

An interview with the head veterinarian of the European Championship, MVDr. Ludek Kucera

**1) Good morning. Doctor Kucera, you became the head veterinarian of the European Championship in the individual mushing events: canicross, bikejöring and scootering. Are you personally close to these sports?**

For sure. As here are two great activities combined, exercising in nature and being in touch with a close life creature. I professionally attend to animals (dogs especially). I clear my head while running, biking and swimming.

**2) Have you ever tried these sports?**

My very first own dog was a beautiful wolf-grey German Shepard, called Aron, with whom I went running regularly. I even got a sledding harness as a gift, but I wanted him to retain the joy from free running so he ran with me loose. We ran in the forest, where we never met anybody, except familiar forest workers sporadically. They remind me to this day, that when they met me running through the forest, tired Aron showed up 100 meters behind me. However, nobody knew that he already ran a minimum of 50 km. He always went for a short wander and only after some 20 km of our run, he would obediently line up behind me. Still, he looked forward to our runs. I also tried with him pulling a bike, but it was very dangerous. Then our four dogs went running with me – the already mentioned Aron, Tibetan Spaniel and two tiny female dogs that we found. What a sight we were. One of the female dogs, Adel, she was very intelligent and unbelievably skillful, great for agility. Naturally, I as a runner, tried to put a harness on her. But she immediately lied down and she would make me drag her on the ground. As soon as I let her free, she was able to run for hours with me. So in the end, I never managed real canicross.

**3) We anticipate the biggest European championship in the history of the ECF. Will the dog inspection be specially organized so that there are no long queues?**

The dogs won't be checked all at once. Individual delegations will be informed in due time about the exact time of their veterinarian checkup.

**4) It's not uncommon that competitors have more than one dog with them. Will it be necessary for all dogs (even the ones that won't race) to go through the veterinarian inspection?**

No other dogs, except the dogs of the competitors, will be let in the racing premises due to the possibility of infection and also due to the elimination of mutual unwanted conflicts. All competitors' dogs will be required go through the vet checkup. After the veterinarian inspection, all dogs, based on experience from other races, will be marked by a spray and only these dogs will be allowed to enter the premises of Vysocina Arena.

**5) Is there any veterinarian specification for the Czech Republic that the foreign competitors must fulfill?**

The Czech Republic has no specific terms for dogs to enter into the country. A pet passport with valid vaccination against rabies and a microchip identification are required (a tattoo is insufficient). The Czech Republic has been free of rabies since 2003. Other diseases appear in the country only sporadically. Also, because of the mild temperature zone, there aren't required precautions against some insect-born parasitic diseases. Like those occurring in the Mediterranean. Foreign competitors from Norway, Finland, Great Britain, Ireland, and Malta must deworm their dogs against Echinococcosis 24 to 120 hours before they return to their countries. We will have the approved deworming medication on hand and available to competitors.

**6) Let's move, Doctor Kucera, to the practical matters. Can you please remind the competitors what they shouldn't forget? What they will have to hand in?**

During the veterinarian inspection we will check the certificate of vaccination, in the case of foreign competitors we will check the pet passport with valid vaccinations. The microchip check will take place to identify the animals and we will carry out a preliminary check-up of each dog.

**7) Lets look at the mandatory vaccinations. Vaccinations against rabies and against the kennel cough are compulsory. Can you somehow specify the vaccine?**

We will follow the vaccination recommendations given by The World Small Animal Veterinary Association (WSAVA). Rabies vaccinations are mandatory. They must be older than 21 days with the validity of preventive immunity 1-3 years according to the manufacturer registration. Considering the large gathering of dogs, we identify with the requirements of the European Canicross Federation (ECF). The ECF requires a vaccination against kennel cough. The most suitable vaccines are the ones containing Bordetella bronchiseptica and a virus parainfluenza canis (e.g. Nobivac KC, Pneumodog). We also recommend to have vaccinations against other dangerous diseases, for example: canine distemper, parvoviruses and infectious hepatitis. We also come across leptospirosis, borreliosis and tetanus in our region, so it's advisable to include them in the vaccination scheme. The recommended vaccines are up to the decision of each competitor. Today's trend, based on the quality of vaccines that are given to the animal (for some diseases up to 3 years of immunity), is not to burden the dog.

**8) Doctor Kucera, in conclusion, is there anything that you would like to send for the competitors?**

I wish for all competitors to enjoy the Vysocina Arena in Nové Město. I wish that everything goes smoothly without any medical intervention for dogs or competitors. And that everybody, first or last, are happy with their results and become enriched by an unforgettable adventure.