

Naturewatch Foundation General Election 2017 Opportunities

Becoming a world leader in animal welfare

The United Kingdom aspires to be a world leader in animal welfare, and has already provoked change in international laws to protect animals. We implore future political leaders to consider animals and the impact leaving the European Union will have on them. We ask that existing animal welfare legislation and wildlife protection legislation be strengthened post-Brexit, and that any changes to the legislative framework improve enforceability of legislation.

Dog Welfare

Puppy farming is widely accepted as the United Kingdom's major dog welfare issue of the 21st century. Around half the puppies purchased annually in the UK (around 400,000) are estimated to come from puppy farming systems.

In the last twelve months, the Government undertook several steps to improve standards for the breeding and sale of dogs and puppies, including reviewing animal establishment licensing laws in England. Defra is now in the process of drafting new legislation based on these reviews. While some positive actions were proposed as a result of the reviews, ultimately they did not go far enough to work towards ending the cruel business of puppy farming in the United Kingdom.

Opportunities:

- 1) End the sale of puppies via third parties other than genuine rehoming services.** There is overwhelming support for a ban on third party puppy sales. Yet the recent review of licensing laws failed to include a ban in the proposed new legislation, despite it being the single quickest and most effective way to end cruel puppy farming. As a first step, we propose Defra establishes a time frame to work towards a third party sales ban, with a view to phasing it out over the next five years.
- 2) Modernise dog breeding regulations to protect progeny of dogs.** Unscrupulous breeders exploit consumer desire for dogs bred with physical features that compromise the animals' welfare. The Government must put forward a strong plan to draft breeding regulations that protect progeny of dogs to ensure now common health problems, such as respiratory disorders, heart disease and kidney problems, and many others, become a thing of the past.
- 3) Publish a list of registered and licensed dog breeders and sellers.** Defra rejected this EFRA Committee recommendation as they claim the public should only access assured breeders through the Kennel Club. However public knowledge about licensing requirements for breeders and sellers is currently far too low to place total faith in buyers to be sourcing from Kennel Club Assured Breeders alone. This is demonstrably already a failed method as seen by the continuing existence of rogue breeders and sellers. The Government must make a firm commitment to improve traceability of sellers and breeders in order to protect both dogs and consumers from unscrupulous puppy farmers.
- 4) Introduce stricter laws for online classified sites.** The Government has proposed to include a requirement for licensed sellers of pets to display their licence number in online advertisements, a move we applaud. However this requirement may be easily flouted by rogue puppy sellers. The Government must introduce a requirement to display a registration number for unlicensed sellers of all animals; and make the PAAG Minimum Standards mandatory for all websites where pets are advertised and sold within the UK.

Animal Experiments

Despite a national aspiration to replace, refine and reduce the use of animals in British laboratories, the numbers of animals used in scientific procedures has consistently risen over the past 15 years. In 2015, over 4 million live animals were used in scientific procedures in Great Britain. This represents an increase of around 52,000 compared with 2013.

In 2015 the Coalition Government ended the testing of finished household products on animals, however the legislative requirements for testing of individual ingredients remains full of loopholes allowing for unnecessary animal testing.

Section 24 of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act, 1986, prohibits information about animal experiments becoming public knowledge, despite it being in the public interest – presenting a direct conflict with the central principles of the Freedom of Information Act.

Opportunities:

- 1) Repeal section 24 of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act, 1986** so taxpayers, consumers, researchers and shareholders are all privy to the methods and purposes of animal experiments. A public consultation on repealing section 24 was run by the Home Office in June 2014 but a Government response is still yet to be issued. In that time, around 12 million animals were subjected to experiments, and research funding may have been ineffectively placed. There is wide public, Government and scientific community support for repealing section 24 and it must be prioritized as an urgent action by the new government. As a first step, we propose the Government respond to the public consultation before the end of 2017.
- 2) End the use of animals in household product ingredient testing and ban the sale of household products which contain new ingredients tested on animals.** As with cosmetic testing, there is no public appetite for household product ingredient testing on animals. Banning the sale and marketing of such products would also work towards reducing the practice internationally, in the same way the EU cosmetic testing regulation did.
- 3) Increase funding for non-animal alternative tests and introduce a levy for animals used in British laboratories.** Incentivizing the scientific community and industry to use fewer animals will be critical to successful implementation of the 3Rs, through researching, developing and validating non-animal alternatives. The Home Office could ring-fence funds raised by the treasury for the purpose of reinvestment into alternatives; and create tax incentives for research not involving the use of animals.
- 4) End the use, breeding and importation of dogs and cats for scientific procedures and training in the UK.** 3,405 dogs were used in experimental procedures in 2015, and 192 cats. In 2016, despite overwhelming public apprehension, a beagle breeding facility was greenlit for housing 200 beagles in Hull. There is very little public appetite for conducting scientific procedures on dogs or cats and community sentiment on this issue must be acknowledged by future governments. We propose the government increase funding to validate non-animal alternative methods to using dogs and cats in scientific procedures, and pledge that no further laboratory dog or cat breeding facilities will be built or expanded in the UK.

Submitted by Caroline Ruane, CEO; Jennie Rudd, Campaign Director; and Joanna Randall, Campaign Manager, Naturewatch Foundation