

Italy - Animal Welfare and Cultural Issues



Italians have always worked alongside animals – especially dogs. Farmers keep dogs to protect their livestock from foxes and wolves, some keep them to hunt rabbits, while still others rear dogs to sniff out truffles. Truffle hunting is very common in Italy, as an experienced truffle hunter can earn approximately 6,000 US dollars per season. However, there are certain differences in the way animals are perceived in Italy as compared to the US, the UK or most parts of the world.

Attitudes to pets

Pets in Italy are rarely kept in the house. They are kept in the backyard or are even set free to roam around with the other dogs in the area. Neutering is often dismissed on the grounds that it is expensive and unnatural, and as a result, the number of stray animals is quite high. Many pet owners prefer to feed their pets scraps off the table rather than animal food, so dogs in Italy tend to be more familiar with pasta than kibble. This does not mean that owners mistreat their pets or that they do not care for them; it is simply that this is considered to be the “normal” way to raise pets. It is important for expats to keep an open mind towards pet care, and avoid criticizing the pet care methods of Italians, or offering advice unless asked for – in the same way that one would not criticize someone’s child rearing skills or offer unsolicited advice in that area. At the same time, it is not necessary for expats to adopt the local practices when caring for their own pets, at least to the extent that pet food and other supplies are available. There is a marked difference in the way people in the cities treat their pets as compared to those in the surrounding villages and hamlets. People in Italian cities tend to have less traditional methods of pet care, and have willingly accepted pet food, regular health check-ups, and animal dentistry as part of a healthy pet care regimen.

Superstitions

There are several Italian superstitions that surround animals, and while most of them are fairly harmless, some can have unpleasant consequences that many expats find horrifying. For instance, black cats are still thought to bring bad luck, which has led to the widespread killing of these animals. It is estimated that approximately 60000 black cats are killed annually in Italy. Black cats are also killed as part of black magic rituals carried out by certain cults. However, this attitude does not extend to all cats – for example, in Italy it is considered good luck to hear a cat sneeze. In general, owls, foxes, and black cats are considered unlucky, and when people see them, the typical response is to stop and wait for another person to pass them by. The idea is that the bad luck that would have struck you will instead pass on to the unfortunate soul who overtook you and crossed the path of the animal. A common superstition relating to birds is that they should not be kept as pets within the house, as they will bring the homeowners bad luck. In fact, it is thought that if a bird simply flies into the house, the owners will suffer bad luck too. Some people take this even further and avoid keeping bird feathers in their house – peacock feathers are considered to be particularly unlucky due to their unique design, which allegedly resembles the “evil eye”.

Animal welfare and rights

Italy has several laws against cruelty to animals and relating to animal welfare in general, but many of these laws are considered outdated and inadequate. As popular attitudes to animals have progressed, efforts have been made to update the laws, as well as the infrastructure available to care for animals and support animal welfare. The Italian Animal Welfare Party (Partito Animalista Italiano) is a minor political party whose main focus is around animal rights and animal welfare, and you can find out more about their programs and activities at http://www.partitoanimalista.it/INDEX_English.htm.

The LIDA (Lega italiana dei diritti dell’animale), which translates to the Italian League for Animal Rights, is another organization that describes its activities as “a public and non-violent struggle against all the injustice and suffering inflicted on weak human and non-human beings by Homo Sapiens”. The Italian Horse Protection Association (IHP) is a center for confiscated and mistreated horses, and is the only one of its kind in Italy. The organization strives to help mistreated horses with their psychological and physical recovery, and to raise awareness regarding the proper care and treatment of horses. You can read more about them at <http://www.yardandgroom.com/Employer/Italy/Firenze/Ihp-Italian-Horse-Protection-Association/103794>. The Italian national organization for animal protection is the ENPA (Ente Nazionale Protezione Animale) and they manage rescue centers across the country. The Anglo-Italian Society for the Protection of Animals (AISPA) is a UK-based charity that raises funds for medicines, rescue vehicles, and surgical equipment for Italian animal welfare organizations.

Reference - <http://www.expatsfocus.com/expatriate-italy-animal-welfare>

No animal deserves to suffer. There are humane methods to care for all animals. Regardless of purpose...all animals should be treated with dignity and respect in a stress and pain free environment. All individuals have the responsibility of ensuring good care and the wellbeing of animals world wide.

The following is a brief list of animal welfare organizations.
Find one that you can learn from and support today.

National: American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
www.aspca.org

Arizona: www.azaspca.org

Arizona Humane Society: www.azhumane.org

AZ Animal Welfare League: www.aawl.org

AZ Italian Greyhound Rescue: www.azitaliangreyhoundrescue.org

National Wildlife Federation: www.nwf.org

World Animal Protection Organization:
www.worldanimalprotection.org

International Fund for Animal Welfare: www.ifaw.org/united-states

FACEBOOK: Esdaw - Italy, Malta, San Marino, Vatican City State
Community Page about Esdaw - European Society of Dog and Animal Welfare

*RCI is not responsible for content on external websites...

Interested in the history of the Italian Greyhound dog breed?



The Italian greyhound has been around for many centuries, but exactly how and when this miniaturized greyhound was developed has been lost in time. Evidence of dogs resembling the Italian greyhound can be found in art dating nearly 2,000 years ago from Turkey, Greece and other areas around the Mediterranean. By the Middle Ages, miniaturized greyhounds could be found throughout southern Europe, but they found special favor with Italian courtiers. The breed came to England in the 17th century, quickly becoming as popular with nobility there

as they had been in their Italian homeland. In 1820, the Italian greyhound was one of only two toy breeds mentioned in a book about dogs. The Italian greyhound continued to find favor, reaching her peak during the reign of Queen Victoria. After that time, her numbers declined, however, and the breed dwindled to such an extent that she almost disappeared in England after World War II. One possible reason for her decline was a degradation in quality, because dogs were bred for tiny size, often without regard to soundness and health. Fortunately, Italian greyhounds had come to America in the late 1800s, and even though their numbers were small, these dogs were of high quality. They, along with other imports, helped revive the breed in Europe. Since then, the Italian greyhound has risen gradually in popularity and is now enjoying a second renaissance.

Italian Greyhound Dog Temperament: A sighthound in a small package, the Italian greyhound shares her larger relatives' characteristics. She loves to run and chase. She is extremely gentle and sensitive. Reserved, often timid, with strangers, she is devoted to her family and is good with children, and other dogs and pets. However, she can be easily injured by boisterous children and larger dogs.

Italian Greyhound Dog Care: The Italian greyhound likes a daily romp outdoors, but she hates the cold. Her exercise needs are best met with a good walk on leash or even a rollicking game indoors. She also likes to stretch out and sprint in a fenced area. This breed cannot live outdoors. Care of the fine short hair is minimal, consisting only of occasional brushing to remove dead hair. Regular brushing of the teeth is important in this breed.

Italian Greyhound Dog Health

Major concerns: periodontal disease

Minor concerns: epilepsy, leg fractures, patellar luxation, PRA

Occasionally seen: none

Suggested tests: knee, eyeLife span: 12-15 years

Note: The breed is susceptible to leg and tail fractures.

