

A history of Animal Rights Activity in Italy

As in many European countries, the animal rights movement in Italy is divided between groups that campaign legitimately and legally and those who use illegal extremist tactics.

Animal extremists

The strongest promoter of animal rights extremism in Italy has been the organisation: [Animal Liberation Front Italia](#). Since the late 1980s this group has been the most active in championing animal rights using extreme methods.

The Animal Liberation Front Italia is modelled on the UK Animal Liberation Front and has no formal structure and lacks any obvious hierarchy.

The only way to become a member is to embrace the group's ideology and act accordingly. Consequently ALF Italia is a spontaneous association of individuals or small groups of people, who gather voluntarily to conduct actions, protests and operations. Any group can claim actions on behalf of ALF as long as the activists take (as stated on ALF's own website) "every reasonable precaution not to endanger life of any kind" and respect the [principles of the movement](#).

Actions claimed by ALF Italia include serious crimes such as vandalism and destruction of property and also resulted in animals being severely injured or killed.

In September 2008 two ([1a](#),[1b](#))([2](#)) mink farms in the northern Veneto region were raided by activists who opened the cages of roughly 12.000 minks. While most of the minks did not leave their familiar surroundings, many hundreds did. Dozens were later found killed by traffic.

In February 2009, extremists attacked a nature park containing eagles, hawks and owls in Cumiana, near Turin. The birds of prey were free during the day, and would return to the park aviary at night. The attack was carried out with the use of around 20 Molotov

cocktails which burnt down the aviary. After the attack forty birds had disappeared but it is not clear whether [they all perished in the fire](#).

Earlier animal extremist activity

Between 1988 and 1993 ALF Italia has been associated with at least nine major attacks in Italy¹. The attacks often targeted scientific research centres. Examples include an attack on the Laboratorio del Centro di Chirurgia Sperimentale del Policlinico in Padua (1989), where several rats, mink and rabbits were taken. Rooms of the Istituto Ortopedico Rizzoli in Bologna were [set on fire](#) in 1991, and the Sant'Orsola hospital in the same city was [broken in to](#) in 1996 and research animals stolen.

Commercial activities have also been targeted: in 1992 the milk distribution centre in Bologna came under attack. In 1998, in Turin, four furriers received hoax bomb packages by mail.

ALF actions have also been designed as publicity stunts. In 1998 the Florence and Bologna offices of Ansa, the leading Italian news agency, received [two panettoni](#), both poisoned with the rat poison Racumin, and a message threatening a large scale poisoning of panettoni. The message also stated that the giant company Nestlé was expected to "cease the mass poisoning caused by its genetically modified products".

Product tests conducted throughout Italy revealed that the threat was a hoax. In 1999, the Adn Kronos newsagency and the Repubblica newspaper received a [Galak chocolate bar](#) and the announcement of the poisoning of 55 more such bars. Once again tests carried out revealed that no items had been poisoned.

Animal rights organisations in Italy

The following organisations campaign for animal rights using legal and legitimate means and do not condone violence.

Lega Antivivisezione Italiana (LAV)

[Lega Antivivisezione Italiana](#) (Anti Vivisection League) is arguably the most successful animal rights association in Italy. It was founded in 1977 and has been operating since then. Structurally, it's very similar to other similar organisations such as PETA. Funding is gathered via membership subscriptions and donations. The movement's ideas are usually conveyed with the use of flyers, legitimate advertising, sit-in protests and marches against animal research and related topics.

LAV is recognized as an institutional stakeholder, able to pursue its agenda through direct political lobbying at both local, national and European level. It also uses petitions to encourage regions and governments to take its point of view into account. LAV has also created an intergroup within the Italian parliament.

Recently, LAV has been one of the driving forces behind the current attempt to force Green Hill, a beagle farm for biomedical research, to shut down, by giving visibility to the issue, and trying to secure in parliament a ban on breeding of animals for animal research. The campaign against Green Hill, run with other animal rights stakeholders, has been at least in part successful: the facility halted the breeding operations, and is also currently undergoing an investigation for alleged mistreatment of its animals. Its dog colony has been effectively dispersed throughout the Country, when the judiciary ordered them given to custody of private citizens. LAV has been [instrumental](#) in rehoming more than two thousand of these animals.

Organizzazione Internazionale Protezione Animali

[OIPA](#) is another organisation that champions animal rights through legitimate activities and campaigns. They concentrate on the actual assistance and

protection of animals. Their status is reinforced by their Guardie EcoZoofile, volunteers acting as public officials in defense of animals.

Ente Nazionale Protezioni Animali (ENPA)

[The National Agency for the Protection of Animals](#) is the oldest and largest animal rights association in the country. ENPA exists to raise awareness of animal rights, receives no government funding, and depends on voluntary contributions. ENPA also runs a network of animal 'shelters.'

Several other minor organisations such as La Vera Bestia also campaign by providing information and material about the subject rather than organising theft or attacks against facilities.

Recent animal rights group activity

The Green Hill campaign has received extensive media coverage in Italy and has catalyzed the formation of several groups that oppose both the farm and animal research, such as [Comitato Montichiari contro Green Hill](#) (Montichiari Committee against Green Hill), [Freccia 45](#), and [Fermare Green Hill](#).

Animal welfare legislation in Italy

Italy has yet to implement the new EU Directive 2010/63 on the protection of animals used in scientific research. Nevertheless, animals have enjoyed a higher than European average level of protection since the approval on 27th January 1992 of decree n.116 regulating the use of animals for biomedical research.

The n.116 decree called for markedly stricter and more severe regulations and safeguards than those imposed by the then current European framework, Directive 86/609. Also, on 12th October 1993, a law was passed to regulate the possibility for conscientious objectors to refrain from conducting biomedical research on animals. On 20th July 2004 another law was passed, regulating the obligations and punishments regarding animal mistreating.

References and sources

See a related ARE information news item here:

<http://www.animalrightsextremism.info/news/15/dog-theft-GreenHill-Italy>

<http://blog.libero.it/uomoambiente/view.php?id=uomoambiente&gg=070324&mm=0>

<http://fronteliberazioneanimale.weebly.com/alf.html>

<http://torino.repubblica.it/dettaglio/animalisti-incendiano-con-20-molotov-lo-zoom-torino-muoiono-40-volatili/1595718>

http://ricerca.gelocal.it/gazzettadimantova/archivio/gazzettadimantova/2012/01/19/NZ_29_05.html

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1. ⁱ 3 november 1988. San Vito al Tagliamento, Pordenone. *Bottos Farm of the Le Pissarell company*. Liberation of 2000 minks. *Experts consider this the first animal related extremist action in Italy.* (ALF)
 2. 1989. Padua. Laboratory of the Centre of Experimental Surgery of the Policlinic Hospital. Liberation of guinea pigs, rabbits, mice and minks. (ALF)
 3. 1989. Pordenone. Liberation of hundreds of minks and pheasants. (ALF)
 4. 1989. Udine. Arson of the branch of a hunters' association. (ALF)
 5. 1990. Milano. Vandalizing of an animal shop and a pharma company. (ALF)
 6. 1991. Bologna. Arson to the rooms of the Orthopedic Institute Rizzoli. (ALF)
 7. Gennaio 1992. Bologna. Action against the city's dairy collection point. (ALF)
 8. 1992. Milano and Roma. Adulteration of milk bottles and boxes with blue and red paint. (ALF)
 9. 4 april, 1993. Cremella, Lecco. Failed attempt to free 800 minks from a breeding farm. (ALF) ([Source](#))