

THE GHOSTS IN OUR MACHINE



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Interview with Dr. Gieri Bolliger



Photo credit: © TIR

Our **Featured Animal Ambassador** for September 2012 is **Dr. Gieri Bolliger**, Attorney of law and Director of the **Foundation for the Animal in the Law** (TIR, Switzerland). We had the opportunity to interview Dr. Bolliger in person in Zurich, Switzerland, and we filmed in the Foundation's beautiful library. Following are some excerpts from a discussion between **Director Liz Marshall** and Dr. Bolliger.

Q: You have an impressive 10,000 + books about animal welfare and animal rights in the library at the **Foundation for the Animal in the Law!** Can you please explain the purpose of the library?

A: A lot of thinking and writing has been done on the topic of animal welfare and the relationship between animals and humans. The goal of our “**Foundation for the Animal in the Law**” is to collect all this knowledge so it can be spread and used by others. The collection contains everything from natural science to legal to ethical literature. Having everything in one place makes it much easier to work and develop new ideas on the subject of animal welfare. We also work closely together with the University of Zurich so students get the opportunity to gain insights into the world of animal welfare law. The library is publicly accessible and often used. Even in the era of the internet not everything is available in digital form, especially older books. Our library gives interested people the chance to work with old and new books in a wide range of categories.



The library at the Foundation for the Animal in the Law has more than 10,000 books.
Photo courtesy Jos Schmid.

Q: Can you please summarize what “animal’s dignity” means in the context of Swiss law, and its protection of animals?

A: The institute of the protection of “animal’s dignity” is a worldwide unique act of protection that Switzerland introduced. The Swiss Animal Welfare Act does not only protect the well being of animals but also their dignity. Animal’s dignity is defined as the inherent worth of the animal that has to be regarded when handling it. Animals have to be respected and protected for their own sake and not only out of human interests. Swiss Animal Welfare Law does not simply prohibit physical interactions such as causing pain, fear, harm or suffering to an animal but also respects ethical components. For example, humiliation, excessive instrumentalisation and drastic interference with the appearance of an animal constitute a violation against the animal’s dignity.

Q: Does this unique legislation help all animals, day-to-day in Switzerland?

A: The legal incorporation of this important issue definitely helps animals every day. Even though the article of the protection of animal’s dignity is quite new (it was implemented in 2008), the quality of protection the law can now offer animals is much higher. Forms of handling that didn’t fall under any of the other animal welfare articles can now be prosecuted thanks to the introduction of animal dignity to the law. Some current examples of prohibited actions are sexual interactions with animals (zoophilia) or postal delivery of animals. Another positive aspect is how the law sees the animal as “well” – namely as a living being that has to be respected for its own sake and not just as an instrument to human needs and trends. This is a big step towards a better interaction between humans and animals. Now it’s up to the courts and the public authorities to establish a strict legal practice.



The Ghosts team poses for a shot with Dr. Gieri Bolliger and Andi Ruettimann, Lawyer, in the library at the Foundation for the Animal in the Law. From left to right: **Cinematographer John Price**, **Andi Ruettimann**, **Dr. Gieri Bolliger**, **Photographer Jo-Anne McArthur**, **Director and Producer Liz Marshall**, **Sound Recordist Jason Milligan**.
Self portrait photo by Jo-Anne McArthur.

PRODUCTION PARTNERS

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ABOUT

With the exception of our companion animals and a few wild and stray species within our urban environments, we experience animals daily as the food, clothing, animal tested goods and entertainment we make of them. This moral dilemma is often hidden from our view.

A film by Liz Marshall
An interactive story by The Goggles
Featuring Jo-Anne McArthur
Produced by Nina Beveridge & Liz Marshall
Broadcaster: *documentary*
With "Give Up The Ghost" by RADIOHEAD
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