

Little is known about the tragic reality that are the lives of Portuguese Podengos and their exploitation by hunters. Most hunting podengos are kept in cages or short-chained to a wall. Only occasionally given water and food, just barely to be kept them alive. At young age they go through a hunting trial. Most do not survive and end up shot dead or abandoned.

This is a common practice both for hunters and for the so called “matilheiros”, the packmen, that breed podengos for hunting.

*“They have up to 100 dogs each. When a hunter wants to buy some of these dogs it brings them with him in advance for trials. If they have “hunting” skills, they keep them. The ones that are “worthless” are shot immediately or abandoned if they are lucky enough to drift away and escape.”*

*Siegfried Albert Kraus, Founder and Chairman of the shelter Cantinho dos Animais de Beja in Alentejo, a hunting hot spot in Portugal*



If they survive they spend most of their life in a crowded, small, dark, damp cage, covered with dog dirt, beaten and starved. Females constantly pregnant and giving birth. When they no longer meet their hunting purposes they are abandoned, hanged, shot or beaten to death.

Little Sancha was beaten to almost death, thrown into a trash bag and left on the side of the road. Claudia Pombeiro rescued her. Sancha lasted 2 months, the only time of her life she felt what human love was.

*“Sancha had a microchip, I know the owner, he is a hunter. I have made a formal complaint to the local Police office and it was presented to a local Judge. The owner went there and said he didn’t beat Sancha. They accepted and the complaint was archived. Since then he killed 3 more of his own dogs in the same way. He says that now he wants to hunt with Epaugnel Bretons instead of podengos.”*

*Claudia Pombeiro, Chairman of MAAE Movimento Animal Associacao de Elvas.*





The tragic and dark elements of the lives of hunting podengos in Portugal are a showcase of the lowest human qualities: evilness, unkindness, lack of compassion. The ones that make it into light are the ones that had the luck to cross pathways with the exceptional individuals that dedicate themselves to rescue and rehabilitate these dogs. One of them is Elisabete Esteves. She rescues many podengos in a hunting hot spot in northern Portugal. She once told me:

*“My Podengos are like humans, but only with kindness in their hearts”*

Elisabete knows it is a human soul that she frees from those cages during the night and that she brings home to slowly awaken from a skeletal shadow into a beautiful bright dog. She knows all along the way that her podengos feel pain and fear, cold and warmth, joy, happiness and love. She knows their eyes will never forget her. Elisabete understands all this. But unfortunately, Elisabete is not the rule, she is exceptional.

Bring Portuguese Podengos to Light is also a statement to honor the courage, kindness, and resilience of all the rescuers that work in Portugal and in the Azores.

