The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
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Police Investigate Parasailing Donkey

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July 20, 2010



Police have opened an inquiry into animal abuse after a donkey, attached to a parachute and pulled by a motorboat, flew over a Krasnodar beach for a half hour in a publicity stunt gone bad.

The animal screamed in fear for most of the flight, which ended with it being dragged several meters across the water's surface but surviving, the local Taman newspaper reported, adding that the incident took place Thursday in the village of Temryuk on the Sea of Azov.

The sight caused children present at the beach to cry, with some of them asking, "Why did they hitch a doggie to a parachute?" the report said.

The answer is, apparently, that it was an advertisement for a parasailing company run by a local businessman, Krasnodar news web site Yuga.ru reported Tuesday.

The incident was filmed by witnesses, and clips of the flight appeared online and, some time later, on national television, with Channel One carrying the story Tuesday.

“The donkey was forced to go parasailing to attract attention to this sort of entertainment. The donkey screamed and the children cried, but no one had the brains to call the police,” a police spokesman told RIA-Novosti on Monday.

A spokeswoman for the local police, Dina Goncharova, said she learned about the incident from the Taman newspaper on Monday, Yuga.ru reported. She said a preliminary investigation has been opened and may lead to formal charges of animal abuse, punishable by up to two years in prison.

Goncharova said the donkey's owner and the businessman who provided the ride have been identified but did not give their names.

Animal rights groups condemned the stunt.

"There was clearly no thought for this animal¹s welfare before they strapped it into a parachute, sending it catapulting into the sky," said British-based charity The Brooke, which helps working horses, donkeys and mules.

"This animal would have been extremely distressed, suffering immeasurable fear and pain. This should never have happened," it said in a statement carried by Britain's Press Association.

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