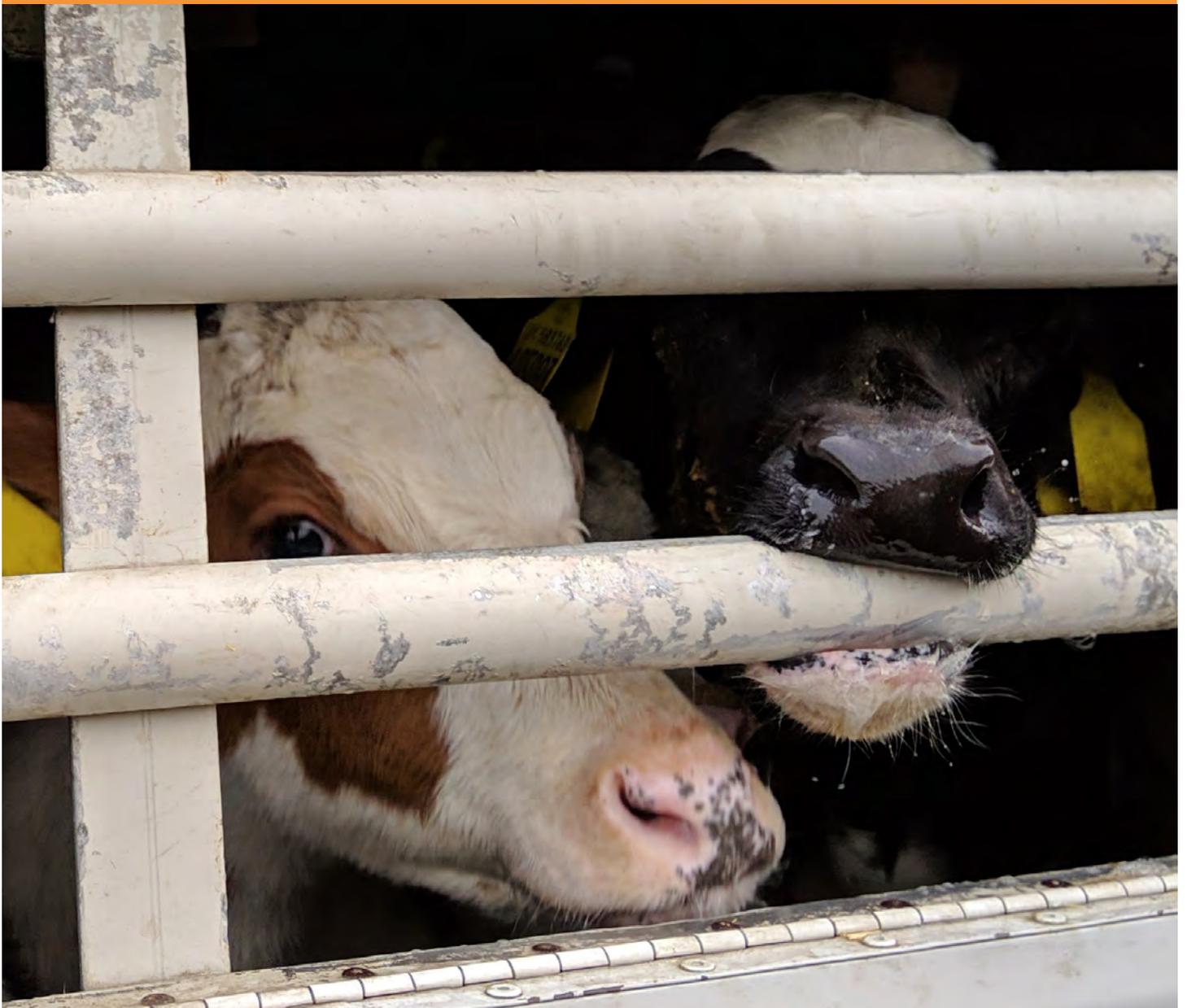


MAY | 2021

No Animal Left Behind

– proposals for an
Animal Welfare Strategy



#ActNowForAnimals

Introduction

Photo: Jo Charlesworth



2021 is an important year for the UK and set to be a defining one for animal welfare.

Climate change has confronted us with the sustainability of our resources and the effect we are having on biodiversity. For the first time since 1973, we are out of the EU with an opportunity to set our own animal welfare standards in trade deals. Informed by the Trade and Agriculture Commission's recommendations and Henry Dimbleby's National Food Strategy, the UK Government will set out its first food and first trade policies in a generation. Secure in a parliamentary majority, the UK Government is set to begin executing its manifesto commitments on animal welfare.

But if we want to harness these opportunities and grapple with these challenges, we must begin by acknowledging there is an inextricable and circular link between people, planet, animals, food and health.

The Covid-19 pandemic has shown us how quickly things start to unravel when the human-animal balance is disturbed and disrespected. At least 75% of all new human infectious diseases come from animals, so the Prime Minister is right to call for a worldwide network of zoonotic research hubs and a global pandemic early warning system. Strengthening animal disease surveillance from the community level upwards is vital and with the G7 summit approaching, the UK Government has a role to play in calling for greater investment in animal health systems to help prevent further pandemics. The 'One Welfare'¹ approach highlights the interconnections between animal and human welfare and the environment, revealing that solutions to global issues will be found by valuing high animal welfare standards.

It is becoming increasingly clear that a commitment to animal welfare will help us tackle other global challenges too such as climate change and food security. But there exists a tension between ambitions of free trade and high animal welfare, so ensuring we have a sustainable, ethical food production system that can also produce good quality food at affordable prices, will take commitment and courage.

For all these reasons, policy making in silos simply isn't an option any longer. We need the Government to provide a vision and direction for animal health and welfare. A lot has changed since the last such strategy was published in 2004. Science has improved our understanding of the welfare needs of animals, members of the public have become more interested in where their food comes from, more alert to the plight of wildlife and more distressed by the growth in criminality driving pet theft and puppy smuggling.

As leaders in animal welfare, we have come together to offer our support and expertise to Government and Parliamentarians not only to drive legislative and policy reform but also to encourage them to go further. In this green paper, we don't profess to have all the answers, nor do we offer this document as a complete and fully formed strategy. What we do know however, is that piecemeal legislation won't repair the broken links in the delicate human, animal equation. We are offering to work together to build a world-leading animal welfare strategy, fit for the 21st century and deserving of this nation of animal lovers.

Chris Packham

10 May 2021

¹ www.onewelfareworld.org/about.html

Executive summary

In the last two decades we have seen attitudinal changes from the public, underpinned by new scientific information that has driven government policy; that animals have emotions, feelings and needs and deserve a good life. That their welfare is important in itself but they also enrich our lives. And at the heart of it all, a dawning realisation of the inextricable and circular link between people, planet, animals, food and health.

In anticipation of a series of legislative and policy ambitions from DEFRA in the new Parliamentary session, this report represents the collective ideas and priorities of the animal welfare sector in the areas where legislation is contemplated. It deals with devolved issues such as animal welfare and reserved issues such as trade. A number of the recommendations are relevant across the devolved administrations. It will, we hope, assist the UK Government in developing a more cohesive animal welfare strategy. The last such strategy is now 17 years old and although some issues remain live, the animal welfare landscape has changed significantly. We face new and urgent challenges, which we will bring to life in this document.

This report is an attempt to meet these issues head on. It is wide ranging to reflect not only the variety of challenges that animals face, but also the scale and expertise of the coalition of organisations who have come together to advocate with one voice. We make 40 recommendations:

Recommendations 1–2: Setting the foundations for change

1. The Government to create a **transparent, independent, expert Animal Sentience Committee** to ensure a meaningful process of accountability for the impact on and measurement of animal welfare in policy decisions. This body is critical to ensuring Ministers' new duty of paying all due regard to all sentient animals, including cephalopods and decapod crustaceans, when making and implementing policies.
2. The Government to **include animal welfare alongside natural history in any new GCSE curriculum.**

Recommendations 3–13: Companion animals

3. The Governments in England and Wales to bring forward secondary legislation to set out a **licensing and inspection framework for Sanctuaries and Rescue Centres.**
4. Government to introduce secondary legislation to **mandate cat microchipping**, to commission a centralised

database for microchipped dogs and cats and to give guidance to councils to ensure that dogs and cats found dead at the roadside are always scanned for a microchip.

5. The Government's task force on **pet theft** to expedite its conclusions and instigate steps to deliver a solution before Parliament breaks for summer recess 2021.
6. The Government to bring forward the necessary legislation to **ban the use in England and sale of electronic training, sonic and spray collars in the whole of the UK.**
7. **The Government should update the legislation on livestock worrying and widen the scope. They should mandate the police to record and report incidents, review the powers of the police, sentencing options available to the courts and address the issue of dogs without a present owner.**
8. Government to introduce primary legislation to raise the minimum age for imported puppies and kittens to six months with increased penalties for illegal importation. To reintroduce **rabies tests and wait periods for dogs** and tick and tapeworm treatment for both dogs *and cats* before entry into the UK.
9. The Government to introduce legislation to **ban the importation and sale of dogs with cropped ears.**
10. The Government to conduct a **review of existing fireworks legislation** and their impact on animal welfare, with a view to introducing further restrictions on their use and sale. Public displays should be licensed by the relevant council.
11. The Governments to consult on **regulating cat breeding**, to include a licensed breeder inspection regime and limitations on age and litter limits per cat. To also consider a cessation of the commercial breeding of extreme breeds of dogs and cats.
12. Following the Government's consultation on firearms we are calling for the **certification or licensing of any person who possesses an air weapon.**
13. Review the enforcement, effectiveness and scope of **The Equine Identification (England) Regulations 2018** to include the requirement for equine premises to be registered. Introduce the concept of 'Operator' – a person responsible for keeping an equine ID record up to date and also ensure data on equines and premises is accurate and easily amendable via a digital solution.



More than half of UK sows spend around a quarter of their lives confined to farrowing crates, a practice the Governments should end and use the farm support payment to encourage pig producers to swap for higher welfare alternatives.

Recommendations 14–24: Farmed animals

14. Under existing welfare regulations, the Governments to **phase out farrowing crates** totally by 2027, with those that have come to the end of their working life before this date, immediately replaced with free-farrowing systems.
15. Under existing welfare regulations, the Governments to **phase out enriched cages totally by 2026**, with an immediate ban on the installation of new or replacement caged systems. This would tie in with the UK's major supermarkets' promise to phase out the sale of caged eggs from their stores by 2025.
16. Under the UK's farm payment system, which will replace the Common Agricultural Policy now we have left the EU, **payments should not be given to farms who continue to operate caged systems**. Instead, the provision in the Agriculture Act should provide for farmers to receive Government subsidy to assist with improving animal welfare and support best practice: **merely complying with minimum legislation should not give access to subsidy by taxpayers**. Government must ensure robust independent auditing to ensure welfare standards linked to subsidy provisions are consistently met.
17. All Governments to introduce secondary legislation to **protect farmed chickens**, including reducing stocking densities to 30kg/m² and only permitting the use of higher welfare breeds. Government to also introduce new species specific legislation for those species such as dairy and beef cattle and farmed fish that currently do not have such standards.
18. All Governments to introduce secondary legislation to **mandate method of production labelling** for raw and processed animal products, with rigorous inspection and enforcement mechanisms. Government should ensure mandatory method of production labelling is also built into trade deals.
19. The Government to set out clearly in its trade strategy how it will ensure farm standards are safeguarded in trade deals, maintain its current MFN tariffs where no FTA applies, give Parliament proper scrutiny in agreeing new FTAs and work with other countries to advance animal welfare standards in international fora such as the WTO, OIE and FAO. **The UK should not conclude any new trade agreement that compels it to allow the import of products produced to standards of animal welfare, food safety or environmental protection that are lower than those required by UK law**. The Government can defend its actions under Article XX of the GATT, which allows countries to protect "public morals" where it represents a legitimate public policy consideration, enabling a country to justify such a measure in certain circumstances.
20. The Government must swiftly legislate to **end the live export of farm animals and equines for slaughter and further fattening**. The maximum journey for all poultry (except end-of-lay hens) should be reduced to four hours and day old chicks should be restricted to 24 hours immediately following hatching. For cattle (including calves), sheep, pigs and end-of-lay hens there should be an eight hour maximum for all journeys, and 12 hours for transporting equines. All animals should be transported in species appropriate vehicles that can effectively regulate and monitor temperature to maintain optimal conditions for the animals.
21. The Government should review slaughter legislation, end non-stun slaughter and develop more humane methods of electrical stunning of poultry so **all animals are rendered insensible to pain** before they are killed.
22. **There should be no blanket approval for gene editing**. Gene editing of farm animals should not be permitted other than in the most exceptional circumstances where a full impact assessment has been undertaken to check the public are fully aware of the implications, the desired objective is justifiable, there will be no detrimental impact on animal health or welfare for those animals

created through GE and there is no practicable alternative to achieving the desired objective. The creation of founder lines of GE farm animals should be regulated under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986.

23. The Government should introduce legislation to **ban the import and sale of foie gras**.
24. The Government **should ban the use of high levels of CO2 for killing pigs**.

Recommendations 25–39:

Wildlife

25. The current UK regulatory framework is fragmented so we urge the Government to consider a complete review of wildlife legislation similar to the recommendations provided by the Law Commission's 2015 Wildlife Law report.
26. The sale and use of all glue traps and snares should be banned. All Governments to overhaul all legislation regarding the trapping of wild animals, so that it is mandatory for traps used to catch all wild animals to be rigorously tested for humaneness and operators of such traps mandated to demonstrate competence.
27. The Government must **ban the intensive breeding and release of 'game' birds**.
28. Government to **prohibit trail hunting on government-owned land** and strengthen the Hunting Act by introducing an offence of recklessly hunting a wild mammal, removing exemptions exploited under Section 1 of the Act, introducing custodial sentences and introducing a 'vicarious liability' provision to cover employers and landowners.
29. Government must act on recent commitments to **phase out the mass culling of badgers** in England in favour of more humane and effective alternatives by immediately ceasing issuing licences that permit controlled shooting as a method of culling and stop issuing new or further supplementary licences.
30. Government to **add hares to Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act or introduce a closed season** to the current Game Acts with greater penalties for the illegal taking of brown hares. The small and vulnerable English population located in the Peak District, should be protected by a complete ban on shooting and hunting.
31. To meet its Fisheries Act commitment to minimise and where possible eliminate sensitive species bycatch, the UK and devolved Governments to **set ambitious annual targets to continually reduce bycatch**, to invest in bycatch solutions for UK fleets and independent at sea monitoring to track progress.
32. The Government to **institute a total ban on the private possession of primates**, with a grandfather clause

for existing animals and the provision of a centralised enforcement body.

33. The Government to conduct a **comprehensive review of the trade in and private keeping of wild animals as 'pets'**, in order to place greater restrictions on the trade in and private keeping of such pets, to take into account their welfare needs, the suitability of owners, the impact on the conservation of the species in the wild and full consideration of the risks to public and animal health and safety.
34. We urge the Government to review the relevant legislation and guidance with a view to **restricting the keeping or training of wild animals for exhibition or performance** in Great Britain and to enact regulatory controls to prohibit adverts of cruel animal entertainments overseas.
35. The Government to enact a strict **ban on the import and export of hunting trophies**, with no provisions for exemptions such as trophies hunted under purported 'conservation benefits'.
36. The Government to **ban the import and sale of animal fur** and to lead global diplomatic advocacy (e.g. at **G7 and G20**) on the need to end the farming and trade of wild animals that pose both unacceptable animal welfare outcomes and zoonotic disease risks.
37. The Government to support the adoption and implementation of a **global agreement on tackling wildlife crime** and to use the upcoming review of CITES regulations to further strengthen scrutiny of and restrictions on wildlife trade.
38. The Government to **maintain support and financial commitment to the International Whaling Commission** and the preservation of the moratorium on commercial whaling.
39. Government to **invest funds in fish welfare research and humane killing technologies**, with a view to developing legislation for humane fish capture and slaughter in UK waters.

Recommendation 40:

Enforcing and reviewing legislation

40. All Governments to ensure that **enforcement is a statutory obligation** in any legislation and include an impact assessment on additional costs for enforcers. To reflect evolving scientific knowledge (e.g. sentience and breed type), legislation should also have flexibility built in via statutory instruments and all legislation should be reviewed during the normal five year review process by the newly formed Animal Sentience Committee and **amended if it is not meeting its goals**.

What has been achieved? The journey so far

The 2004 strategy set a clear goal for the next 10 years:

.....
Develop a new partnership in which we can make a lasting and continuous improvement in the health and welfare of kept animals while protecting society, the economy and the environment from the effect of animal diseases.
.....

There have been some important gains made in the ensuing period. Scotland, England, Northern Ireland and Wales have all agreed new framework laws on animal welfare, bringing in prevention for the first time. Under this, Scotland, England and Wales have agreed clear standards in how we breed, sell and keep companion animals. We have seen the introduction of Lucy's Law and Finn's Law, new preventative measures to improve the welfare of kept animals in Great Britain, measures to prevent fly grazing of horses and an end to the use of wild animals in travelling circuses. As the virtual ink dries on these pages, the Animal Welfare (Sentencing) Act will increase the maximum sentence for animal cruelty in England from six months to five years. The billion plus farm animals reared every year in the UK have felt a glimmer of hope too: an end to the use of battery cages for laying hens, of sow stalls for pigs and the introduction of mandatory CCTV in slaughterhouses.

But for every success, many issues remain unresolved.

In its 2019 manifesto, the Conservative Party set out its animal welfare commitments; tougher sentences for animal cruelty, a crack down on puppy smuggling, new laws on animal sentience, bringing the ivory ban into force, banning imports from trophy hunting of endangered animals, banning the keeping of primates as pets and mandatory microchipping of pet cats. The Government also promised that Brexit would mean an end to long journeys for farm animals – a public demand going back to the live export rallies in the 1990s. They have also relentlessly stated that no compromise will be made to animal welfare standards in new trade deals. There have been over 10 animal welfare consultations in the past year with more planned for 2021 as they commit to reviewing food labelling, glue traps, farrowing crates and cage arrangements for game birds. The Government also supported the creation of racing's 'Horse Welfare Board' which is implementing its five-year strategy – the sport now aware it is on notice for further regulation in areas such as welfare of the horses and use of the whip, if it does not make the progress required.

So much, so good – but is it good enough? What principles should guide us?

Principle

01 Understand what animals need

For many years, the 'Five Freedoms' framework provided the lens through which animal welfare was considered: freedom from hunger and thirst, discomfort, pain, injury or disease, fear and distress and freedom to express normal behaviour. However, since the Freedoms were first defined in the 1970s, there has been increasing recognition that simply eradicating negative experiences isn't enough. Good welfare means an animal has the opportunity to positively enjoy their environment and diet, have the ability to express normal behaviour and have good health.

Just as our understanding of human health has evolved, the Five Domains model² has built on our understanding of animal welfare science and the importance of a positive mental state to experience good welfare. It sets out four physical domains: nutrition, environment, health and behaviour and adds a crucial fifth domain of mental state. This domain includes negative states such as anxiety, fear, and very importantly, positive states like physical comfort and affectionate sociability.

The Five Domains model is thus often used to consider whether animals have a "life worth living", or ideally a "good life", and is especially helpful when reviewing how an animal's quality of life might change over time³. Any animal welfare strategy should reflect this and include policies that, at the very least, enable animals to live a life worth living.

² Mellor D J. Updating Animal Welfare Thinking: Moving beyond the "Five Freedoms" towards "A Life Worth Living". *Animals*. 2016; 6(3):21. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ani6030021>

³ Littlewood K E, Mellor D J. Changes in the Welfare of an Injured Working Farm Dog Assessed Using the Five Domains Model. *Animals*. 2016; 6(9):58. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ani6090058>.

Principle

02

Recognise animals as sentient beings

We look forward to welcoming the implementation of the Government's commitment to enshrine recognition of animals as sentient beings in UK primary legislation. Sentience is the capacity to have positive or negative experiences such as pain, distress or pleasure and should apply to all companion, wild, farmed and research animals. It must include vertebrates, cephalopods (e.g. squid and octopus) and decapod crustaceans (e.g. prawns and lobster). Given growing scientific knowledge in this area, the Bill should also provide a mechanism for this list to be reviewed every five years and revised by secondary legislation if appropriate.

To be meaningful and honour the Government's commitment, the new legislation must impose a legal duty on ALL Ministers to pay "all due regard" to the welfare needs of animals as sentient beings when formulating and implementing relevant policies. We understand there will be conflicts that arise between the interests of humans and other animals, so an additional feature of the legislation should therefore be the creation of an independent Animal Sentience Committee with a full-time chair, in order to assist and if necessary challenge Ministers in fulfilling their duty.

Principle

03

Ensure animals' needs are considered throughout the policy making process

An Animal Sentience Committee (ASC) should draw on the best of the wealth of scientific, ethics and animal welfare expertise available in the UK. It should provide independent and transparent advice to the Government, conduct welfare impact assessments for legislative proposals liable to significantly affect the welfare of animals. It could take representations from the public and be self-tasking, as well as being commissioned to advise on specific issues by the Government and provide expert opinion to Select Committees. There are existing models and tools already in existence. The Animal Welfare Commission set up in Scotland in 2020 for example and the [Equality and Human Rights Commission's tracker](#) provides an effective means of monitoring Government's progress in that policy area.

Crucially, the Committee needs to work closely with the existing UK Animal Welfare Committee and have real power to proactively hold the Government to account, challenging policy decisions that would have a negative impact on the welfare of sentient animals. The Committee must not be a token gesture.

Principle

04

Education changes behaviours

We believe teaching appreciation of the natural world and animal welfare in schools would result in a step-change improvement in some of the animal welfare issues impacting society today. Studies have shown that children who extend respect and kindness to animals are more likely to be more just, kind and considerate in their relations with one another. The benefits of a greater awareness of our responsibility to the wider natural world at a time when we face serious environmental issues such as climate change, catastrophic species and habitat loss are clear. Many of our organisations already deliver education programmes and are keen to help the Governments develop this idea, particularly by using their science derived knowledge of what influences behaviour.

.....

96% of respondents to a recent RSPCA survey agreed animal welfare should be taught in schools⁴.

.....

.....

70% of UK adults say that learning about the five welfare needs of animals should be a compulsory part of the curriculum taught in UK schools⁵.

.....

.....

In 2019, Blue Cross reached over **118,000 children** and young people and Cats Protection gave **1,500 welfare talks** to **41,000 adults and children**. In 2020, PDSA reached **100,000 children** through school visits and online.

.....

Recommendation 01

The Government to create a transparent, independent, meaningful process of accountability for the impact on and measurement of animal welfare in policy decisions. This body is critical to ensuring Ministers discharge their new duty of paying all due regard to all sentient animals, including cephalopods and decapod crustaceans, when making and implementing policies.

Recommendation 02

The Governments to include animal welfare alongside natural history in any new GCSE curriculum.

⁴ Beautiful Insights survey commissioned by the RSPCA, carried out between 28 January and 9 February 2020 (sample size: 1,500 10–18 year olds).

⁵ PDSA (2020) PDSA Animal Wellbeing Report www.pdsa.org.uk/get-involved/our-campaigns/pdsa-animal-wellbeing-report

**Mandatory microchipping of cats leads to happy endings.
Holly the cat was reunited by Cats Protection with her owner
20 months after going missing because she had up-to-date
information on her microchip.**



Photo: ©RSPCA

Legislative ambitions

Companion animals

Licensing of Sanctuaries and Rescue Centres

Those who take animals into their care usually do so with the very best of intentions, but sometimes the standards of animal welfare in such settings can fall short. While anyone caring for animals in England and Wales must meet the welfare standards and duty of care set out in the Animal Welfare Act 2006, there is no specific regulation of sanctuaries and rescue centres. Many sanctuaries operate without being registered charities but even where they are, there are no consistent welfare standards or systems in place to check on the standards nor that public donations are being well spent. As a result, animals in the care of these organisations may need to be 're-rescued' by other charities.

Already at or near capacity, **National Welfare Equine Council** members took in **186 equines** from struggling sanctuaries or rescue centres in 2019.

Recommendation 03

The Governments in England and Wales to bring forward secondary legislation to set out a licensing and inspection framework for Sanctuaries and Rescue Centres

Mandatory microchipping of pet cats

Anyone who owns a cat will know their inquisitive nature can sometimes get them into trouble! They can become lost or injured and without a microchip, an owner may never be reunited or informed if their pet is injured or killed. As well as causing unnecessary anguish for owners, a lost cat without a microchip places a huge burden on animal welfare charities. We know that regulation works – since compulsory chipping was introduced for dogs in 2016, [PDSA's Animal Wellbeing Report](#) shows that the proportion of microchipped dogs increased from 70% in 2011 to 92% in five years. In the same time period, microchipping in cats rose from 46% in 2011 to 74% in 2020. While this represents an increase, around a quarter (26%) of the owned cat population are still not microchipped.

We believe Local Authorities should also have a clear responsibility to record, report and scan all pet animals found dead on the roadside and make reasonable efforts to contact owners where a chip is found.

8 out of 10 stray cats coming into Cats Protection and Blue Cross centres are not microchipped. PDSA and Cat's Protection research shows **2.6 million cats** or **26%** of all owned cats across the UK are not microchipped

Recommendation 04

Government to introduce secondary legislation to mandate cat microchipping, to commission a centralised database for microchipped dogs and cats and to give guidance to councils to ensure the dogs and cats found dead at the roadside are always scanned for a microchip.

The scourge of pet theft

Pet theft, especially of dogs, is a growing problem in the UK. DogLost, a UK charity that helps victims of dog theft, recorded a 170% increase during the Covid-19 pandemic, undoubtedly due to the staggering rise in puppy prices triggered by a demand for pets during lockdown. Prices of cats and kittens online have increased rapidly, with some pedigrees fetching thousands of pounds.

Pets4Homes saw the average price of a puppy increase from **£970** in March 2020 to **£2,062** in January 2021. Less than **1% of dog thefts** in one survey ended in a successful conviction.

We welcome the Government's determination to tackle this terrible crime through the setting up of a dedicated taskforce. Whether through an amendment to the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill, currently making its way through Parliament to introduce a new offence with penalties commensurate with the severity of the crime or a public consultation to stimulate the Sentencing Council to increase the range of penalties available (which would require no new legislation), a solution must be found urgently.

Recommendation 05

The Government's task force to expedite its conclusions and instigate steps to deliver a solution before Parliament breaks for Summer recess 2021.

Ban on electronic training aids

Quite simply, the use of electronic training collars and other aversive training devices such as sonic and spray collars is detrimental to animals' welfare. Not only can they cause pain, they can have a serious negative impact on an animal's mental and physical wellbeing. In 2010, Wales led the way by banning the use of electronic training collars and in 2018, the Scottish Government introduced guidance on the use of electronic training, sonic and spray collars. Only Westminster has the power to ban the sale of these devices across the whole of the UK.

Recommendation 06

The Government to bring forward the necessary legislation to ban the use in England and sale of electronic training, sonic and spray collars in the whole of the UK.

Update the law on livestock worrying

Livestock worrying can have a devastating effect on the welfare of the farm animals involved, as well as the distress and economic impact on their owners. Although data is patchy, we do know that calls to the police about livestock worrying have increased. However the Dogs (Protection of Livestock) Act 1953 is woefully out of date and needs updating to be fit for purpose today. The definition of

'livestock' should extend to more species and the scope widened to include all land where livestock is permitted. Powers of the police must be extended to include search, seizure and post-conviction control orders and the sentencing options of the courts must be reviewed. There is also an issue of dogs involved in livestock worrying without the presence of someone in charge of the dog.

Recommendation 07

The Government should update the legislation on livestock worrying and widen the scope. They should mandate the police to record and report incidents, review the powers of the police, the sentencing options available to the courts and address the issue of dogs without a present owner.

Puppy and kitten imports

The Pet Travel Scheme (PETS) rules were relaxed in 2012 to harmonise travel across Europe. The new rules dramatically reduced the age of puppies able to travel to the UK from 10 months to 15 weeks. These changes resulted in a drastic increase in the number of puppies entering Great Britain for sale, often illegally, often carrying disease, often underage and with disturbing disregard for their welfare. So too have we seen the number of cats and kittens arriving under PETS increase from 8,280 in 2011 to 31,890 in 2019.

Leaving the EU presents an opportunity to reduce the illegal movement of animals and ensure better disease control for animals entering legally. The prevention of zoonotic diseases such as European species of tick and tapeworm as well as rabies is more important than ever.

The law on protecting sheep from dogs is nearly 70 years old and is in urgent need of updating.

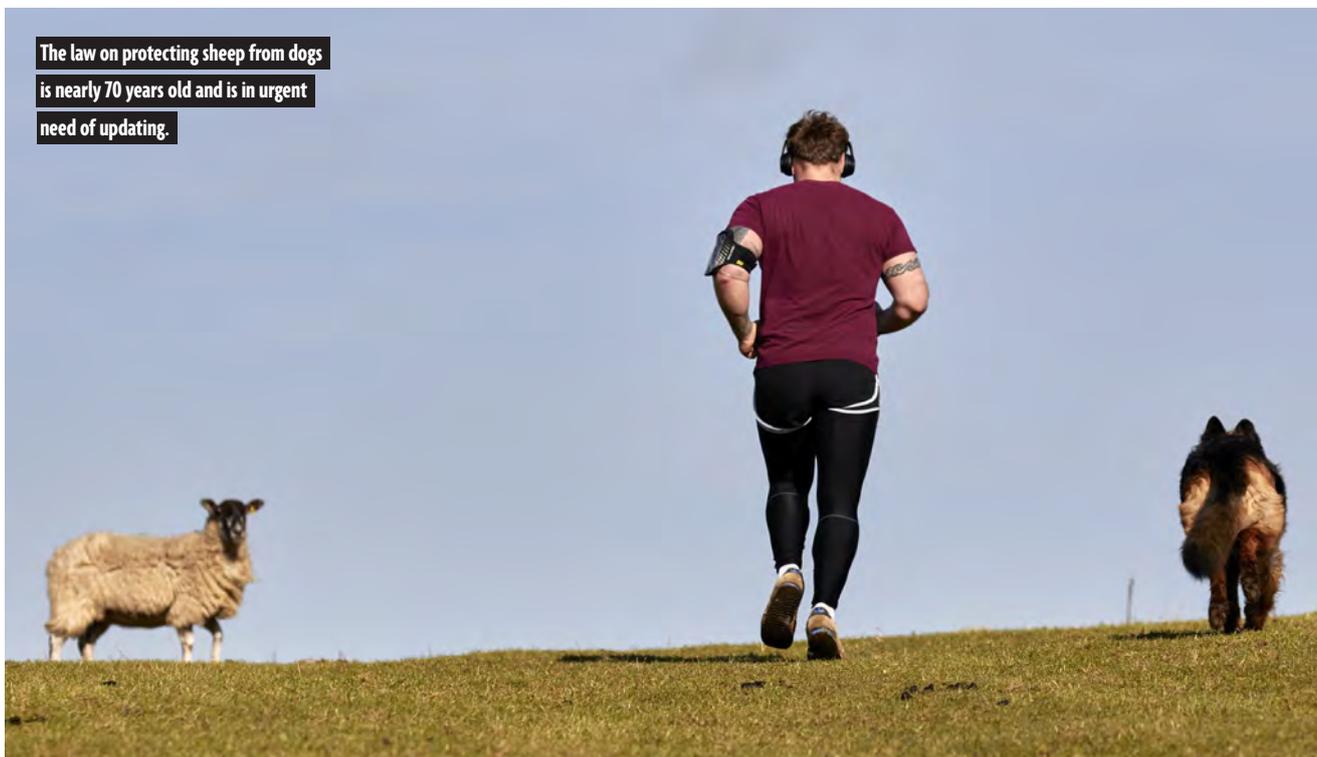


Photo: ©RSPCA

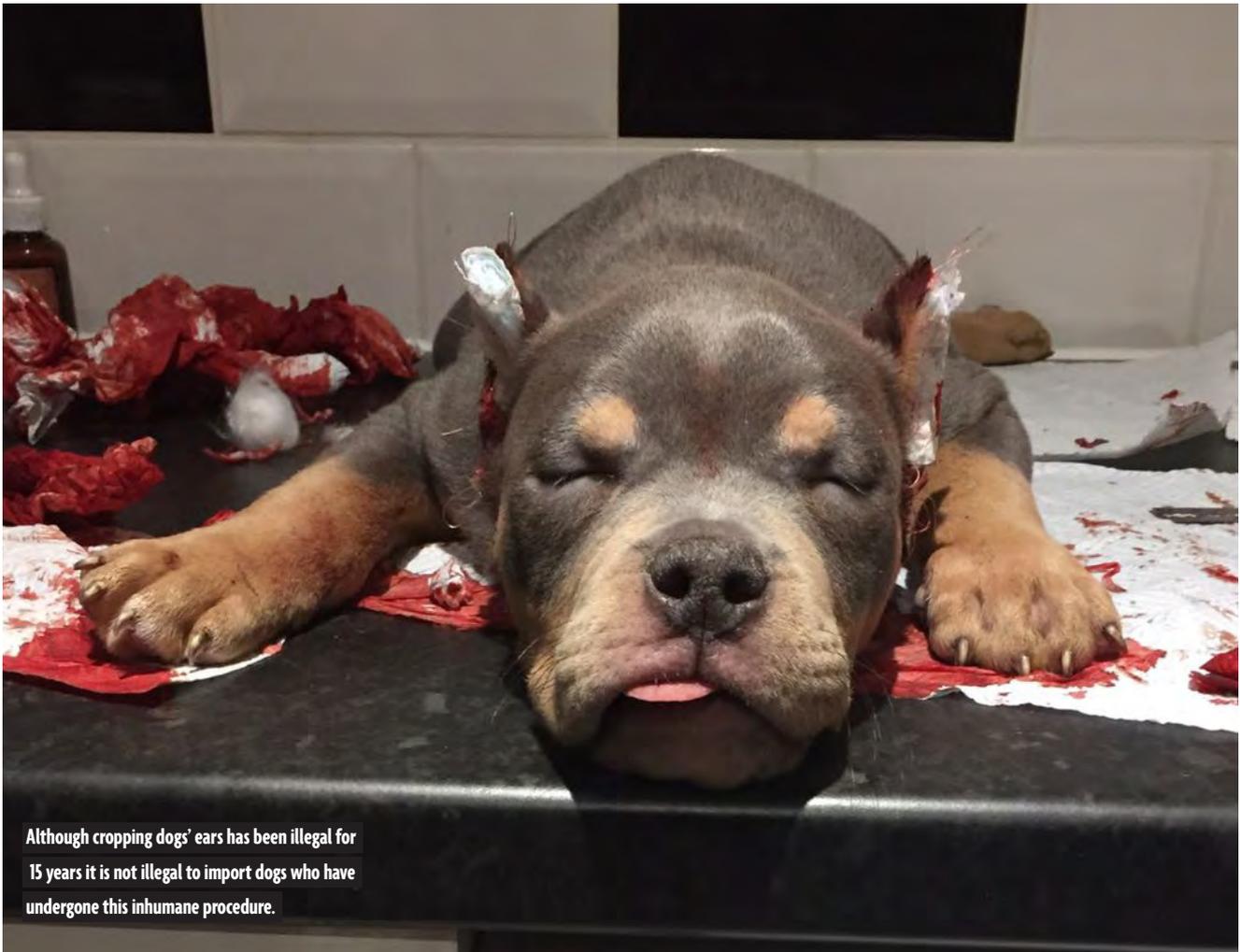


Photo: ©RSPCA

Although cropping dogs' ears has been illegal for 15 years it is not illegal to import dogs who have undergone this inhumane procedure.

.....
Since 2015, Dogs Trust's Puppy Pilot rescue scheme has intercepted and rescued **1,500** illegally imported puppies with a street value of more than **£3 million**.
.....

Recommendation 08

Government to introduce primary legislation to raise the minimum age for imported puppies and kittens to six months with increased penalties for illegal importation. To reintroduce rabies tests and wait periods for dogs and tick and tapeworm treatment for both dogs *and* cats before entry into the UK.

Ban on imports of dogs with cropped ears
.....

We have recently seen a sharp increase in the 'desirability' of breeds of dog whose ears have been cropped to fulfil a certain look. This is in part fuelled by celebrity trend setting but also a rise in the popularity of dogs historically associated with having cropped ears such as Dobermanns and Cane Corsos. This abhorrent and painful practice is not in any way normal for a dog and can have a profound influence on their behaviour and welfare. Although it is illegal to crop dogs' ears in the UK and the EU, it is not illegal to sell or import them from abroad or indeed take dogs abroad to be cropped.

.....
The RSPCA has seen a **621% increase** in reports of ear cropping from 2015 to 2020.
.....

Recommendation 09
The Government to introduce legislation to ban the importation and sale of dogs with cropped ears.

Tighter controls over fireworks

While fireworks bring enjoyment to some people, they can cause significant psychological distress to animals. In an attempt to flee the noise, they can injure themselves, sometimes fatally and firework debris can also pose a hazard to animals such as horses, livestock and wildlife if not cleared away. The Fireworks Act 2003 and Fireworks Regulations 2004 do place some curbs on the use of fireworks, however we believe further measures should be taken to reduce the impact on animal welfare.

BVA revealed that almost **one in five** equine vets dealt with firework-related injuries to a horse in 2018.

Recommendation 10

The Government to conduct a review of existing fireworks legislation and their impact on animal welfare, with a view to introducing further restrictions on their use and sale. Public displays should be licensed by the relevant council.

Cat and dog breeding

Cat breeding is currently unregulated with no safeguards in place. Cats experiencing poor welfare may be overbred, giving birth to repeated, often sick litters in poor conditions. There is also a developing fashion for pets with extreme characteristics such as Munchkin and Scottish Fold cats or brachycephalic (flat-faced) dogs such as pugs and French bulldogs. They will experience suffering and often a shortened life.

Recommendation 11

The Governments to consult on regulating cat breeding, to include a licensed breeder inspection regime and limitations on age and litter limits per cat. To also consider a cessation of the commercial breeding of extreme breeds of dogs and cats.

Air gun licensing

Although low powered weaponry will rarely kill an animal outright, being shot with such weapons can fatally injure companion animals (particularly cats) and wild animals (particularly birds and small mammals) leading to a slow and painful death. Government needs to act to prevent air guns from falling into the wrong hands in order to protect vulnerable animals and people.

Forensic ballistic science can prove which weapon fired which pellet, but is of little use without police having records of people holding such firearms.

Cats Protection's research showed **100,000 UK households** reported their cat had been shot by an airgun.

Recommendation 12

Following the Government's consultation on firearms we are calling for the certification or licensing of any person who possesses an air weapon.

Equine ID and digital traceability

Centralisation and digitisation of equine ID is fundamental to the integrity of the entire equine sector, however the Government has failed to realise the potential of the Central Equine Database contract awarded in 2018. Data remains inaccurate, the system remains unlinked to other government systems and so opportunities to trace equine movements, monitor standards, support disease surveillance and identify concerns with over breeding have been lost.

Recommendation 13

Review the enforcement, effectiveness and scope of The Equine Identification (England) Regulations 2018 to include the requirement for equine premises to be registered. Introduce the concept of 'Operator' – a person responsible for keeping an equine ID record up to date and also to ensure data on equines and premises is accurate and easily amendable via a digital solution.



Demand for pet dogs has soared under Covid-19 lockdown restrictions resulting in a huge increase in dogs being brought into the UK from abroad. Many of the dogs are not bred in conditions that would be legal in the UK.

Photo: ©Kevin Johnson

Farmed animals

It is understandable to be moved by the desperate plight of weak, illegally bred puppies or emaciated, abandoned equines and to exclaim in despair at trapped and injured wildlife. But every year, billions of animals are bred for food in the UK in intensive conditions that would make our nation of animal lovers weep. They may be hidden in sheds and barns, but **we** see them.

Ending the use of cages

Caged farming is inhumane and highly detrimental to animal welfare. If the UK truly wishes to be the global leader in animal welfare, it must take legislative steps to End the Cage Age for the more than 16 million animals that find themselves confined each year.

Around 200,000 sows are confined to farrowing crates every year – metal pens where pregnant sows are placed for giving birth. A crate is typically just three-and-a-half metres square so although boosting production and economic return, the imprisoned sow can only move a little forwards and backwards, unable to even turn around. But at what price to the welfare of these intelligent animals?

Recommendation 14

Under existing welfare regulations, the Governments to phase out farrowing crates totally by 2027, with those that have come to the end of their working life before this date, immediately replaced with free-farrowing systems.

We consume over 13 billion eggs every year in the UK, the majority coming from the 57 million egg-laying hens farmed in the UK. But 45% of these hens are kept in 'colony' or 'enriched' cages where there is less usable space than an A4 sheet of paper per hen. The limited space makes it difficult for the hens to move around, exercise and freely perform natural behaviours.

Recommendation 15

Under existing welfare Regulations, the Governments to phase out enriched cages totally by 2026 with an immediate ban on the installation of new or replacement caged systems. This would tie in with the UK's major supermarkets' promise to phase out the sale of caged eggs from their stores by 2025.

Recommendation 16

Under the UK's farm payment system, which will replace the Common Agricultural Policy now we have left the EU, payments should not be given to farms who continue to operate caged systems. Instead, the provision in the Agriculture Act should provide for farmers to receive Government subsidy to assist with improving animal welfare and support best practice: *merely complying with minimum legislation should not give access to subsidy by taxpayers*. Government must ensure robust independent auditing to ensure welfare standards linked to subsidy provisions are consistently met.

Chickens bred for meat

Chicken is our most popular meat, with around 20 million birds slaughtered every week in the UK. However, many are kept in conditions which are simply unacceptable.

Most meat chickens have been genetically selected to grow very fast and can reach typical slaughter weight just **35 days** after hatching.

Such unnaturally rapid growth means they can suffer severe leg, heart and circulatory issues. A lack of appropriate space can lead to poor welfare as the chickens are unable to move around, perform natural behaviours (e.g. stretching, wing spreading and walking) or exercise properly.

Most birds are reared at a stocking density of **38kg/m²**, which equates to **~19 2kg birds per m² of floor space**.

Last year the RSPCA commissioned a trial to assess the welfare of meat chicken breeds. This trial assessed the welfare of the three breeds used most extensively worldwide and compared them with a commercially-viable slower-growing breed. The results were clear: the genetics of these conventional breeds failed to adequately safeguard their welfare to such an extent that many could be considered as **having a life not worth living**. The trial found that, compared to the slower growing breed, the conventional breeds were up to:

Twice as likely to die or be culled.

3.5 times more likely to be moderately to severely lame and require culling.

23 times more likely to suffer from wooden breast, where the breast muscle cells have died.

The [Better Chicken Commitment](#) calls for food businesses to move 100% of their chicken sourcing to higher welfare by 2026 in the UK.

Recommendation 17

The Governments to introduce secondary legislation to protect farmed chickens, including reducing stocking densities to 30kg/m² and only permitting the use of higher welfare breeds. Government to also introduce new specific legislation for those species such as dairy and beef cattle and farmed fish that currently do not have such standards.

Food labelling

The Commons EFRA Select Committee has already twice recommended that the Government should introduce mandatory method of production labelling. We agree, so warmly welcome news that DEFRA will consult on labelling this summer. We also believe that greater awareness and consumer choice will drive momentum towards higher-value, higher-welfare production, with farmers confident that their higher quality products will stand out. But to succeed, there must be clarity for consumers and an end to inconsistent labelling and misleading marketing. A chicken pictured in a sunny pasture may be very different indeed from their lived reality.

Recommendation 18

All Governments to introduce secondary legislation to mandate method of production labelling for raw and processed animal products, with rigorous inspection and enforcement mechanisms. Government should ensure mandatory method of production labelling is also built into trade deals.

CIWF reports that **64.4%** of food consumed by adults in the UK is processed, so processed food must be part of the mandatory labelling scheme.



More than 90% of the UK's chickens are reared using fast growing breeds which are genetically selected to grow so fast they suffer leg, heart and circulatory problems.

Photo: ©RSPCA



More than half of UK sows spend around a quarter of their lives confined to farrowing crates, a practice the Governments should end and use the farm support payment to encourage pig producers to swap for higher welfare alternatives.

Photo: ©Compassion in World Farming



The Government needs to set out how they will ensure products made from lower standards do not enter the UK under new trade agreement.

Trade strategy

In the new post EU free trade world, safeguarding and improving our farm standards will be one of the major challenges facing the Government. The Trade and Agriculture Commission's recent report advocated for the UK to position itself as a beacon of animal welfare, setting in train a global race to the top on standards, with high quality food production being recognised as our unique selling point. We agree – the welfare of animals and the sustainability of our farming industry depend on us not engaging in a race to the bottom.

The current farm framework provides a reasonable foundation. The Trade and Cooperation Agreement with the EU, our biggest agri-food import and export market, provides for tariff free trade under standards broadly equivalent to the UK's. The UK's external most-favoured-nation (MFN) tariffs are set at a level which would prevent trade outside of Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) from undercutting our farm welfare standards. Furthermore, the Government has kept the present budget for farm support until 2024 and in England has diverted these subsidies, representing some £2.4 billion, towards animal welfare and environmental benefits. It is hoped the other three Governments will replicate this initiative. All three initiatives should be maintained.

However, the Government has been less explicit in how it will safeguard farm standards in new trade agreements. Its manifesto commitment, not to compromise these standards in FTAs, is clear but the UK has yet to set out in detail how it will achieve this in its first ever independent trade strategy. It is currently negotiating four FTAs, has this month agreed one in principle, and could add a fifth, India, soon. Most of these prospective partners have lower farm animal welfare standards than the UK and their priority will be to

liberalise trade in these products. The Trade and Agriculture Commission gave the Government 22 clear recommendations in how it should solve this problem. We hope the Government will agree with all of these in its response. It also needs to ensure adequate animal welfare expertise on the new Commission, clear impact assessments and a transparent process of negotiating and agreeing FTAs.

Recommendation 19

The Government to set out clearly in its trade strategy how it will ensure farm standards are safeguarded in trade deals, maintain its current MFN tariffs where no FTA applies, give Parliament proper scrutiny in agreeing new FTAs and work with other countries to advance animal welfare standards in international fora such as the WTO, OIE and FAO. The UK should not conclude any new trade agreement that compels it to allow the import of products produced to standards of animal welfare, food safety or environmental protection that are lower than those required by UK law. The Government can defend its actions under Article XX of the GATT, which allows countries to protect "public morals" where it represents a legitimate public policy consideration, enabling a country to justify such a measure in certain circumstances.

Live animal exports and long-distance transport

We welcome the Government's manifesto commitment to "end excessively long journeys for slaughter and fattening" and to "abolish the cruel live shipment of animals" and eagerly await their response to their consultation of December 2020. However, if we really want to achieve the step change in animal welfare that is possible, the Government must be ambitious and unwavering.

So while we are pleased with the suggestion of reducing maximum journey times within England and Wales, the proposed maximum times are still too long and we have concerns about vehicle transit conditions.

Recommendation 20

The Government must swiftly legislate to end the live export of farm animals and equines for slaughter and further fattening. The maximum journey for all poultry (except end-of-lay hens) should be reduced to four hours and day old chicks should be restricted to 24 hours immediately following hatching. For cattle (including calves), sheep, pigs and end-of-lay hens there should be an eight hour maximum for all journeys, and 12 hours for transporting equines. All animals should be transported in species appropriate vehicles that can effectively regulate and monitor temperature to maintain optimal conditions for the animals.

Slaughter legislation and ending non-stun slaughter

Scientific evidence clearly indicates that non-stun slaughter can cause unnecessary suffering with only prolonged blood loss rendering the animal unconscious and insensitive to pain.

Rules on slaughter are set at a devolved level such as the Welfare of Animals at the Time of Killing (England) Regulations 2015. However, there is an exemption that allows slaughter without pre-stunning for some religious purposes. Leaving the EU presents us with greater freedom to set our own rules, so Governments should take this opportunity to bring about an end to slaughter without pre-stunning. We must also ensure that all Free Trade Agreements signed, explicitly exclude the export of non-stunned meat or live animals for slaughter without pre-stunning. New Zealand has already enacted this provision.

Until an end to non-stun slaughter is brought about, a process needs to be put in place to ensure that the religious exemption is only used for supplying products to that community. We would also like to see the regulations amended to bring in minimum stun parameters for poultry and introduce mandatory and effective method of slaughter labelling.

Recommendation 21

The Government should review slaughter legislation, end non-stun slaughter and develop more humane methods of electrical stunning of poultry so all animals are rendered insensible to pain before they are killed.

Gene editing (GE)

The Government has recently consulted on GE, with a view to changing legislation so that organisms produced in this way would no longer be subject to the same restrictions as other Genetically Modified Organisms. 'Editing' an animal's genome involves procedures that cause pain, distress and lasting harm and despite claims that newer GE techniques such as CRISPR

are more precise than previous methods, they still cause unpredictable and unintended changes to the genome, which are only just starting to be understood. We believe there should be a moratorium on the application of gene editing techniques to farm animals because of the associated ethical and animal welfare concerns.

However, if a decision is made to stop regulating GE farm animals as GMOs, the scope must be limited to a case by case basis and there should be a robust regulatory and identification framework.

Recommendation 22

There should be no blanket approval for gene editing. Gene editing of farm animals should not be permitted other than in the most exceptional circumstances where a full impact assessment has been undertaken to check the public are fully aware of the implications, the desired objective is justifiable, there will be no detrimental impact on animal health or welfare for those animals created through GE and there is no practicable alternative to achieving the desired objective. The creation of founder lines of GE farm animals should be regulated under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986.

Ban on the import and sale of foie gras

Foie gras production involves restraining and force-feeding ducks or geese, causing their livers to enlarge up to 10 times their normal size causing serious, unnecessary and avoidable suffering. This type of farming would be illegal in the UK because it would contravene animal welfare legislation, but it is legal to import, sell and serve foie gras. This needs to change.

Recommendation 23

The Government should introduce legislation to ban the import and sale of foie gras.

A ban on using high levels of carbon dioxide gas for killing pigs

It is widely recognised that there are severe welfare problems inherent in the use of high carbon dioxide (CO₂) concentrations to slaughter pigs. A 2003 report by the Farm Animal Welfare Council (FAWC, now AWC) concluded that, "the use of high concentrations of CO₂ to stun and kill pigs is not acceptable and we wish to see it phased out in five years".

The recent Defra Review of the Welfare of Animals at the Time of Killing (England) Regulations 2015 Post Implementation Review should go much further, by putting an end to this practice. Instead, it states "This is an area we need to consider further in terms of research into alternative systems for stunning pigs."

Recommendation 24

The Government should ban the use of high levels of CO₂ for killing pigs.

Despite a Welsh Code of Practice for the best use of snares, the RSPCA continues to get hundreds of calls regarding animals such as badgers being indiscriminately caught in snares.



Photo: ©RSPCA

Protecting wild animals

Overarching Recommendation 25

The current UK regulatory framework is fragmented so we urge the Government to consider a complete review of wildlife legislation similar to the recommendations provided by the Law Commission's 2015 Wildlife Law report.

Wildlife legislation in England and Wales is complex and dated, with some statutes dating back to 1840. A complete review would provide for a modern legislative framework, protecting both the welfare of individuals, the conservation of species and also better regulate any taking or killing of wild animals by any method.

Inhumane trapping methods, including snares and glue traps

Snares set to trap foxes or rabbits are cruel and indiscriminate, often catching badgers, hares, dogs and cats instead and leading to severe injury and protracted death. The current system of control for snares is mostly voluntary and compliance is low. Rodent glue traps create similar issues to snares but are even more widely available to the general public at prices as low as 99p

Recommendation 26

The sale and use of all glue traps and snares should be banned. All Governments to overhaul all legislation regarding the trapping of wild animals, so that it is mandatory for traps used to catch all wild animals to be rigorously tested for humaneness and operators of such traps mandated to demonstrate competence.

Caged breeding of game birds

Over 60 million non-native pheasants and partridges are released each year, to be shot for 'sport'. Large numbers are industrially produced in intensive units, with tens of thousands of breeding birds confined to battery-style cages for most of their productive lives. Life in a cage causes stress and injury, with open foot sores, exposure to extreme temperatures and 'scalping' from repeated attempts to escape. To eliminate aggression caused by the crowded breeding cages, game farmers fit restraining devices ('bits') over the birds' beaks. These birds are not covered by the basic regulations granted to other farmed animals, nor are they routinely inspected by government agencies

Recommendation 27

The Governments must ban the intensive breeding and release of 'game' birds.

Glue traps can cost less than one pound but can cause huge suffering to animals such as birds and even cats.



Photo: @RSPCA

Large numbers of partridges are confined to battery-style cages resulting in stress and injury to the birds.



Photo: ©Animal Aid

Strengthening the Hunting Act

Hunting with dogs is barbaric and has no place in a modern, compassionate society. Though banned under the Hunting Act of 2004, the use of ‘trail’ hunting and exemptions in the Act, provide cover for illegal hunting and fines are an insufficient deterrent. In a significant turning point, ITV News recently exposed webinars hosted by hunting’s governing body in which senior figures described trail hunting as a “smokescreen”. Fox hunting is opposed by 85% of the public, while 69% back legislative change to end trail hunting.

The League Against Cruel Sports collated **677 reports** of suspected **illegal fox hunting** during the 2019/20 season.

Recommendation 28

Government to prohibit trail hunting on government-owned land in England and Wales and strengthen the Hunting Act by introducing an offence of recklessly hunting a wild mammal, removing exemptions exploited under Section 1 of the Act, introducing custodial sentences and introducing a ‘vicarious liability’ provision to cover employers and landowners.

Ending the badger cull

Since 2013, more than 140,000 badgers have been killed under licence as part of the Government’s strategy to control bovine TB in England. While welcoming the recent proposals to phase out the mass culling of badgers in favour of more progressive and humane approaches to bovine TB control (including stricter cattle measures, badger vaccination programmes and ultimately the licencing of a vaccine for cattle), progress has been disappointingly slow.

Recommendation 29

Government must act on recent commitments to phase out the mass culling of badgers in England in favour of more humane and effective alternatives by immediately ceasing issuing licences that permit controlled shooting as a method of culling and stop issuing new or further supplementary licences.

Better protection for hares

Over the last century, brown hare numbers in England have dropped from 4,000,000 to around 800,000, but despite this decline it remains legal to shoot hares all year round. Hares are also the subject of illegal coursing activity which is often linked to large-scale criminality. Scotland and Northern Ireland have banned hare shooting during the breeding season to protect both the hares and their consequently orphaned leverets.

Recommendation 30

Government to add hares to Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act or introduce a closed season to the current Game Acts with greater penalties for the illegal taking of hares. The small and vulnerable English population of mountain hares located in the Peak District, should be protected by a complete ban on shooting and hunting.

Protection of marine mammals from bycatch

It is estimated that more than 1,000 whales, dolphins and porpoises are killed each year in UK fisheries due to entanglement in fishing gear. The majority of dolphins and porpoises caught will suffocate or die, having sustained serious injuries such as amputations. Bycatch compromises not only individual welfare, but the health and the survival of populations.

Recommendation 31

To meet its Fisheries Act commitment to minimise and where possible eliminate sensitive species bycatch, the UK and devolved Governments to set ambitious annual targets to continually reduce bycatch, to invest in bycatch solutions for UK fleets and independent at sea monitoring to track progress.

The private keeping of primates and other dangerous wild animals

Primates are intelligent and complex animals who cannot be kept properly in a household environment, however well intentioned the keeper. With an estimated 4,000–5,000 pet primates, mostly marmosets, capuchins and squirrel monkeys in private ownership in the UK and with an ineffective current legislative and regulatory framework, we were pleased to see DEFRA consult on a ban on the keeping of and trade in primates as pets. The Government’s proposals to restrict primate ownership to licensed persons who can meet zoo standards is a step forward but doesn’t go far enough. We would not support a licensing scheme for private keepers which would allow breeding and selling to continue and are concerned about local authorities’ ability to enforce a ban.

The private keeping of other dangerous wild animals such as wild cats and venomous snakes has continued to increase since 2000. Significantly, there is a worrying trend in crossbreeding domestic cats with exotic wildcats. In addition to unease regarding the unknown behaviour of these hybrids, there are huge welfare concerns for the female domestic cats used to breed with a much larger male wild cat.

Born Free revealed that DWA licences were issued for at least **3,951 animals** in 2020 in Great Britain.

Recommendation 32

The Governments to institute a total ban on the private possession of primates, with a grandfather clause for existing animals and the provision of a centralised enforcement body.

Recommendation 33

The Governments to conduct a comprehensive review of the trade in and private keeping of wild animals as ‘pets’, in order to place greater restrictions on the trade in and private keeping of such pets, to take into account their welfare needs, the suitability of owners, the impact on the conservation of the species in the wild and full consideration of the risks to public and animal health and safety.

More than **400 licences**, involving more than **11,400 wild animals** were issued between October 2018–October 2020 to keep or train animals for exhibition in England.

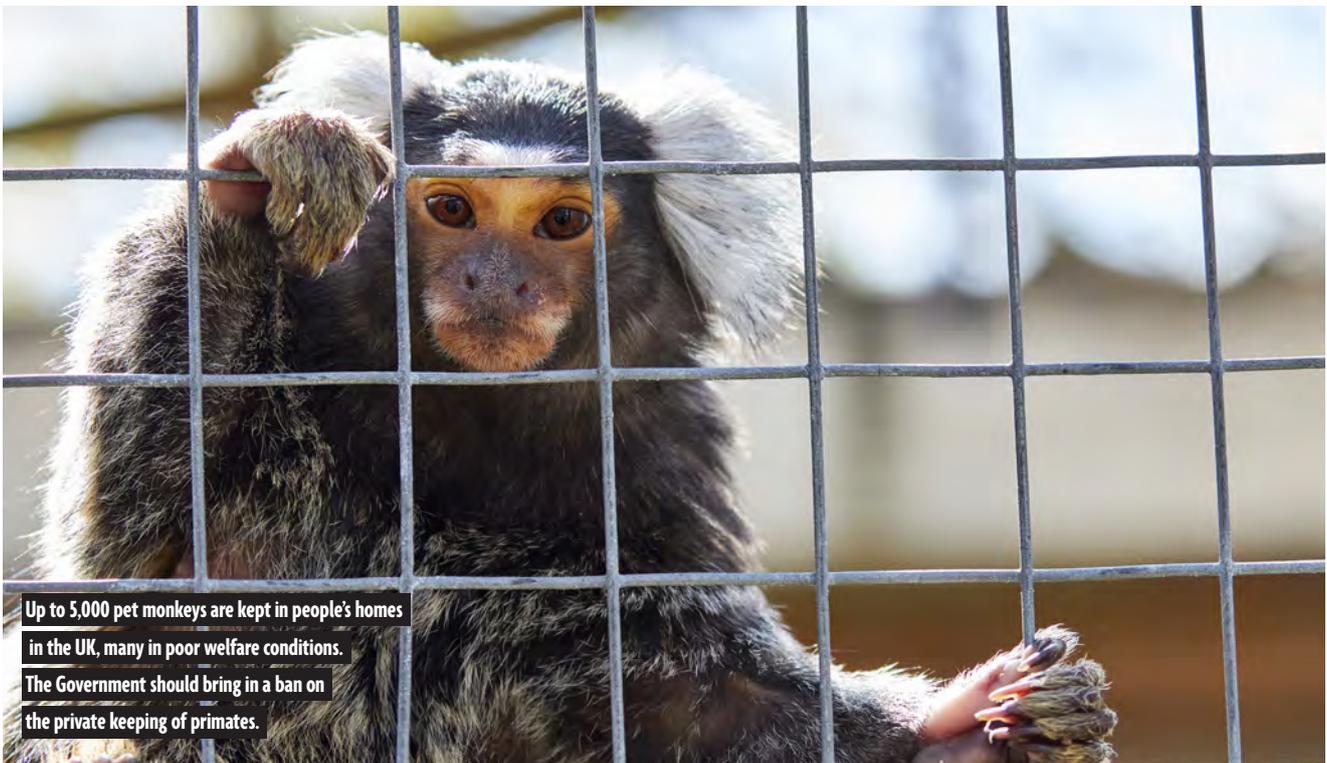
We welcome signs that the Government is also considering governing advertising for low-welfare activities overseas, such as elephant riding.

Recommendation 34

We urge the Government to review the relevant legislation and guidance with a view to restricting the keeping or training of wild animals for exhibition or performance in Great Britain and to enact regulatory controls to prohibit adverts of cruel animal entertainments overseas.

Wild animals kept for exhibition or performance

While wild animals are now banned from travelling circuses in England, Wales and Scotland, wild animals kept or trained for other types of exhibition in Great Britain including TV, film, social media and private and public events, have not been given equal consideration.



Up to 5,000 pet monkeys are kept in people's homes in the UK, many in poor welfare conditions. The Government should bring in a ban on the private keeping of primates.

Photo: ©RSPCA

Banning hunting trophy imports and exports

We urge the Government to enact its commitment to ban the import and export of hunting trophies. The ban must be comprehensive in scope and contain no loopholes which could facilitate continued trade in trophies. The Government has the opportunity to create the strongest trophy hunting trade ban in the world and to do so will send an important message to the international community.

Recommendation 35

The Government to enact a strict ban on the import and export of hunting trophies, with no provisions for exemptions, such as trophies hunted under purported 'conservation benefits'.

Banning the import and sale of animal fur

Although fur farming has been banned in the UK since 2003, the continued annual importation of £50–£70million of fur, equating to two million animals, means we remain complicit in this barbaric trade. The cramped and inhumane conditions on fur farms not only compromise animal welfare but also pose a risk to human health. The UK was the first country ever to ban fur farming and can once again demonstrate

global leadership by closing our borders to the fur trade, as well as leading diplomatic discussions towards an end to fur farming and other abusive and dangerous types of wildlife trade, globally.

Recommendation 36

The Government to ban the import and sale of animal fur and to lead global diplomatic advocacy (e.g. at G7 and G20) on the need to end the farming and trade of wild animals that pose both unacceptable animal welfare outcomes and zoonotic disease risks.

By April 2021, there had been over **400 outbreaks of Covid-19** on mink fur farms in **12 countries**.

International commercial wildlife trade (CITES) and crime

We anticipate a review of the UK's CITES implementing regulations which are currently inherited from the EU Wildlife Trade Regulations. We urge the Government to use this opportunity to further strengthen scrutiny of and restrictions on wildlife trade to help protect biodiversity, reduce welfare

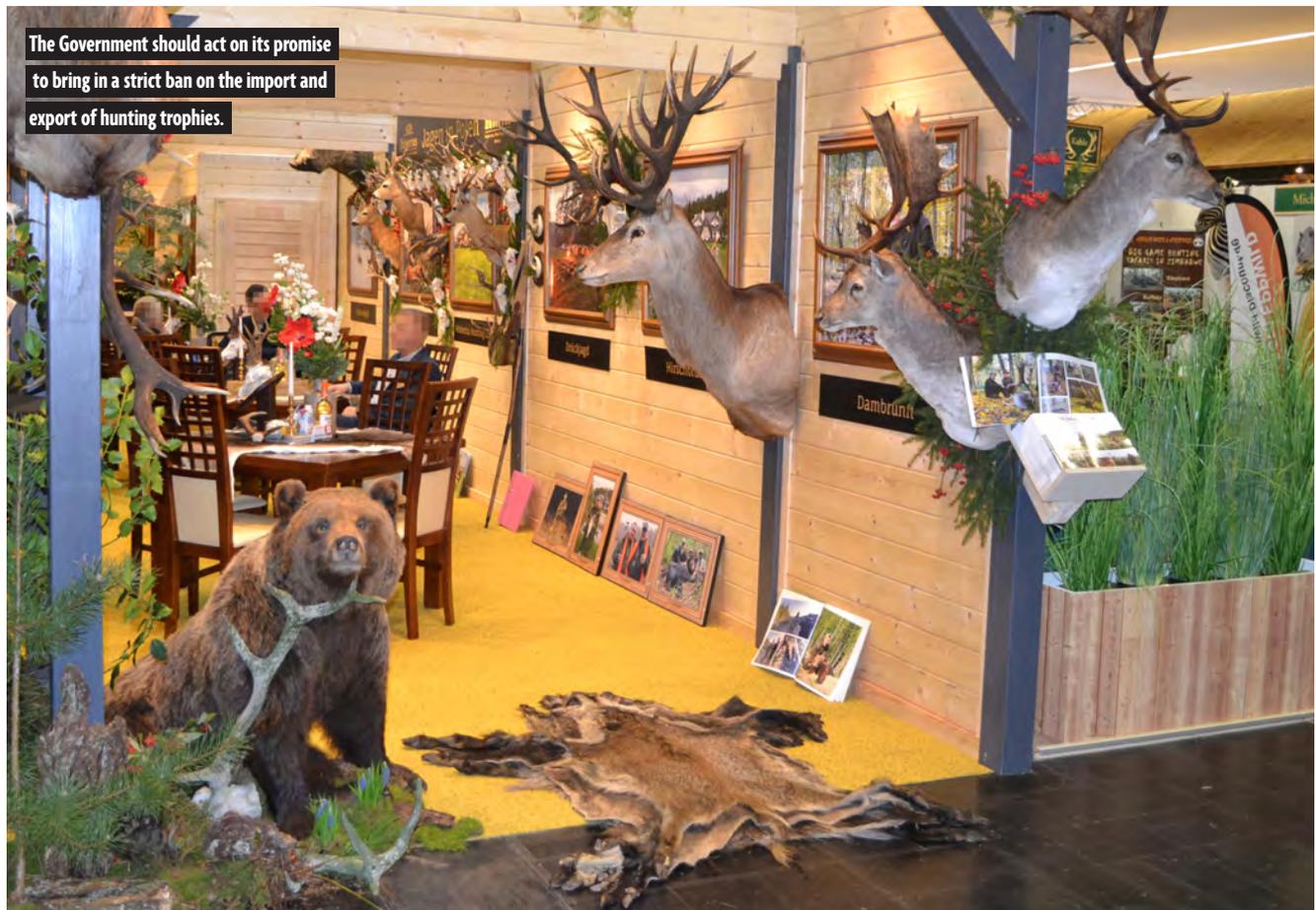


Photo: ©Humane Society International

The culling of millions of fur animals being farmed in Europe due to Covid-19 infection highlights the need to ban the import of farmed fur into the UK.



Photo: ©Humane Society International

harms associated with wildlife exploitation for trade and look at solutions such as positive lists or the recent Italian law to mitigate risks to human and animal health.

Recommendation 37

The Government to support the adoption and implementation of a global agreement on tackling wildlife crime and to use the upcoming review of CITES regulations to further strengthen scrutiny of and restrictions on wildlife trade.

Cetacean protection and the International Whaling Commission (IWC)

The UK has long been a world leader in whale conservation and welfare. While much of the world has consigned commercial whaling to the annals of history where it clearly belongs, some of our neighbouring countries continue to kill whales for profit. The UK should maintain both its financial support for the IWC and its diplomatic protests at this continued cruelty, robustly defending the IWC's moratorium on commercial whaling.

Recommendation 38

The Government to maintain support and financial commitment to the International Whaling Commission and the preservation of the moratorium on commercial whaling.

Fish welfare

The UK catches between 1.5 to 2.7 billion fish every single year. Despite clear scientific evidence that fish are sentient, death through asphyxiation is inhumane and 76% of people in the UK believe the welfare of fish should be protected to the same extent as other animals farmed for food, there is almost no regulation to safeguard the welfare of these animals.

Recommendation 39

Government to invest funds in fish welfare research and humane killing technologies, with a view to developing legislation for humane fish capture and slaughter in UK waters.



Enforcing and reviewing legislation

Legislation is a glorified and costly piece of paper without enforcement and a wasted opportunity if it doesn't deliver its objectives. Effecting sustainable change is hard and we want all legislation, new and existing, to 'work'.

However, past history shows a litany of legislative changes aimed at improving animal welfare which wasted away on the enforcement vine – whether it was mandatory equine identification in 2009 or stopping routine pig tail docking in 2019. They didn't achieve their goals as it was neither mandatory for the local authority to enforce them nor were funds made available to them for enforcement. In recent years local authorities have been asked to manage the licensing of animal businesses, prevent horse fly grazing and stop illegal puppy sales without an additional penny.

The farm animal changes we propose would require prioritisation from the Animal Plant and Health Agency (APHA) and resourcing from Trading Standards. Yet information-sharing between agencies is often patchy. While Border Forces may identify concerns with puppies, equines or livestock on arrival, the wide and broad regional responsibility of the APHA means data and thus investigations often fall between the cracks.

Turning from enforcement to effectiveness, legislation can have a shelf life. The recent review of key equine welfare legislation for example, although welcomed, was as the result of pressure from the welfare sector as opposed to proactive activity by the Government. As a consequence, it meant legislation more than 50 years old was still being used for the licencing of riding establishments.

One of the starkest examples of failing legislation is the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 (DDA.) The Government will report back this year on an independent scientific review of dog behaviour by Middlesex University which was tasked with looking at the impact of the DDA on promoting responsible dog ownership and improving public safety. The DDA was introduced in the UK following a number of high-profile dog attacks on children. Its aim was to improve public safety, reduce dog bites and eradicate breeds and types of dogs traditionally selected for fighting; the Pit Bull Terrier, Japanese Tosa, Fila Brasileiro and Dogo Argentino.

However the DDA has failed to achieve its objectives and as well as compromising dog welfare, has resulted in the unnecessary and inappropriate euthanasia of many dogs. Breed/type is not an appropriate criterion to assess a dog's risk to people. **Effective legislation has to be evidence based in approach.**

.....

The BVA discovered that adult hospital admission rates for dog bites **tripled in England** between 1998 and 2018. **Thousands of dogs** have been needlessly euthanised since 1991.

.....

On the 30-year anniversary of the DDA, the findings of this report will provide the Government with the opportunity to review the Act, in particular the clause dealing with prohibited types. It can be no coincidence that similar legislation is currently being reviewed in several other countries and the progressive trend is one which focuses on education, prevention and is breed neutral in approach.

Finally, responsibility for enforcement and review should not fall solely to the charitable sector. Such an approach is unsustainable, isolates animal welfare as a social issue and hampers collaboration and data-sharing with other statutory agencies.

Recommendation 40

All Governments to ensure that enforcement is a statutory obligation in any legislation and include an impact assessment on additional costs for enforcers. To reflect evolving scientific knowledge (e.g. sentience and breed type) legislation should also have flexibility built in via statutory instruments and all legislation should be reviewed during the normal five year review process by the newly-formed Animal Sentience Committee and amended if it is not meeting its goals.



Photo: @RSPCA



Although it is illegal to have a horse that is not microchipped, more than half the horses entering UK rescues are not identified due to poor enforcement.

Conclusion

Driving societal change isn't easy. Building agreement when there are conflicting priorities and seemingly bigger and more important challenges is hard, but we believe the prize of a better life for millions of animals is worth fighting for. We are grateful for the progress this and previous Governments have made and for the anticipated legislative changes to be announced in the Queen's speech.

But animals deserve more – and to break the unsustainable cycle of climate change, find solutions for food insecurity and to reduce the risk of pandemic disease, Governments need to do more.

As leaders in animal welfare and science – through this green paper – we offer our expertise and commitment to the Government to work with them, to build a world-leading animal welfare strategy, fit for the 21st century and deserving of this nation of animal lovers.

Roll of honour – our contributors and collaborators

We are incredibly grateful to the cast of hundreds within the animal welfare sector who have come together to create this document. Without their expertise, sense of team and collective passion to improve the lives of animals, it would not have been possible. **#ActNowForAnimals**



A better future for animals will require political leadership, so we are grateful to have received cross party support.

“We welcome the strong steps the Government has taken in advancing animal welfare, including the Animal Welfare (Sentencing) Act to increase sentencing for animal cruelty and its commitment to leading standards around the world such as ending live exports for slaughter and fattening. It is important that the Government plays an active role globally too. Animal welfare is an increasing concern amongst the general public, who frequently look to Government to take the lead in both maintaining and improving standards. We welcome the ‘No Animal Left Behind’ Animal Welfare Strategy proposals and look forward to seeing powerful animal welfare measures in the Queen’s Speech and working with all parties in achieving a better world for all animals.”

– Lorraine Platt, Co-founder, Conservative Animal Welfare Foundation

“Animal welfare must be a priority for any government. We must ensure that our animals are cared for, the abuse of animals is punished and eradicated, and those with responsibility for animal welfare are fully supported. This report, from organisations right across the animal welfare sector, is an extremely timely and powerful contribution to this area of policy about which very many people, rightly, are so passionate. I welcome it as the basis for the development of a truly holistic approach to the compassionate treatment of all animals.”

– Lord Dodds of Duncairn, Democratic Unionist Party

“The urgent challenges we face around biodiversity, climate change, human health and animal protection need a joined-up approach and this blueprint is a model of that, with the backing of more than 50 organisations. The Government needs to read this report and take the opportunity to develop a truly joined-up strategy for animal health and protection before it’s too late.”

– Caroline Lucas MP, Green Party

“Labour welcomes this important contribution to the debate – it is very important that animal welfare organisations speak with one voice. Many of these proposals are existing Labour policies and we will consider the paper carefully as we develop our ideas for the future.”

– Luke Pollard MP, Shadow Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

“How we care for and protect animals is a mark of the kind of country we are and to do our best by those we share this land with, we must have a comprehensive approach to animal welfare. I hope that the Government will agree and legislate for a package that ensures that we live up to our image as a nation of animal lovers.”

– Tim Farron MP, Liberal Democrat spokesperson for Food & Rural Affairs

“I welcome this landmark report which sets a path towards a more comprehensive animal welfare strategy. As the owner of dogs, chickens and horses, animal welfare is a policy area that is close to my own heart. Wales is a nation of animal lovers, with just under half of all households owning a pet, while our proud agriculture sector continues to play a key role in our economy and culture. Many people in Wales will therefore welcome the publication of this report.”

– Liz Saville Roberts MP, Plaid Cymru Westminster Leader

“This report is a substantial and comprehensive piece of work and it’s a huge contribution to the debate on the treatment of animals. This report and its recommendations will challenge politicians in Government and opposition alike and will help to drive forward proper consideration of animal welfare issues.”

– Deidre Brock MP, SNP Spokesperson for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

#ActNowForAnimals – a video message

Some famous faces have joined us in support of this document – hear what they have to say here:

www.rspca.org.uk/getinvolved/campaign/actnowforanimals