

**Name of Firm:** Antoine F. Goetschel, Attorney-at-Law

**City/Country:** Zurich, Switzerland

**Type of Practitioner:** Sole, in fulfilling official duties.

## 1. how did you become an animal law attorney?

I was the leading attorney to change the legislation of the Canton of Zurich in the late 80's and early 90's. By that law, dated 2 June 1991, animals have their own attorney in every court case on animal mistreatment. The official attorney represents the animals' interests as if the animal was a human being. This revolutionary concept works very well.

Since November 2007 I took over this duty having been nominated by the leading animal welfare organizations of the Swiss Canton of Zurich and elected by the Government. Per year about 200 cases of animal mistreatment are worked on by my law firm.



## 2. what are your major areas of practice within animal law?

In practically every case, that has to be sent to me by the courts, policemen and administration, I describe the legal situation in favor of the animal and send important court decisions on similar cases. As the **Foundation for the Animal in the Law** which I work with closely, collects every decision in Switzerland scientifically, I can support state attorneys and judges finding the adequate punishment. I also give lectures at Zurich Law School on animal welfare legislation and animal rights. In a book I'm writing, I compare more than a dozen international legislations worldwide concerning the animal in the law.

## 3. describe your typical day.

Well, beside working as a very active attorney in various fields ([www.afgoetschel.com](http://www.afgoetschel.com)) I work on letters to courts, state attorneys and the administration concerning actual cases of animal mistreatments. I also try to find the time to work on my (about 12th) book on the animal in the law, concentrated on international questions. The biggest library in Europe in the field of the animal in the law and in ethics with more than 11,000 books and articles, owned and run by the Foundation for the Animal in the Law is a big help.

## 4. how do you decide which cases to take?

By my states' mandate I represent the animal's interest directly. The owner is very often the mistreater himself, so he would never ask for legal assistance in favor of the animal! So these 220 cases per year concern mostly mistreated dogs, cows and cats, but also other companion animals and farm animals.

## 5. tell us about your greatest success to date.

As an institutionalized representative of injured animals, I have the same rights as an injured person and his/her lawyer respectively. The following cases show how my office contributes to better animal protection.

Generally, animal crimes are severely prosecuted. In a peculiar case of severe negligence of 149 cats, I demanded harsh punishment. The prosecutor subsequently inflicted a monetary penalty up to 800 SFr and 90 daily rates of CHF 30 on the defendant. In another lawsuit in which I intervened several times, the defendant was required to pay a fine in the amount of 500 SFr and 90 daily rates of CHF 60 for repeated dog abuse.

I have also been involved in making sentencing recommendations in lawsuits concerning illegal rabbit keeping, poor cattle welfare, painful cat murder by negligence and insufficient supervision of a German shepherd dog.

In another case, concerning the killing of a fox and a common buzzard, my arguments were entirely adopted and the defendants were sentenced for wilful murder.

## 6. what are some of the challenges you have faced?

Hard hearted judges and state attorneys, stubborn farmers, selfish pet owners. And politicians that lack vision.

## 7. do you have any words of wisdom to share with australia's budding animal lawyers?

Great, continue creating a more humane world in supporting e.g. animal's interests!

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