongside holding a shotgun.

On reaching the testing area the bear's chain was attached to an overhead cable. The expert judges were situated on a small platform and spectators observed from further away in a small grandstand. The dogs were released in the same way as had occurred at the other hunting dog training stations visited, out of sight of the bear so they could follow a scent trail.

One investigator recalled: "The bear began full of energy and aggression. Sometimes the bear was close to catching the dogs. As the testing went on during the day, the bear became exhausted suffering constant bites. When the bear became completely exhausted and sat down, the cable was pulled and the bear was dragged along, initiating renewed attacks from the dogs."

## Boar testing

The investigators visited the station's boar breeding pens with very young piglets and were told that the father was used for the dog testing.

The investigators watched as Laikas were tested on a large boar in a paddock, recalling,

"The dogs chased the boar throughout the paddock, trying to corner it against a fence. They attacked its front and side and rear. We were struck by how difficult it was for the dog owners to call the Laika away from the boar after the testing period was over. Several dogs just didn't seem to want to stop. It took some dog owners over twenty minutes to call off their dogs."



## Station 4

The station consisted of a group of rustic buildings, including accommodation although most people in attendance were camping beside a fishing lake. The investigators saw Laika being tested on a bear and also a competition in which Laika were being tested on badgers. The investigators were advised that boar testing also takes place at the station but they did not have an opportunity to see any boars.

## Badger Competition

An expert commission of three judges was present to judge a competition involving 30 Laikas over three days. The One Voice investigators were advised that the badgers being used had been captured from the wild and then kept for a while so they could 'adapt' to the station conditions. The investigators did not see where the badgers were kept when not being used.

The investigators observed as each dog was released to find a badger in a paddock by following a scent trail. One reported: "Most of the dogs were quick to find the badger that was hiding in a pile of logs. On finding the badger, each dog barked continuously at the badger, but could not get him to come out so after a dog had proved that it would not lose interest, its owner took it away from the logs and station workers poked at the badger and forced it into the open and the dog was released to chase it."



"It was amazing how aggressive the badger was, particularly when it was cornered, sometimes biting and chasing a dog away. The battle between the badger and the dog often lasted a number of minutes before either the badger escaped, or was caught. On three occasions we saw a dog grab a badger by the neck and shake it vigorously. When the dog held the badger's neck between its teeth like this the station workers went over to the animals to separate them. We could see that the badger had blood around its neck. A badger also injured two dogs whilst we were present. One dog was even carried out of the paddock." The investigators saw one Laika outside the badger paddock with bloodstains around the mouth, ears and neck."

The investigators were told that the usual practice was to replace badgers when they became exhausted or injured so as to ensure a fair competition. One expert advised that the day before they had had to change the badger seven times. Whilst the investigators watched, however, they saw badgers being used for testing even though the previous dog had bitten them on the neck and shaken them.



“We were told that the badgers are left to recover from their injuries after the testing, or killed if the injuries are too bad. We were also advised that on rare occasions badgers are killed because the judges do not intervene



soon enough to separate the animals although they try to stop this from happening.”

“One dog we saw scored 91 points out of 100. The judge said this was because the dog grabbed the badger by the neck and wouldn't let go.”

## Bear testing

After the badger testing the investigators went to observe Laika being tested on a bear. One reported,

“We passed the cage where the bear is kept whilst not being used for testing. It was very small and barren with a dirty floor and no shelter to nest in. There was a pile of cakes and sweets outside the cage, presumably the bear's food.”

“We saw Laika attacking the bear as we had seen at other stations. There were 30 dogs being tested and it was the second day of a competition. The bear had endured being attacked the day before and would suffer again the next day. We watched as the bear was bitten on its rear again and again.”

“At the end of the day a transport cage was pushed towards the bear and the bear was enticed inside by being offered some honey. The cage was then hooked up to a 4x4 and towed back to its cage.”







## Animal Welfare Concerns

### ***Understanding animal welfare***

The science of animal welfare has developed over the past thirty years<sup>58</sup> and has guided the development of internationally accepted principles including those of the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) to which 178 Governments, including Russia, have given their agreement<sup>59</sup>.

The OIE's guiding principles for animal welfare are based upon a comprehensive assessment of animal welfare taking into account nutrition, environment, health, behaviour and mental state<sup>58</sup>. These key elements are drawn from internationally accepted concepts, including the five freedoms (see table 1) and the five domains of animal welfare compromise (see table 2). The five domains were developed to address “more directly the practical reality of what can go wrong with an animal's welfare” as the five freedoms arguably represent idealised goals that may not be achievable during an animal's life<sup>61</sup>.

**Table 1: The Five Freedoms developed in 1979 by the UK Government's Farm Animal Welfare Council <sup>62</sup>.**

Freedom	Provision
Freedom from Hunger and Thirst	By ready access to fresh water and a diet to maintain full health and vigour.
Freedom from Discomfort	By providing an appropriate environment including shelter and a comfortable resting area.
Freedom from Pain, Injury or Disease	By prevention or rapid diagnosis and treatment.
Freedom to Express Normal Behaviour	By providing sufficient space, proper facilities and company of the animal's own kind.
Freedom from Fear and Distress	By ensuring conditions and treatment which avoid mental suffering.

**Table 2: The Five Domains of Potential Animal Welfare Compromise**

*This table is adapted from Green and Mellor 2011 <sup>63</sup>*

Domain	Examples of compromising factors	Examples of physical/functional effects	Subjective or emotional experiences/animal welfare status
<b>Nutrition</b>	Water and food deprivation	Dehydration, negative energy balance	Thirst, Hunger
<b>Environment</b>	Over exposure to heat, cold	Hypothermia, Hyperthermia	Debility, malaise
<b>Health</b>	Disease, Physical Injury	Damage to organs, tissue damage, impaired mobility or escape capacity	Nausea, sickness, pain, distress, fear and /or anxiety
<b>Behavioural</b>	Space restriction, barren environments,	Muscle atrophy/reduced muscle strength, Stereotypical, abnormal behaviour, withdrawal, self-mutilation	Weakness, boredom, frustration, helplessness, depression, pain from injuries
<b>Mental</b>	Cognitive awareness of external challenges	Brain activation of fight-flight-fright physiological and behavioural activities	Anger, assertiveness, anxiety, fear, nervousness, stress

In recent years the five freedoms have been replaced by a more scientific concept of needs. The evolution of animals in their natural environment has led to their having certain needs that must be met for welfare to be good <sup>64</sup>. As such needs have been investigated for many species they provide a starting point for the assessment of welfare <sup>65</sup>. When an animal's needs are not satisfied, welfare will be poorer than when they are satisfied <sup>66</sup>.



As part of the EU's Animal Welfare Quality project researchers from institutions in Europe and Latin America developed assessment systems to evaluate and monitor the quality of farm animal welfare based on four key principles and twelve criteria developed to answer four questions <sup>67</sup> :

1. *Are the animals properly fed and supplied with water?*
2. *Are the animals properly housed?*
3. *Are the animals healthy?*
4. *Does the behavior of the animals reflect optimised emotional states?*

The principles and criteria informing how these questions might be answered are shown in Table 3.

## Definitions of animal welfare

The OIE describes animal welfare as a broad term that includes the many elements that contribute to an animal's quality of life, including those referred to in the five freedoms. According to the OIE an animal is in a good state of welfare "if (as indicated by scientific evidence) it is healthy, comfortable, well nourished, safe, able to express innate behaviour, and if it is not suffering from unpleasant states such as pain, fear, and distress <sup>68</sup>."

Using these definitions and drawing on published animal welfare studies it is possible to reach some conclusions on the animal welfare status of wild animals kept in captivity for use as living training tools in Russia's hunting dog training stations.

**Table 3: Giving welfare principles and criteria (from Keeling and Veissier, 2005) <sup>69</sup>**

Principles	Welfare criteria
Good feeding	Absence of Hunger Absence of Prolonged Thirst
Good housing	Comfort around resting Thermal comfort Ease of movement
Good health	Absence of injuries Absence of disease Absence of pain induced by management procedures
Appropriate behaviour	Expression of social behaviours Expression of other behaviours Good human-animal relationship Absence of general fear

## Providing for the welfare of captive wild animals

Concerns about the welfare of captive wild animals have attracted increasing attention, particularly over the past thirty or forty years. There is widespread agreement amongst scientists that captivity affects animal welfare <sup>70</sup>. In 2002, for example, one scientific paper on wildlife management and zoos concluded: "Close confinement results in poor welfare in most vertebrate animals. Poor welfare when kept in some degree of confinement is much more likely in animals which are not domesticated than, in domesticated animals. When wild animals are brought into captivity they show extreme responses, often including immunosuppression and consequent mortality from latent pathogens. Where the needs of animals are not met in zoo conditions they may show behavioural abnormalities such as apathy involving reduced responsiveness, stereotypies, self-mutilation or increased aggression <sup>71</sup>."

The effects of being captured and confined may be so great that death is the result as Professor Broom has advised: "... a wild animal or domestic animal that has never experienced close confinement may be so disturbed by the confinement that its welfare is very poor and there is a substantial risk that it will die" <sup>72</sup>.

On the basis of scientific evidence of animal suffering caused by inadequate welfare provision in zoos many countries have introduced legislation and minimum standards. For example, the 1999 EU Zoo Directive requires zoos to 'accommodate their animals under

conditions which aim to satisfy the biological and conservation requirements of individual species, inter alia, by providing species-specific enrichment of the enclosures; and maintaining a high standard of animal husbandry with a developed programme of preventative and curative veterinary care and nutrition' <sup>73</sup>.

In recent years many zoos have changed the way in which they accommodate animals to provide for the expression of natural behaviours <sup>74</sup>. For example, the 1990s saw a move away from concrete pits for bears to more naturalistic and enriched enclosures that attempted to provide greater quality of life with opportunities for foraging, nest building, climbing, walking, running and swimming <sup>75</sup>.

In 2003 the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA) adopted a Code of Ethics and Animal Welfare requiring exhibits to be "of such size and volume as to allow the animal to express its natural behaviours". The Code states, "At all times animals should be protected from conditions detrimental to their well-being and the appropriate husbandry standards adhered to <sup>76</sup>."

Concerns about the difficulty of providing good welfare for captive wild animals has also led to discouragement of their keeping as pets, for example, by the Council of Europe's Convention for the Protection of Pet Animals that came into force in 1992 <sup>77</sup>. In 1995 the Council of Europe adopted a non-binding Resolution on the Keeping of Wild Animals as Pet Animals stating that 'An animal must be housed and cared according to its physiological and behavioural needs' and that conditions, including the following must be met <sup>78</sup>:





- space allocation sufficient for the specific needs of the animal in particular for movements and exercise;
- appropriate enclosure enrichment with climbing material, digging possibilities, rest and hiding places as well as bathing, swimming or diving facilities;
- possibilities to fulfil the needs for social behaviour;
- appropriate climatic conditions.

## The welfare of bears in hunting dog training stations

One Voice investigators reported that the provision for the welfare of the wild animals they saw in hunting dog training stations was very poor. Additionally they considered, as does One Voice and Baltic Animal Care that the activity for which the animals were being kept was morally unacceptable.

### No provision of a suitable diet

One Voice investigators spent only one or two days at each hunting dog training station. They saw the living quarters of the bears at three stations. At one of these they saw bears being given bread, at another they saw a pile of cakes and sweets outside a bear cage. At the first station they visited they did not see the bear's living quarters but saw the bear being used for testing being given bread during the lunch break. They also saw one bear being enticed into a transport cage by the use of honey. At the three stations where they saw the living quarters of bears they saw water in containers inside the cages.

The investigators did not see any bears being given any form of vegetable, fruit or protein. This raises concerns because although brown bears are one of the largest terrestrial carnivores their diet mainly comprises plant material (fruits, roots, vegetables etc.) supplemented by protein from insects, other invertebrates, fish and small animals, such as rodents<sup>79</sup>. As most of their food is hidden bears spend approximately 60 percent of their time foraging<sup>80</sup>, for example, using their long non-retractable claws to dig and to turn over rocks and logs to find roots and bulbs. To satisfy their foraging behaviours and dietary needs bears travel over huge ranges.

### No provision of a suitable environment

The bear cages seen by One Voice investigators were extremely small. The estimated size of a cage at one station containing two young bears is about 5 x 3 x 2.5 metres. The two bears housed in that cage are not considered to have sufficient space or areas to escape from each other or to avoid conflict.



All the cages seen were very barren. They did contain small nest boxes for the bears but these were small and filthy. Bedding was either non-existent or thick with waste and mud. Some cages were thick with waste and mud and the bears living in them were clearly in poor condition as the filthy conditions prevented them from grooming.

Scientific evidence shows that bears range vast and diverse habitats to satisfy their needs<sup>81</sup>. In the wild depending on the location and the quality of their habitat an individual bear may roam over an area of 100m<sup>2</sup> to 100,000 km<sup>2</sup><sup>82</sup>. They can run up to 50km/h over short distances<sup>83</sup>. They travel not just to find food but also to avoid bears of their own sex and to find a winter den. They are good climbers and swimmers<sup>84</sup>. They are mainly solitary but communicate with other bears through scent and by marking trees.

In captivity bears are often forced to live with others. They also quickly become bored in barren environments. Scientists have concluded, "bears are particularly susceptible to the development of stereotypy, a propensity possibly related to their complex feeding behaviours and large home ranges in the wild, neither of which can be fully reproduced in captivity<sup>85</sup>."



In animal welfare science an environment would be deemed appropriate for an animal if it allows an animal to satisfy its needs<sup>86</sup>. A need is "a requirement, that is part of the basic biology of an animal, to obtain a particular resource or respond to a particular environmental or bodily stimulus"<sup>87</sup>. Whilst a captive environment does



not have to be the same as the environment in the wild the functions should aim to provide for good welfare. For bears an environment should include <sup>88</sup>:

- Feeding areas with scope for foraging
- Resting areas
- Materials for making nests or beds
- Shade and shelter
- Hiding places
- Opportunities for walking, running, climbing,
- Pools for swimming
- Multi-levels and vantage points

### No provision of opportunities to exhibit normal behaviour patterns

The bears seen by One Voice investigators spent their time either in close confinement in a cage or as live targets for hunting dog training. These animals had no opportunities to perform any normal behaviour patterns. They were not free to forage, to roam, to rest comfortably, to hide, to run or climb or swim.

The bears were even prevented from acting upon the innate fight-flight response that most animals have when they encounter a threat. Individual brown bears in the wild may react differently towards attacking dogs but their reactions include “escape behaviour or defensively attacking the dogs depending on the circumstances of the contact” <sup>89</sup>. In confrontations with dogs it is reported that bears will “generally escape to cover” <sup>90</sup>.

Bears attached by chains and pulled to and fro could not flee the threat presented by the dogs. Having no escape routes they attempted to fight but found their efforts were impeded by their restraints. In the face of such frustration of normal behaviour some of the bears simply give up and sat down. This withdrawal was countered once again by hunting station operators, who pulled to get them moving again.

Bears are considered to be amongst the most intelligent of all mammals <sup>91</sup>. They are great ‘wanderers and investigators’ <sup>92</sup>. Scientists have concluded that for these animals to survive in the wild they must be intelligent, curious, determined with good skills, memory and endurance <sup>93</sup>.

Animal welfare science advises us that when we take animals into our care “Suffering, which occurs when one or more negative, unpleasant feelings continue for more than a few seconds, should be recognised and prevented wherever possible. When managing animals, we should endeavour to promote feelings of contentment and happiness in animals” <sup>94</sup>.

### No protection from pain, suffering, injury and disease

During the tests of dogs on bears, the bears tried to escape but could not do so because a chain connected to an overhead pulley controlled them. One Voice investigators reported that a bear being walked to a testing area tried to escape and struggled.

Animal welfare science tells us “the fact that an animal avoids an object or event, strongly gives information about its feelings and hence about its welfare. The



stronger the avoidance the worse the welfare whilst the object is present or the event is occurring <sup>95</sup>".

One Voice investigators saw bears being bitten repeatedly on the rear, rear thigh and rear legs. These bites were not insignificant as the Laika's teeth are extremely sharp and the bite is strong, a characteristic of this species of dog. It was not possible to see the damage being done by the bites because of the thick fur of the bears. No doubt the bites experienced by the bears differed in severity, possibly ranging from nips, to puncture bites involving some teeth, puncture bites involving lots of teeth and grab and shake bites.

There is little doubt that bears will suffer anxiety, fear and distress when they continually find themselves under attack from dogs, whilst being restrained to prevent escape or a proper defence. They may also experience fear in anticipation of such events.

Investigators reported one bear was obviously suffering and in pain whilst under attack by the dogs. He was seen limping and trying to avoid putting weight on the bitten leg. This bear received no treatment whilst the investigators were present and the investigators advised that those involved in conducting the hunting dog training and testing demonstrated no concern. As any serious injury would necessitate anaesthetic to immobilise the bear it is believed that the bears would be left to heal without treatment.

Dog bites cause pain, tissue damage and inflammation. Bears with weakened immune systems because of a lack of good nutrition and suboptimal living conditions might also suffer fever and infection, as well as impaired mobility whilst healing.

Investigators also noted that bears soon became exhausted following attacks from dogs. They watched as the bears reactions and movements became slower and slower. Some bears tried to sit and rest but were pulled and made to move.

The environment in which the bears were made to live and their diet also gives rise to concern. A lack of good nourishment may affect every system in a bear's body resulting in a lack of energy and feelings of malaise. The effects of close confinement may include impaired mobility and weakened muscles. Bears kept in filthy conditions will have difficulty grooming and may develop skin and foot lesions.

Bears are tough and may appear 'normal'. However, their thick fur means that appearance is not indicative of good health or a lack of pain, suffering, injury and disease. A long life in captivity is also no indication of good welfare or health.

Scientists studying bears in captivity in zoos have commented "Bears are virtually indestructible despite suffering from a range of viral, bacterial and parasitic diseases and they normally live long lives in captivity in comparison with many other species <sup>96</sup>".

Bears can live up to 25 years in the wild and longer in captivity, up to 47 years <sup>97</sup>. One of the judges of Laika on bear advised One Voice investigators that bears were kept for about fifteen years to be used for testing and then killed.

However, hunting station staff at two stations visited during the investigation advised that they disposed of bears that they considered to be too large for testing.

## **The welfare of badgers and boars in hunting dog training stations**

Two badgers were seen in a small wire mesh cage and the investigators understood that this was how the badgers would be kept until being used in a competition. Dogs were brought to the cage to bark at the badgers and this would have caused fear and distress. There was nowhere in the cage in which the badgers could hide from the dogs. The welfare of these badgers was clearly poor and all the more so given that they had been recently caught from the wild where they would have lived in burrows in social groups. Badgers are nocturnal, omnivorous animals, which forage for a wide variety of food including fruit, bulbs, worms, rabbits and moles <sup>98</sup>.

The investigators also saw badgers being used for testing and reported they had to be pushed and prodded out into the open from the logs and undergrowth in which they were trying to hide. There can be little doubt that badgers will experience extreme fear and pain from being bitten and chased by dogs three times their size.

The investigators observed violent physical interactions between the dogs and badgers that at times caused injuries to both parties. The investigators saw obvious neck injuries on a badger inflicted when a dog bit the badger on the neck and shook it. The investigators were advised that hunting dog training stations aim to have several badgers on hand so that they can be replaced if injured or exhausted. They were also told the badgers would be left to recover from their injuries, or if the injuries were too bad they would be killed. The investigators saw badgers being used for testing even though the previous dog had bitten them on the neck and shaken them.

The living conditions of the boars seen by One Voice were natural paddocked areas and it seems these animals spend a relatively natural life when not being chased and attacked by dogs, which must cause them to suffer fear, distress and pain.

Boars used for testing must have their tusks removed and this may also involve pain and suffering. Research has shown that boar tusks contain nerves and that trimming the tusks can expose the pulp that contains these nerves causing pain and leaving the tusk open to infection <sup>99</sup>.

## **The welfare of Laikas in hunting dog training stations**

The Laikas were not forced to participate and some dog owners had great difficulty in getting their dogs to stop chasing and attacking when their time was up.

The investigators saw some dogs being injured during the fights with badgers. One dog had to be carried away. The investigators were advised that injuries also occur when dogs are set to chase and attack boars in tests even though the boars have their tusks removed or filed down.



Research into discussions taking place on Russian hunting forums reveals mentions of injuries to dogs. For example, following one event there were complaints that a particular boar's tusks had not been filed down sufficiently as several dogs had been injured, some seriously. One dog owner recounted, "The boar hit him and ripped his neck, right behind the ear. The wound was deep, the artery was revealed... the blood flowed copiously. We were forced to go the veterinarian to save the dog. He said if we hadn't clamped the wound together the dog would have died from blood loss <sup>100</sup>."



## Ethical Concern for Animals

There is a widespread view in many countries that humans have duties towards animals in their care whether they are being kept for food, as means of transport, for research or other purposes <sup>101</sup>. The guiding animal welfare principles of the OIE, supported by 178 countries, including Russia, include the statement “the use of animals carries with it an ethical responsibility to ensure the welfare of such animals to the greatest extent practicable <sup>102</sup>”.

A growing number of countries have acted to recognise that animals are sentient beings and now require full regard to be paid to the welfare requirements of animals when framing policy and legislation, for example, the EU <sup>103</sup>. Some 44 Governments have given in principle support to a Universal Declaration for Animal Welfare (UDAW) a proposed inter-governmental agreement recognising animal sentience aimed at preventing animal suffering and promoting animal welfare. These countries include Costa Rica, Canada, Nicaragua, New Zealand, Peru and Serbia <sup>104</sup>.

According to the UDAW, “Sentience shall be understood to mean the capacity to have feelings, including pain and pleasure, and implies a level of conscious awareness. Scientific research confirms that all vertebrates are sentient animals, and indicates sentience in some invertebrates <sup>105</sup>”.

As long ago as the 17th century legislation to protect animals from cruelty was introduced. For example, in 1641





the Puritans of Massachusetts Bay Colony forbade cruelty against “any brute creature kept by man” <sup>106</sup> and bear and bull baiting were banned in Britain in 1835 <sup>107</sup>. Since that time these and other forms of baiting as well as animal fighting events such as cock and dog fighting have been banned in many other countries <sup>108</sup>.

The harming of animals to provide traditional entertainment for people, for example, bullfighting, dog fighting, cock fighting, bear baiting, throwing a donkey from a church tower are widely accepted as being examples of unacceptable harms that should not be tolerated <sup>109</sup>. In most countries such acts would be prevented by the basic animal cruelty legislation.





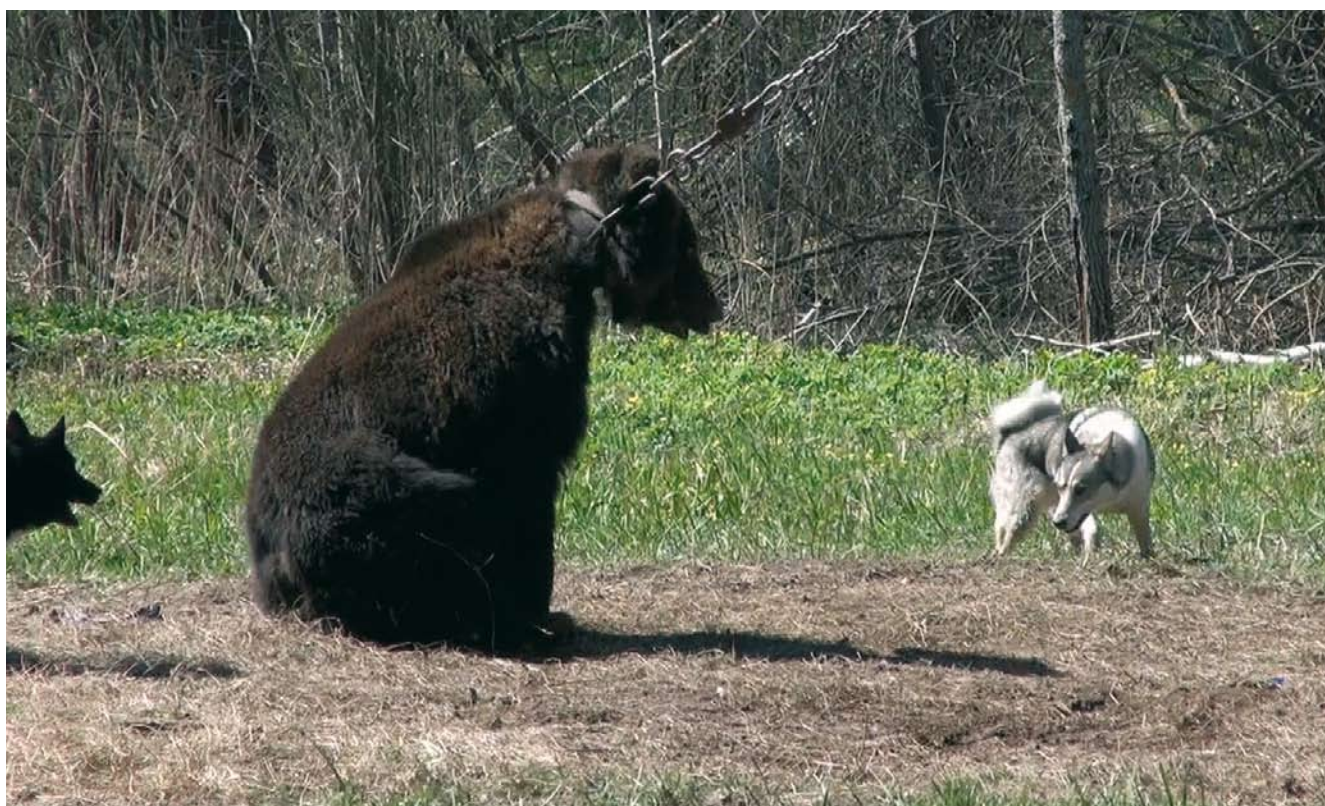
# Animal protection legislation in Russia

A global review of animal protection legislation carried out by the World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA) reveals that Russia lags behind many countries, having no legislation for fifteen of the sixteen areas researched <sup>110</sup>.

The only protection for animals referenced for Russia in this review is the limited protection of animals against physical suffering under the Criminal Code: Part 2, Section IX, Chapter 25, Article 245, which states <sup>111</sup>:

- 1.** Cruelty to animals that has involved their death or injury, if this deed has been conducted with malicious or mercenary motives, or the use of sadistic methods, or in the presence of minors, shall be punishable by a fine in the amount of 100 to 200 minimum wages, or in the amount of the wage or salary, or any other income of the convicted person for a period of one to two months, or by corrective labour for a term of up to one year, or by arrest for a term of up to six months.
- 2.** The same act committed by a group of persons, a group of persons in a preliminary conspiracy, or an organised group, or repeatedly, shall be punishable by a fine in the amount of 500 to 800 minimum wages, or in the amount of the wage or salary, or any other income of the convicted person for a period of five to eight months, or by deprivation of liberty for a term of up to two years.

On first reading it would seem that this legislation might be utilised to prevent the suffering of wild animals in hunting dog training stations. However, an attempt by Russian animal protection campaigners to use it failed some years ago because the responsible authorities advised that hunting dog training stations were legal and that events complied with regulations <sup>112</sup>. This despite veterinary evidence from examining the bear that was the subject of the case that found the animal to be malnourished, malformed, undersized, underweight, injured and suffering because of cramped living conditions and inadequate care <sup>113</sup>.





# Criticism of Captive Animal Trials

## by Laika experts

Concerns have been raised by Laika and hunting experts about the impact on the Laika breed of the growing popularity of tests and trials of hunting dogs on captured wild animals.



### ***“Kamikaze dogs”***

In an article in the Journal of the International Society for the Preservation of Primitive Aboriginal Dogs, Aleksander V. Popov, a professional hunter reports that Laikas

are under threat from two directions, firstly because of a proliferation of breeders focussing on profit rather than on preserving the breed, and secondly because of the growing popularity of “penned animal trial sport” <sup>114</sup>.

Popov describes how for some dog owners and breeders the contests have evolved from being a means to conduct tests for suitability to hunt to an independent goal. He reports that some dog owners and breeders have made aggressiveness and boldness their basic breeding goal, ignoring other components such as searching and barking. He advises this has resulted already in the appearance of Laikas that cannot find penned bears or badgers and to some Laikas of such viciousness that “they are similar rather to kamikaze, then to hunting dogs. As a rule, they get killed or seriously injured at the first hunting.” Although as he points out some dog owners travel constantly taking their Laikas to competitions but never take them hunting.

The modern field trials on captured animals have, in his view, become “a kind of corrida and rules of the trials are adjusted accordingly, constantly raising the bar on aggressiveness and boldness.” Popov gives as an example, the modern rules of trials of Laika on captured bear, in which the requirement for “aggressiveness” reads: “At any convenient opportunity the dog (or a pair of dogs) should bite hard at thighs, heels and rear, except the head and neck”.

Popov asks: “Is it necessary during real bear hunting? Of course, it is not. Only kamikaze dogs can work this way. During real hunting a free walking bear Laika makes one or two hard bites, when a bear is running away, just enough to let the bear know that he has a serious foe. After that, the dog is simply barking at the stopped bear until the hunter comes up. If the dog

tries to bite the bear more often, the bear will catch it eventually, no matter how agile the dog may be.”

Another expert Grigory Nasyrov writing in the same journal reports that the culture of hunting and the original purpose of Laika is being forgotten as the breed has become converted to a “sportsman’s dog” with “the show contests on captured animals become increasingly important with each coming year” <sup>115</sup>.

### ***Risk of creating another dangerous breed***

Alexandra Semyonova, an animal behaviourist, who was consulted by One Voice for this report because of her expertise in dogs and aggressive dogs <sup>116</sup> has expressed concern about the lowering of natural hazard avoidance instincts in dogs that are tested in field trials on restrained animals such as bears on chains or animals from which defences have been removed, for example, boars with filed down tusks. Semyonova comments, “Disarming and / or confining the opponent teaches the dog that attack behaviour will be successful without risk to itself. This lowers any natural, hazard-avoidance barrier the dog might feel if it lost battles with the target or was severely wounded. It will make the dog more ready to attack animals it would normally be hesitant to attack because they are much bigger (e.g., humans) or because the dog would normally fear that the animal can defend itself” <sup>117</sup>.

Semyonova also advised that if some Russian Laika breeders are prioritising aggression in Laika in an effort to do well in field trials then this is an experiment that has already been done a couple of times in our history: “It is what created the British bear-baiting, horse-rending, pit-fighting bulldog, the forbearer of all the present pit bulls and other bully breeds.”

“By choosing dogs that are willing to attack another animal in the absence of hunger and in the absence of an unavoidable threat to the dogs themselves, breeders will be selecting for abnormally disinhibited aggressive behaviour. They’ll be breeding out hazard avoidance behaviours, breeding in a low threshold for

attack behaviour, probably also breeding in insensitivity to pain. They will be selecting for impulsiveness - an inability to suppress a behavioural impulse long enough (half a second) to compose an appropriate and proportionate response, and an inability to self-interrupt the behaviour once it is triggered and underway."

"Breeders will also be breeding to strengthen the specific motor patterns that are part of the actual attack chain. Using the Coppingers' model, it would in this case mean activating the mark > chase > grab-bite > KILL-bite parts of the chain and possibly linking them to each other. If the motor patterns end up linked, the dogs will be less able to execute only one part of this chain once any earlier part of the chain is triggered. You'll have dogs that once they've marked, will be inclined to chase, grab and kill. If you combine magnification of the grab and kill bites with breeding for impulsiveness, you are breeding for the creation of inherently dangerous dogs. Once the chain is activated, they'll have an inherent inability to stop until the chain has been completed."



## Working against evolution

Semyonova advises "The entire evolution of the domestic dog as a species required fitting into the human niche as an animal humans could safely live with. Human selection was aimed purely at decreasing aggression in these pre-dogs that hung out near us. Dogs that threatened our children, our livestock or us were summarily culled. Culling aggressive dogs didn't hurt the species, which was shifting to scavenging our waste in any case, away from killing to eat. This evolution created a creature that is reticent about using real aggression -- a conflict avoider who prefers to solve even a conflict with at most ritual aggression. Evolution made the domestic dog into a creature that can deal with highly complex intra-specific and inter-specific situations without resorting to serious aggression. Reticence about using serious aggression is one of the typifying characteristics of the domestic dog as a species -- as much as having four legs and a tail are."

"Working breeds like the pointer, the border collie, the greyhound and the sled dog are a result of humans selecting for performance that meant changing peripheral traits of being a dog -- a stance, a gait, heat economy. It didn't fool with that essential trait of conflict avoidance, ritual conflict resolution, and highly sophisticated tactics for dealing with intra- and inter-specific relationships. Working towards increased, unbridled, aggression and decreased hazard and conflict avoidance means changing not a peripheral characteristic, but the core characteristic that makes the domestic dog safe as living companions for us."

"The Laika is as yet considered a normal hunting breed. Initiating a selection process aimed at increasing attack aggression in the Laika will take it down the same road another spitz -- the Akita -- has gone down. The Akita is banned in many places where the pit bull type dogs are also banned. Where it's not banned together with the pit bull types, the Akita is on the list of inherently dangerous dogs. Insurance premiums are higher than for other dogs, and some companies won't insure Akitas at all (along with pit bull types and Rottweilers). Doing this to the Laika might satisfy a small portion of the fans of that breed, but it will degrade the breed as a choice by any others."





## ***Risk of out of control dogs***

One Voice investigators reported that dog owners often had difficulty in stopping their dogs from chasing and attacking the wild animal at the end of trials. It took some owners over twenty minutes to call off their dogs. Semyonova explains this was because attacking makes the dogs feel good but repeated participation in such events might conceivably lead to unintended and tragic consequences.:

“As for field trials, regular engagement in the behaviour will teach the dogs how good it feels to be using their hereditary motor patterns, as well as teaching them it’s a fun social activity with their owners (and one the owners reward). This combination of heredity, classical conditioning and operant conditioning will lower the threshold for the dog to engage in the behaviours outside of the training / practice environment.”

“If the dogs work in pairs, the risk is doubled in the following sense: if one of the dogs is triggered in the home environment, the other will join in, just as they do in the field trials. You’d be combining a genetic predisposition to execute certain behaviours with learning experiences (field trials) that increase the likelihood of the behaviour being chosen in response to a stimulus or trigger. That stimulus or trigger could turn out to be another person’s dog, a person with a strange gait or style of movement, a running child, a child screaming with laughter.”

“It’s dangerous to breed for impulsiveness and abnormally disinhibited behaviour, and in particular for abnormally disinhibited aggression. You can’t be sure of containing it and having it occur only when it’s convenient for you.”

# Conclusion

One Voice's investigation into animal baiting being conducted in Russia to test the instincts and abilities of hunting dogs and to qualify them for pedigree breeding status has revealed animal suffering that is animal suffering that is severe and intense and that should not be tolerated and in some cases, of very long duration. One Voice investigators were advised that some bears are used for fifteen years.

Although governed by rules and regulations the hunting dog field trials involve setting dogs on captive wild animals. This equates to animal baiting and is unacceptable on both ethical and animal welfare grounds. Animal baiting has been banned in many countries.

It is One Voice's hope that Russian politicians and citizens are in ignorance of what is taking place in hunt training stations on their doorstep, including in the environs of Moscow and St Petersburg and that this report will help Russian animal protection campaigners to raise awareness that will lead to action to end the suffering.

Mahatma Gandhi is reported to have said, " the greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated...I hold that the more helpless a creature, the more entitled it is to protection by man."

It is now time for Russia to turn its attention to animal protection.





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- Bloknot dlja zapisi ispytaniy laek po vol'ernomu barsuku, Tambovskoe oblastnoe obščestvo ohotnikov I rybolovov  
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(103) For example, the Lisbon Treaty of the EU states: "In formulating and implementing the Union's agriculture, fisheries, transport, internal market, research and technological development and space policies, the Union and the Member States shall, since animals are sentient beings, pay full regard to the welfare requirements of animals, while respecting the legislative or administrative provisions and customs of the Member States relating in particular to religious rites, cultural traditions and regional heritage." Consolidated versions of the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty on the functioning of the European Union.-Official Journal of the European Union C 115, 09.05.2008.

(104) The Universal Declaration for Animal Welfare is a project of the World Society for the Protection of Animals and other leading international animal protection organisations. For further information see: <http://www.wspa.org.uk/wspaswork/udaw/>

(105) Text of the UDAW is available from the World Society for the Protection of Animals.

(106) Various authors, Animals and Their Legal Rights: A Survey of American Laws from 1641 – 1990, Animal Welfare Institute, 1990.

(107) McKenna, C. and Morrissey, C., Countdown to the Ban, Campaigning to Protect Hunted Animals, 2001.

(108) Broom (D.M.), « Animal Welfare: An Aspect of Care, Sustainability, and Food Quality Required by the Public », JMVE 37(1), 2010.

(109) Animal Mosaic, Global Legislation Hub, <http://www.animalmosaic.org/legislation/global-legislation/default.aspx?page=0&continent=&country=Russia,&def= dernier> accès le 18 août 2013.

(110) As above.

(111) <http://www.russian-criminal-code.com/PartII/SectionIX/Chapter25.html>

(112) Elena Bobrova, personal communication.

(113) As above.

(114) Popov, A.V., Hunting Laikas, Russia, Journal of the International Society for Preservation of Primitive Aboriginal Dogs, June 2012 accessed at <http://www.bradanderson.org/pads/Journal-of-PADS-31-English.pdf> on 11 September 2013

(115) Nasyrov, G., Let us preserve the culture of hunting with Laika, in the newsletter of the Russian Branch of the Primitive and Aboriginal Dog Society, 2004 accessed at: [http://www.pads.ru/zadmin\\_data/issue.pdf\\_file\\_en/1083/PADsnewsletter\\_october\\_2004.pdf](http://www.pads.ru/zadmin_data/issue.pdf_file_en/1083/PADsnewsletter_october_2004.pdf) on 11 September 2013.

(116) Semyonova is author of 100 Sillyest Things People Say About Dogs, Hastings Press, 2009, which explodes the 100 most common myths about dogs, their nature, behaviour and how to treat them and explains how serious aggression is utterly abnormal in the domestic dog.

(117) Semyonova, A., personal communication.





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