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Zoophile abuse of horses decried by legal group

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The number of criminal cases for maltreatment of animals in Switzerland rose to a record 1,709 cases in 2014, says an animal rights legal group particularly concerned about zoophile attacks on horses.

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During a press conference in Zurich on Thursday the foundation for animals in law (Tier im Recht) said the number of cases rose from 1,542 a year earlier and were triple the amount from a decade previous.

The organization drew particular attention to the maltreatment of horses, with almost ten percent of the cases (with horses) involving zoophiles.

"This rate is relatively elevated compared with other types of animals," Andreas Rüttimann, legal expert with Tier im Recht told media.

A total of 105 cases of animal cruelty to horses were registered last year, up considerably from previous years but probably below the actual number of incidents, Rüttimann said.

The animal group said in a news release that the number of unreported cases is probably much higher given that 150,000 people in the country are engaged in equestrian activities.

The group said there are now more than 110,000 horses at 18,000 farms in Switzerland.

The 20 Minuten newspaper reported that experts believe there are 10,000 people in Switzerland "predisposed" to zoophilia.

While overall cases of maltreatment of animals is up, Tier im Recht indicated this is due to the impact of tougher animal protection legislation recently adopted by the Swiss parliament.

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