

ANIMALS MATTER



Animals matter; to our climate, to our health, to our economy, and to British voters. They matter as sentient individuals.

Improving animal welfare is both popular with the electorate and essential to creating a safe, sustainable and fair future.



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From across our proudly self-proclaimed 'nation of animal lovers', all Members of Parliament receive a large amount of correspondence from citizens wanting more and stronger animal protection laws and policies. In-depth polling this year showed that across all parts of Great Britain, almost three-quarters of people want to see the government pass more laws to improve animal welfare and protect animals from cruelty.¹ Concern for animal welfare holds strong across all demographics including age, social grade, and political persuasion.

The welfare and suffering of animals can be an emotive issue, but policy makers should not mistake improvements in animal protection as a sentimental or altruistic ambition. Promoting good animal health and welfare is an intrinsic and essential part of solving many of society's major challenges, including climate change, sustainable food production, public health, and reversing biodiversity and habitat loss.

This briefing sets out some key areas of opportunity for improving animal protection laws. Many of these opportunities have arisen as a result of Brexit; a chance for us to positively affect the welfare of animals not just domestically, but also through our independent trading and relations with the rest of the world. All command strong public support, most have near-zero direct cost, and all would set the UK on track to becoming a world leader in the compassionate treatment of animals, for the benefit of animals, people and the planet.



SHOW GLOBAL LEADERSHIP IN BIODIVERSITY PROTECTION

HOW

Ban the import of hunting trophies to end UK support for this damaging and outdated industry while investing in non-consumptive sustainable conservation programmes that empower local communities and safeguard species.

Trophy hunting has been shown to negatively impact populations of threatened and endangered species, including disrupting social structures, reproduction rates and infanticide, whilst failing to provide adequate conservation funding.² The fact that, in 2022, people from the UK are still travelling the world to kill some of the world's rarest animals in order to import their body parts home is a stain on our country's reputation. However, Britain can lead the way by passing the world's most comprehensive ban on the import of hunting trophies and by ending our involvement in this outdated and damaging practice.

WHY IT MATTERS

As sentient beings

Trophy hunting serves no purpose; it is not about killing an animal for sustenance or self-defence but purely for the pleasure of killing. The trophy hunting industry actively encourages the use of less effective and thus less humane weapons like bows, handguns and muzzle-loaded rifles.³ Animals killed by trophy hunters can be left to suffer for days once initially wounded. Cecil the lion was shot with an arrow and took around 10 hours to die.

To voters

Polling confirms that the overwhelming majority of the British public agree that trophy hunting has no place in our society, with more than 80% supporting a trophy hunting import ban and 76% wanting a ban applied to all species.⁴ A commitment to ban the import of hunting trophies appeared in both Labour and Conservative Party manifestos in 2019 and has been included in all four of the last Queens Speeches.

To safeguard biodiversity

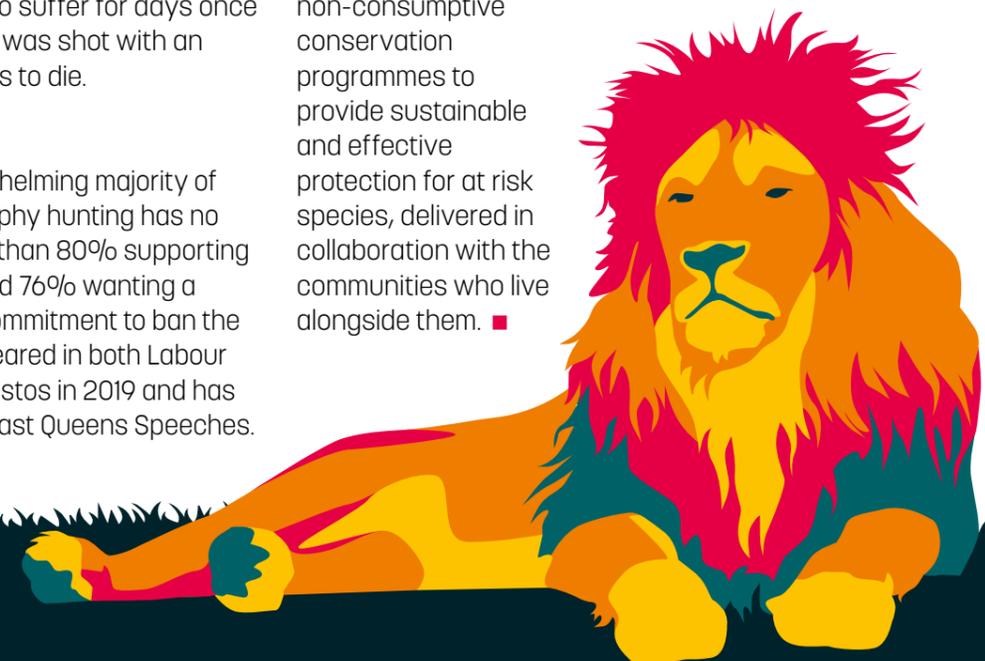
The conservation benefits claimed by the trophy hunting industry have failed to materialise. Trophy hunting has been shown to cause population decline⁵ and negatively impact population viability of a number of threatened or endangered species. The practice deliberately targets mature, large animals whose removal can have a devastating impact on social structures of species like lions⁶, leopards⁷ and elephants⁸ and increase infanticide. Trophy hunting also fails to support biodiversity by indiscriminately killing non-target species, such as caracal which may predate on game stock.

By ending our involvement in this unethical and unsustainable practice, we can prioritise and catalyse funding to support innovative non-consumptive conservation programmes, which provide genuine protection to at-risk species and their habitats.

NEXT STEPS

Henry Smith MP tabled the government-backed Hunting Trophies Import (prohibition) Bill in July 2022, and it has its Second Reading on 25 November. The Bill should be scrutinised to ensure it would deliver a robust ban covering all at-risk species. Any amendments to build in 'smart ban' loopholes should be robustly opposed.

The Government should ramp up funding for non-consumptive conservation programmes to provide sustainable and effective protection for at risk species, delivered in collaboration with the communities who live alongside them. ■



DELIVER BREXIT BENEFITS BY SAFEGUARDING OUR HIGH ANIMAL WELFARE STANDARDS IN TRADE

HOW

Deliver the Government commitment to end the live export of livestock for slaughter and fattening and protect British farmers and hard won UK laws by enshrining core animal welfare standards in our trade policy.

BANNING LIVE EXPORTS

The Government's manifesto states "We will end excessively long journeys for slaughter and fattening" and commits to "Abolishing the cruel live shipment of animals."⁹ We welcome this policy, and the introduction in June 2021 of the Animal Welfare (Kept Animals) Bill. A similar policy, to end live exports for slaughter or fattening, has also been announced by the Labour Party.¹⁰ The policy would apply to any exports from Great Britain as it has been agreed by the Governments in Scotland and Wales. The New Zealand Government has announced a ban on all livestock export by sea. The UK should be keeping pace with world leading standards of animal welfare and an end to the live export trade is long overdue.

WHY IT MATTERS

As sentient beings

In 2019, 3,549 calves were exported from GB for fattening. 3,446 of those animals went from Scotland to Spain, via Ramsgate, on journeys lasting over 60 hours.¹¹ Research indicates a higher mortality rate in post-transport for calves under four weeks old.¹² Allowing long journeys presents an unnecessary risk to welfare. In the same year, 30,890 sheep were exported for slaughter or fattening. After 5-6 hours of transport, sheep are likely to be hungry and may already be showing signs of dehydration. Some sheep export journeys were destined for Bulgaria and Hungary. These countries have a large onward trade to the middle east, where slaughter conditions

are often inhumane.¹³ Once animals leave our borders, the UK is unable to ensure that they will be transported and slaughtered in accordance with EU legislation on animal welfare.

For a strong economy

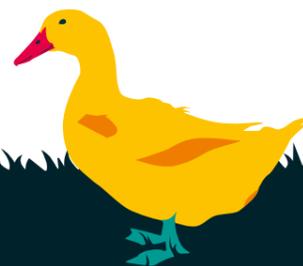
Since 2021, there have been no live exports for slaughter or fattening. There are economically viable alternatives to live exports. Sheep can be exported as carcasses, to the benefit of the British meat-processing industry. Calves exported are mainly male dairy calves and the export trade in these is rapidly becoming redundant due to growing use of sexed semen, dairy-beef crosses and commitments by retailers to source British beef. The UK is only 75% self-sufficient in beef; so it makes no sense to export calves. They should be reared in the UK to high welfare standards, thereby reducing our large trade deficit.

NEXT STEPS

The ability to end this trade, as a result of the UK having fully left the EU, has been identified on numerous occasions by the Government, including the previous Prime Minister.¹⁴ Now is the time to deliver on that promise, by passing the Animal Welfare (Kept Animals) Bill.

CORE ANIMAL WELFARE STANDARDS IN TRADE DEALS

The UK Government has made repeated commitments not to compromise "on our high environmental protection, animal welfare and food safety standards" in trade negotiations. However, as we saw with the UK-Australia trade agreement, the UK is prepared to allow in animal products from other countries that would be



illegal to produce in the UK - for example wool from mulesed sheep and beef from cattle transported for twice as long as in the UK or produced in barren feedlots.¹⁵ As these practices are often cheaper, the imported food can undercut British-produced food resulting in our farmers being undercut and the UK exporting its farm welfare standards.

WHY IT MATTERS

For food security

A trade policy without adequate safeguards will negatively impact the UK's current animal welfare standards for decades to come - undermining our hard-won regulations and seriously undercutting higher welfare British farmers, which risks putting more farmers out of business, jeopardising our food security and outsourcing animal cruelty.

For a strong economy

Trade deals typically include reductions and elimination of tariffs on imports. If the tariff on imports of food produced to low standards is eliminated, British farmers will be entirely unprotected from unfair competition. It's not just our farmers who will be exposed. Our food industry employs over 4 million people in the farm to fork food chain. Enshrining core animal welfare standards in trade deals would limit the risk of producers in the UK being undercut by such conditionality.

NEXT STEPS

The UK Government should introduce a set of core standards for animal welfare and the environment in its trade strategy. These standards must be met for products to be included within the terms of any free trade agreement. Trade negotiators should be instructed that concession of tariff-free access for meat, eggs or dairy should be conditional on the product(s) meeting those core standards, and therefore ensure they are competing with British producers on a fair basis.

FOOD LABELLING ON PRODUCTION PROCESSES

The UK Government now, it is outside the EU, has the opportunity to bring in clearer labelling for consumers on how their food was produced and slaughtered. In September 2022, Defra published

the results of their call for evidence. This showed overwhelming support for introducing mandatory labelling and a consultation on proposals has been promised for next year. We support clearer information for consumers showing how their food was produced - whether it is in supermarkets, on products or in the food service sector.

WHY IS MATTERS?

To voters

Consumers have said they wish to see clearer information on food so that they can make purchase decisions. Polling from 2021 shows that 68% of the British public want to see food labelled to show the conditions that animals have been reared in and 84,000 people signed a petition supporting Honest Labelling.¹⁶ Introducing Method of Production (MoP) labelling will empower consumers to make informed choices about the food they purchase.

To a strong economy

As it can and should be applied to imported products, labelling will ensure that information on any food sold in the UK whether it is produced here or abroad, is readily available to the consumer. This will enable market forces to drive further investment in higher welfare systems by British farmers.

In tandem with a trade policy that adheres to core animal welfare standards, labelling will also ensure that consumers can easily distinguish between higher welfare products and lower welfare imports that do not meet the standards that UK citizens expect their food to be produced to.

NEXT STEPS

We call on the Government to undertake the consultation on labelling as soon as possible to fulfill these demands and, based on these results, legislate to improve labelling on meat and dairy, and on products containing them products, thereby empowering consumers and supporting high-welfare British farmers. ■



LEAD THE WORLD IN ENDING THE CRUEL AND DANGEROUS FUR TRADE

HOW

Build on our world-leading ban on fur farming, by closing our borders to the importation and sale of real animal fur.

The UK led the world by banning fur farming twenty years ago. Public and political opposition to the fur trade now resonates around the globe and the UK's action has been followed by seventeen countries, and growing, across Europe. Since fur farming was banned, the UK has imported millions of pounds worth of real fur; we currently import the equivalent of over one million animals' worth of fur annually. If fur is too cruel to farm here, it is surely too cruel to sell here.

WHY IT MATTERS

As sentient beings

The keeping of tens of millions of wild carnivores, such as foxes, mink and raccoon dogs, in metre-square wire mesh cages for their entire lives fails dismally to meet their complex biological and behavioural needs. Unable to act out their natural behaviours such as running, digging, hunting these animals can suffer psychological disorders. Fighting between cage mates and even cannibalism are common.

In the wild, coyotes, foxes and raccoons are caught by the leg or foot in brutal metal traps (banned in the UK for nearly 70 years) where they can remain for hours, or even days, before the trapper returns to bludgeon or suffocate them. In their desperate struggle to break free, the animals can break their teeth or even gnaw off their own limbs.

There is no such thing as humane fur farming or trapping; 'assurance schemes' or 'high-welfare fur farming' have been repeatedly and extensively proven to not provide animals with a life worth living. As well as using inadequate welfare measures, these schemes are run and funded by the fur industry.

To prevent pandemics

The stressful and unsanitary conditions endured by many thousands of animals living in unnatural proximity on industrial fur farms create the perfect petri dish for viruses to produce and even mutate. Mink on more than 480 fur farms worldwide have been infected with COVID-19, with spillover to humans recorded in at least six countries.¹⁷

Leading global agencies including the World Health Organisation identified the risk and spread of COVID-19 within fur farms, spillover from fur farms to humans and transmission to susceptible wildlife populations, in Europe as high, and the World Organisation for Animal Health (formerly OIE) concluded that raw mink skins cannot be considered a safe commodity for international trade.¹⁸

To voters

For many decades opinion polls have consistently shown the British public to be opposed to real fur. Recent polling shows that only 3% of people say they wear fur, and 77% believe the UK government should ban the import of animal products, such as fur, where production methods are banned in the UK.

NEXT STEPS

The government has committed to 'explore potential action' on the fur trade but progress has stalled. We encourage MPs to urge the Government to publish the results of the Call for Evidence on the UK fur trade, and set out its policy response. The Call for Evidence, launched in May 2021, attracted almost 30,000 responses in a month. ■



CHAMPION HUMANE AND SUSTAINABLE FARMING PRACTICES

HOW

Improve UK farm animal welfare standards by ending the use of cages and crates and accelerate a shift away from intensive animal agriculture and towards less and better meat, eggs and dairy, already supported by UK consumers, investors and businesses.

We are calling for the prohibition of barren, enriched and 'combi' cages, farrowing crates for sows, and individual calf pens in British farming. Cage-free farming systems, which allow each animal to express their individual needs, are already widely used and have been proven to be economically viable.

More broadly, Government policy should adopt the recommendation of the Dimpleby Report on the National Food Strategy to encourage a reduction in meat consumption by at least 30% over the next decade¹⁹, with incentives in the Sustainable Farming Incentives Scheme and Animal Health and Welfare Pathway to promote "less and better" meat production.

WHY IT MATTERS

As sentient beings

Cages confine and restrict, they thwart many of an animal's natural instincts, and they are a desolate reflection of our society. Despite the obvious ethical failings of this outdated technology, in the UK, over 16 million animals are confined in cages every year. There is a wealth of robust evidence demonstrating that enriched cages for laying hens and farrowing crates for sows are highly detrimental to welfare.

To reach Net Zero

Intensive farming systems in the UK, especially those in which caged animals are unable to feed from natural resources, are heavily dependent on imports of animal feed, typically from South America. To meet the demand, land clearance, including deforestation, to produce animal feed is expected to continue to accelerate, with devastating

consequences for local nature and wildlife. In light of global human population growth and increased demand for food, an animal-centric food system is not sustainable and has been shown to be a leading cause of climate change.

To voters

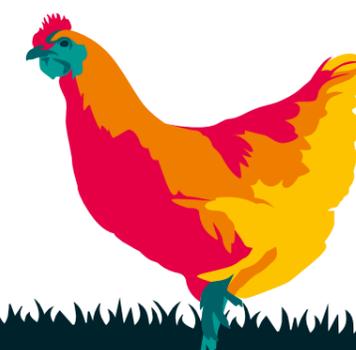
A petition on the Parliament website, calling for an end to caged farming, secured over 109,000 signatures in 2021.²⁰ This followed a similar petition in 2019, which secured over 106,000 signatures.²¹

In 2019, a European Citizens' Initiative secured over 1.4 million signatures. In response the European Commission committed to bring forward a legislative proposal, in 2023, that could end the use of all cages, across the EU27, by 2027.²² A number of other European countries have taken steps to ban caged systems; the UK must now do the same if it is not to fall behind the expectations of consumers and voters.

NEXT STEPS

During the debate on the 2021 petition, the Farming Minister said, "the Government are committed to phasing out confinement systems and supporting the industry to do so, not least to underpin UK food security."²³ The Labour 2019 Manifesto committed to a 'phased ban on sow farrowing crates' and to 'end the use of cages on British farms by 2025'.²⁴ If the Government is serious in its ambitions, it must now embrace a cage-free future – starting by publishing the long-awaited consultation.

As COP26 President, the UK Government must also lead the way in supporting a just protein transition by revising dietary guidelines, supporting alternative protein innovation and offering financial incentives to help farmers shift away from intensive animal agriculture. ■



ENDNOTES

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- 11 <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/scotland-live-exports-ban-calves-boris-johnson-brexit-a9564981.html>
- 12 Knowles, T.G., 1995. A review of post transport mortality among younger calves. *Veterinary Record* 137: 406-407.
- 13 <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/edition/news/sheep-endure-2-000-mile-journeys-for-slaughter-in-bulgaria-and-hungary-fk659q2sx>
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