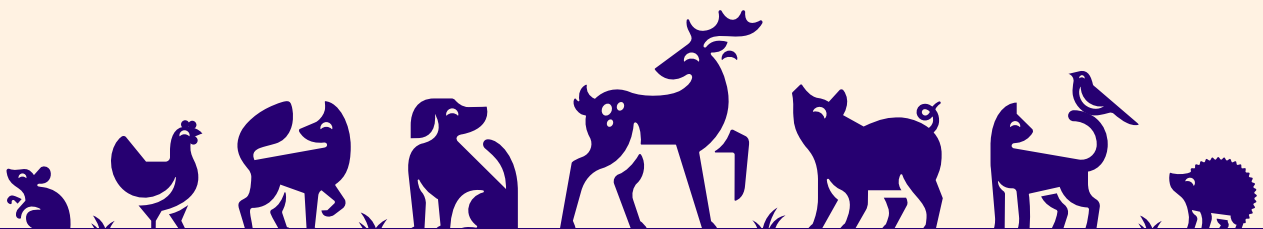


SECURING A **BETTER FUTURE** FOR ANIMAL WELFARE IN WALES



RSPCA Cymru's manifesto
for the seventh Senedd

**RSPCA
CYMRU.**



INTRODUCTION

With 2026's election nearing ever closer, the time has come to consider how animal welfare can be improved and prioritised by the next Welsh Government, Senedd and political parties across Wales.

85%
OF PEOPLE
IN WALES
WANT ANIMALS PROTECTED
THROUGH GOVERNMENT ACTION

According to our most recent Kindness Index, 85% of people in Wales believe that animal welfare should be protected by governments through legislation.

This in itself demonstrates that animal welfare is a key priority for the many members of the voting public who share our vision for a better future for our fellow beings.

The Senedd's sixth term has seen significant progress made for the many animals who call Wales home, with public interest in the relevant issues ever-growing. Bans on the use of snares and glue traps, the introduction of mandatory CCTV in abattoirs and the provision of better resources to enhance enforcement efforts relevant to dog welfare have all been secured, leading to better protections for thousands of individual animals.

On the 18th of February 2025, the current Welsh Government announced its intention to ban greyhound racing in Wales following campaigning by ourselves and our partner organisations. At the time of writing, the completion of the relevant legislative process is still achievable before 2026's election. However, it is also possible that this much-needed action may need to be quickly picked up and progressed by the next Welsh Government and Senedd.

A newly-expanded Senedd could see even more progress made, with this six point plan providing a plethora of suggestions as to how this could be achieved. With animals playing an increasingly important role in our lives and society, our new manifesto details how we can better protect companion, farmed, wild and all animals alike.

Over the coming months and years, we look forward to discussing how we can continue working with current and prospective elected representatives to make Wales an even better place for animals.

By affording animals the legal safeguards they need and deserve, we can build upon our reputation as a compassionate nation, where our consideration for the wellbeing of every kind unites us all.





EMPOWERING THE RSPCA



As the only animal welfare charity with officers working on the ground to respond to reports of cruelty and neglect from the public, the RSPCA holds a unique role in terms of the protection of animals in Wales.

Since the Senedd's last election in 2021, we have rehomed approximately 5,000 animals via our two national centers in Newport and Bryn-y-Maen and our network of dedicated branches.

**APPROXIMATELY
5,000
ANIMALS
REHOMED**

Since 2021

Our work sees us come into contact with animals that have been subjected to the very worst types of cruelty and neglect - thereby reducing the burden on the public services who would otherwise need to step in to protect them. While we aim to be there for every animal that needs us, this is not always possible due to resource constraints. However, making two key changes to the main piece of legislation that underpins our work

- the Animal Welfare Act 2006 - on a devolved level could enable us to be more efficient and help even more animals in Wales in the coming years.

Providing the RSPCA with statutory powers

The RSPCA exists to inspire a world where all animals are treated with kindness and respect. Our inspectors are at the very forefront of this vision, working seven days a week, 365 days a year to help animals in need. We currently have 31 inspectors and animal rescue officers (AROs) working on the ground in Wales to save animals from unimaginable cruelty and neglect, while offering practical support and advice to animal owners and keepers in need of assistance.

Our inspectors and AROs are currently dealing with more than 4,000 cases specifically involving animal cruelty and neglect a year in Wales, with us receiving one call every 30 seconds from members of the public in Wales and England.

Our inspectors undertake their important duties with no statutory powers, leaving them heavily reliant on support from the police and local authorities. Unbeknownst to many, they do not have the same

powers designated to local authority inspectors under the Animal Welfare Act 2006 (AWA). For example, RSPCA inspectors cannot enter outbuildings without a police warrant, automatically seize animals and remove them from a situation negatively impacting their welfare or issue statutory improvement and welfare notices under the AWA.

Our current reliance on statutory public services places additional pressure on their already-stretched resources while leaving animals in need of rescue in limbo or being kept under cruel conditions for longer. The granting of limited statutory powers to the RSPCA and the appointment of our officers under the AWA would enable us to operate in the way the public expects, while helping to lighten the workload of Wales' public services. By enabling our officers to serve statutory welfare notices and reducing the steps required for us to be able access and seize suffering animals, we can ensure that we can be there for even more neglected and abused animals in the years to come.

The RSPCA exists to inspire a world where all animals are treated with kindness and respect.



Reducing the rehoming period for seized animals

Between 2022 and 2024, we secured 248 convictions relevant to various species of animals in Wales. While we always encourage those we seek to prosecute to sign the ownership of their animals over to us before we begin this process, such cooperation is not always guaranteed. As it stands, the animals that are temporarily in our care while our prosecution process is completed are unable to be rehomed until a case is concluded as they are considered 'evidence'.

With this usually taking a number of months - or even years in some cases when appeals are lodged - this prolongs the process of vulnerable animals finding their forever homes. With the RSPCA undertaking 85% of enforcement action under the Animal Welfare Act 2006 in Wales, we are particularly impacted by the current regime.

The rescues that provide temporary accommodation for animals seized during local authority operations are also affected, with some unable to commit to assisting such efforts due to the length of time involved in rehoming animals that have not been signed over.

As such, a new approach which enables seized animals to be signed into the care of rescues quicker - such as that in Scotland where such animals can be rehomed after 21 days - could improve the overall welfare of the animals in question. Such action via an amendment to Section 20 of the Animal Welfare Act 2006 could also reduce accommodation costs for seized animals and free up space for the undertaking of further enforcement action - both by ourselves and local authorities.

This could see less animals kept in situations where their welfare is being compromised and reduce the overall pressure on the agencies responsible for protecting some of the most vulnerable animals in our society.



Between 2022 and 2024, we secured **248 convictions** relevant to various species of animals in Wales.



PROTECTING OUR PETS

For many, their
companion animals
are important and
much loved members
of their families.



The positive benefits our pets provide us with are endless - they offer us unconditional comfort and companionship while also enhancing and improving our mental health and wellbeing.

It is estimated that more than half of households in Wales (53%) have a pet; with dogs and cats being the most common types of companion animal¹. With the number of households with pets having grown in recent years, it is imperative that stringent safeguards and enhanced legal protections are in place to protect their welfare.

Preventing pet theft

While the theft of a pet can have devastating, long-term consequences for both owners and their animals, stolen pets are currently considered 'property' as per the relevant legislation - the Theft Act 1968. As such, the theft of a beloved companion animal in Wales is currently treated in the same way as that of an inanimate or un sentient object such as a wallet, bike or a mobile phone which risks the emotional impact of such crimes being disregarded. Making pet theft a specific offence could act as a deterrent for criminals while also preventing Wales from becoming a target for pet thieves due to differences in legislation.

The Pet Abduction Act became law in England and Northern Ireland in 2024, which means that anyone convicted of the theft of a dog or cat could face an unlimited fine, a maximum of five years in prison, or both. With no equivalent legislation in force in Wales, we encourage the next Welsh Government to introduce its

own legislation relevant to pet theft. Strong support for such action was previously demonstrated during a Senedd debate on a Member's legislative proposal that was held in January 2025².

Securing responsible dog ownership

Matters relevant to responsible dog ownership were much discussed during the Senedd's sixth term following a number of serious and fatal incidents involving dogs in Wales and further afield. The incidence of hospital admissions nearly doubled in the Welsh adult non-geriatric population between 2014-2022, with the areas covered by Swansea Bay, Cwm Taf Morgannwg and Betsi Cadwaladr health boards particularly impacted³. As such, we are calling on the next Welsh Government to consider an alternative approach to dog control, recognising its complexity.

The introduction of legislation similar to the previously proposed Control of Dogs (Wales) Bill could incentivise and enable a greater focus on responsible dog ownership, secure strengthened penalties and ensure better public awareness.

The robust enforcement of such legislation by dedicated dog control or animal welfare officers with access to welfare-compatible, evidence-based powers, such as Dog Control



53%
HOUSEHOLDS
WITH PETS
IN WALES

1. www.gov.wales/national-survey-wales-headline-results-april-2021-march-2022.html#101015

2. record.senedd.wales/Plenary/14803

3. www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S00333350624001975?via%3Dihub#sec4

Notices, could enable a better response to a range of incidents, greater protecting both human and animal welfare as a result. Ensuring that all local authorities have access to these officers/wardens is also key. Consideration as to whether an annual dog registration or licensing scheme could provide much vital funding to help address the relevant issues in Wales is also needed in relation to this long-debated concept, with the RSPCA currently undertaking research relevant to this.

Modernising regulated dog breeding

With the way a dog is bred and reared having a potentially life-long impact on the adult a puppy becomes, it is vital that the relevant regulations are fit for purpose. An update to the Animal Welfare (Breeding of Dogs) (Wales) Regulations 2014 is well overdue, and we hope that this will be prioritised by the next Welsh Government.

New regulations could require all breeders to be registered - regardless of how many litters they produce -, introduce an improved staff-to-dog ratio in breeding establishments, require more focus on the socialisation and enrichment of puppies, and better cover canine fertility clinics, stud dogs and co-ownership agreements. While updating the relevant legislation is key, the provision of adequate resources, funds and support for those who are responsible for enforcing it is also imperative.

In 2021, the Welsh Government's local authority enforcement project, Animal Licensing Wales (ALW), was launched to aid with the enforcement of the relevant pieces of legislation. The continued provision of dedicated resources to address the issues relevant to both licensed

and illegal breeding could build on, and continue, the work that has been undertaken to date, thereby raising standards in breeding establishments while also tackling the scourge of illegal breeding.

Regulating cat breeding

While dog breeding has been regulated in Wales for over a decade, there are currently no equivalent measures in place to protect cat welfare. Recent research suggests that at least a quarter of pet cats in Wales are pedigree breeds, with the popularity of such cats having increased in recent years⁴. With many of these breeds being susceptible to health issues - caused by the selection of extreme body shapes such as brachycephaly - it is important that safeguards are in place to ensure that only healthy and happy cats are bred from and sold.

The regulation of cat breeding in Wales would also require those who profit from this practice to adhere to certain welfare standards which would ensure that these felines are not being subject to overbreeding and that only age-appropriate cats are being bred from. With the breeding of pedigree cats having the potential to be a lucrative practice - and with the demand for such cats seemingly increasing - the regulation of cat breeding is much-needed.



Improving pet microchipping

Microchipping is an essential component of being a responsible pet owner, ensuring that companion animals can be quickly and safely returned to their owners if they are stray, lost or stolen while also making them simpler to identify. While it has been compulsory to microchip dogs in Wales since 2015, concerns remain as to whether the current system is fit for purpose with the number of different providers and databases causing confusion.

As it stands, not every scanner used by enforcement agencies and rescues can pick up every chip thereby impacting the traceability of pets. The development of a single, centralised database with one point of entry by the Welsh, UK and Scottish Governments could therefore lead to significant improvements.

This could also enable the mandatory microchipping of cats in Wales, as has been introduced elsewhere. With it estimated that more than a quarter of owned cats (around 125,000) are not microchipped in Wales⁵, making cat microchipping a legal requirement could see more misplaced moggies reunited with their owners in the years to come.

**125,000+
OWNED CATS
ARE NOT
MICROCHIPPED**

4. www.cats.org.uk/media/ihngqsqe/cats-report-wales-2024.pdf

5. www.cats.org.uk/media/ihngqsqe/cats-report-wales-2024.pdf

Increasing the number of pet-friendly homes

A lack of pet-friendly accommodation in Wales continues to put animal owners who rent at risk of having to choose between keeping companion animals and accessing safe and secure accommodation. It is estimated that only 7% of private rental properties are advertised as pet friendly⁶, despite it likely that many renters either already have or wish to have companion animals. With adverts which state 'no pets' still commonplace, we have long called on the Welsh Government to address this issue.

While the Renting Homes Wales Act enables tenants to request the inclusion of an additional clause in their contracts to allow them to request permission to keep a pet, landlords can still easily refuse such requests. As such, the current provisions fall short from making pets the legal default in tenancy agreements as we have long called for.

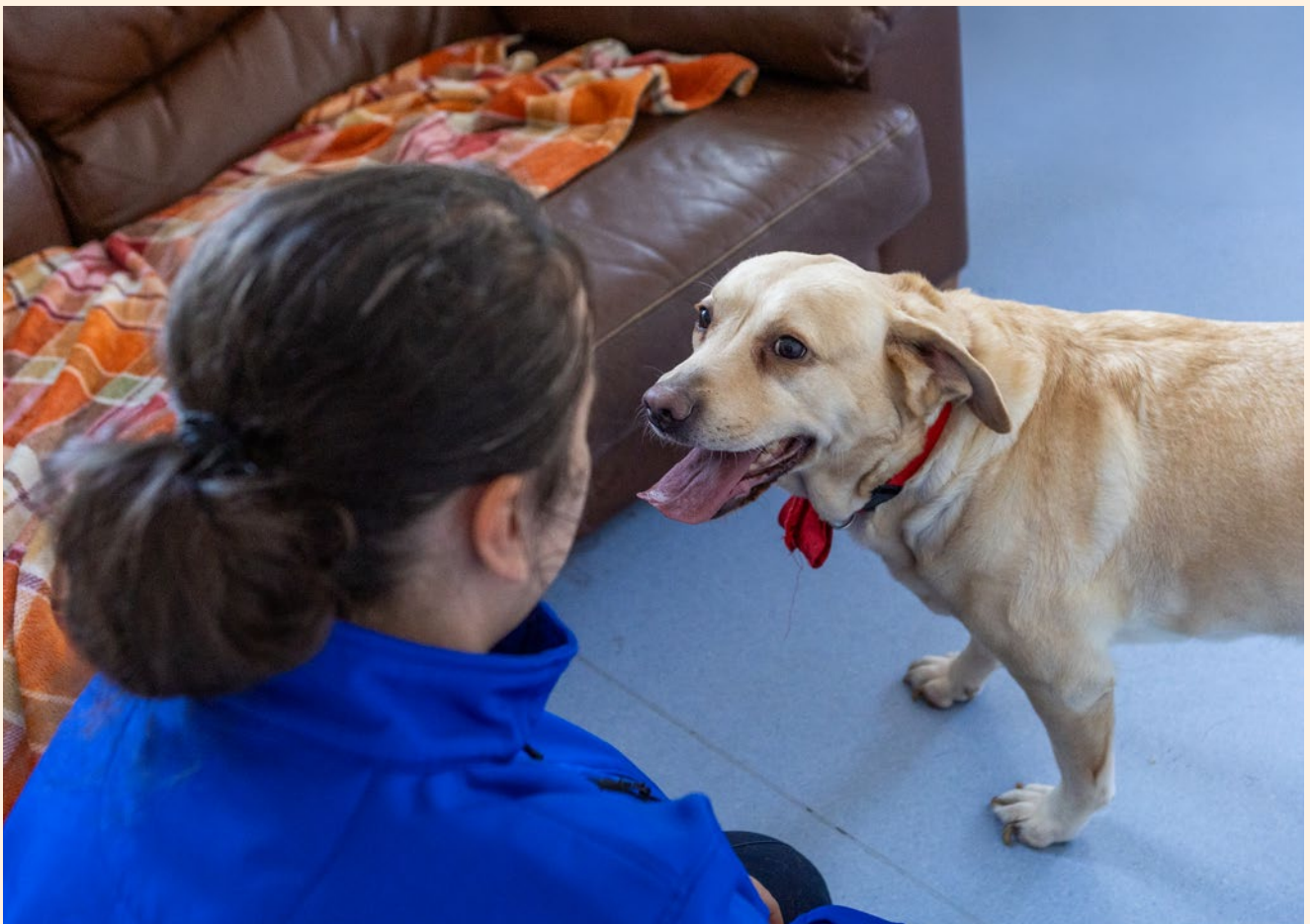
As well as calling for better provisions for pet owners who rent, we have also advocated for **more support for those who find themselves homeless.**

For many homeless pet owners, their animals are a vital source of comfort and companionship while providing them with a sense of purpose and routine. It is therefore important that more providers of temporary accommodation, such as shelters and hostels, are incentivised to accept pets - especially dogs - to increase the likelihood of their owners accessing the support they need.

It is also key that service providers and local authorities receive the guidance, training and resources needed to meet the specific needs of this demographic and that requirements to do so are featured in the relevant strategies and plans.

**ONLY 7%
RENTAL PROPERTIES
ADVERTISED AS
PET FRIENDLY**

6. www.zoopla.co.uk/discover/renting/renting-with-pets/





IMPROVING HORSE WELFARE

Working with equines such as horses, ponies and donkeys - both kept and feral/semi-feral - forms a **significant part** of our work in Wales.





**Between 2022 and 2024,
we secured 27 convictions
relevant to horses in Wales.**

Previous estimates suggested that there are upwards of 44,000 equines in Wales, although this number may have grown in recent years⁷. The Control of Horses (Wales) Act was introduced in 2014 to give local authorities greater powers to seize equines found to be fly grazing, straying or abandoned. With more than a decade having passed since the introduction of this key piece of legislation, concerns remain as to whether it is being utilised or if it is having the desired effect in terms of improving horse welfare. A review of this legislation is therefore needed to ensure that it is sufficient and provides enforcement officers with the relevant powers - and that they have the resources to be able to utilise them.

⁷ www.statista.com/statistics/530776/number-horses-united-kingdom-uk/

Regulating livery yards

It is estimated that around 60% of horses in the UK are kept at livery yards⁸. Recent research undertaken by RSPCA Cymru suggests that there are at least 135 individual providers of livery services operating in Wales. With so many horses kept at livery yards, the absence of regulation and any form of minimum standards to protect animal welfare are a significant concern.

135+
LIVERY SERVICES
IN WALES

Unlike kennels and catteries which provide boarding accommodation for cats and dogs - and horse riding schools - there are no specific legislative or licensing requirements relevant to livery yards. Sadly, studies have found several issues of animal welfare concerns that are specific to livery yards, which could be addressed - at least, partially - by the introduction of registration and licensing for these establishments.

Our recent Horse Sense report⁹, indicates a lack of equine-keeping facilities with adequate provision for turnout, grazing and socialisation, leading to unfulfilled welfare needs and fewer opportunities for positive welfare, and proposes regulation of livery yards as an action to address this.

Addressing horse tethering

Since the Senedd's last election, we have received hundreds of reports relevant to equine tethering in Wales. While we have long been opposed to this method of keeping horses as it has the potential to compromise equine welfare, it remains a legal and commonplace practice. Being tethered restricts an equine's ability to exercise freely, perform social behaviour and to forage, while also restricting their access to water, preventing escape from attacks by other animals as well as shelter and shade seeking behaviour.

The Welsh Government's own Code of Practice for the Welfare of Horses advises against using tethering as a long-term means of managing horses¹⁰. Members of the public who report tethered horses - those who are restrained with a rope, chain, strap or cord by the sides of roads, on roundabouts, in fields and other similar settings - are often surprised to hear that this remains entirely legal.

With there being no legislative measures that are specifically relevant to horse tethering, our officers are only able to help animals being managed in this way if they are injured or in bad condition. Better enforcement of the relevant legislation - the Animal Welfare Act 2006 - by local authorities, along with greater regulation of the practice could significantly improve the welfare of tethered horses.

It is therefore imperative that the appropriate resources and training are available to those with the relevant statutory responsibilities, while a Welsh Government-led review could determine whether legislative action on a devolved level is needed to address equine tethering.

8. Furtado, T., Perkins, E., McGowan, C., & Pinchbeck, G. (2021b). Equine Management in UK Livery Yards during the COVID-19 Pandemic—"As Long As the Horses Are Happy, We Can Work Out the Rest Later"

9. RSPCA (2025) Horse sense: A good life for horses through strengthening the horse-human relationship. Available from: www.rspca.org.uk/documents/d/rspca/2099_equine_welfare_crisis_report_rgb

10. www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2020-11/code-of-practice-for-the-welfare-of-horses.pdf





ENHANCING FARMED ANIMAL WELFARE



As the home of at least **11.8 million poultry, 8.7 million sheep, 1 million cows and 27,900 pigs¹¹**, the welfare of farmed animals is an issue that is particularly relevant to Wales.

As it stands, the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) and local authorities are responsible for responding to possible breaches of legislation and reports of alleged cruelty to farm animals.

However, improving their welfare - both via our policy and campaigning efforts and our farmed animal welfare assurance scheme and ethical food label, RSPCA Assured - is a key part of our work. When rolled out, the Welsh Government's new farming subsidies payment scheme - the Sustainable Farming Scheme (SFS) - is expected to introduce mandatory measures relevant to animal health and welfare along with a voluntary option for farmers who adhere to higher standards of animal husbandry. Still, there are a number of steps that the next Welsh Government could undertake to further enhance the lives and welfare of Wales' farmed animals.

Prohibiting the use of cages

Moving away from lower welfare methods of farming is among the most important animal welfare issues on a public scale, according to our most recent Kindness Index. This research showed that around two-thirds of people actively seek higher-welfare and/or free range products due to their concerns for animal welfare.

Nevertheless, the use of certain cages - such as farrowing crates for pigs and 'enriched' cages for laying hens - still remains legal here in Wales, along with the caging of gamebirds for sporting purposes. Being kept in cages can prevent the animals in question from expressing natural behaviours by restricting their movement, which can lead to needless suffering as a result. As such, prohibiting the use of such cages could improve the welfare of countless animals and ensure that all animals in Wales have the potential to live good lives.

Addressing non-stun slaughter

The RSPCA has long been opposed to non-stun slaughter as we consider the method to be inhumane. The number of animals being slaughtered in this way has increased by 18.5% since 2022, according to the latest figures by the Food Standards Agency¹². While non-stun slaughter is largely prohibited in the UK, there is an exemption that permits the method for religious purposes which means that upwards of 30 million animals are currently killed in this way every year¹³.

While it was previously confirmed that non-stun slaughter was not taking place in Wales back in 2019¹⁴, it is possible that this could change in the future. As such, we encourage the next Welsh Government to consider a formal prohibition of the licensing of such slaughterhouses in Wales to protect animal welfare.

Introducing mandatory food labelling

While many consumers actively seek higher-welfare produce, unclear or absent labels continue to cause confusion and make it difficult for consumers to make adequately informed decisions, or make purchases in line with their intentions. As it stands, only whole/shelled eggs laid by hens and unprocessed fish such as salmon require information on their packaging as to how the animals in question were reared or caught. RSPCA Cymru has long called for the introduction of mandatory 'method of production' and 'method of slaughter' labelling to help consumers in Wales make more informed choices about the meat, fish and dairy products they consume.

The current absence of clear labelling on the majority of animal derived products puts the farmers who produce them at a clear disadvantage while also confusing consumers. However, mandatory labelling has the potential to revolutionise purchasing decisions - along with consumer behaviour and patterns - thereby contributing to improved levels of animal welfare overall. As such, we encourage the next Welsh Government to introduce mandatory labelling, either via their own approach or through joint working with other neighbouring administrations.



30M+
ANIMALS A YEAR
ARE KILLED
BY NON-STUN
SLAUGHTER

11. www.gov.wales/survey-agriculture-and-horticulture-june-2024.html

12. assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/67c5cf0e750837d7604dbdbf/25-02-14_Slaughter_Sector_Survey_2024_REVISED.pdf

13. www.farminguk.com/news/rspca-calls-for-non-stun-slaughter-ban-as-numbers-rise-nearly-20-65730.html

14. www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2021-02/slaughter-method-survey-report-2018-for-england-and-wales.pdf



LEGISLATING FOR EVERY KIND

While we are widely recognised for our work with companion animals, we advocate for every kind here at the RSPCA as we believe that **all animals** deserve strong legal protections.

Regulating animal welfare establishments and exhibits

With the RSPCA having secured four prosecutions relevant to animal welfare establishments such as sanctuaries, rescues and rehoming centers in Wales since 2021, we are keener than ever to see these establishments regulated.

Unbeknownst to many, these establishments are not currently subject to any external oversight which means that anyone can set one up, regardless as to whether they have the experience, skills, funds or knowledge to care for vulnerable animals. While this has led to animal welfare being seriously compromised on several occasions,

making these establishments subject to local authority licensing could lead to much-needed improvements. We have also long called for the regulation of animal exhibits, which cover an abundance of settings and ways in which animals are used and displayed. These include those used for learning and educational purposes, within the media and performances, bird of prey exhibits, reptile and/or exotic animal exhibits and handling and many more. With these animals often required to travel, frequently adapt to different environments and be exposed to unfamiliar people and surroundings, their welfare can become easily compromised. A licensing scheme is therefore both much-needed and long overdue.



Recognising animal sentience in Welsh law

Just like us, animals have the capacity to experience feelings that are both positive and negative, such as pleasure, joy, pain, and distress. In Wales, devolved policies are not currently scrutinised for their impact on animal sentience prior to implementation which means that animals here are essentially subject to less legal protection than their counterparts in other areas of the UK. Since 2023, animal sentience has been recognised under English and UK law, including reserved legislation that is applicable to Wales, via the Animal Welfare (Sentience) Act 2022.

This legislation also covers creatures that are not covered by the Animal Welfare Act 2006 like cephalopods and decapod crustaceans such as lobsters, crabs and squid. As such, we hope that the next Welsh Government will seek to acknowledge animal sentience within Welsh law and extend legal protections to these species at long last.

Regulating exotic pet keeping

In Wales, almost any type of animal can be legally bought by a member of the public and kept in their home, although there are certain requirements for some species. The needs of exotic animals can be challenging to meet by members of the public because their needs are the same as they would be in the wild; these are fundamentally linked to certain behaviours, diets or environmental conditions that can be difficult to replicate in a home. Evidence shows that some breeds and species are unlikely to have their needs met and experience a good life in a household environment¹⁵. As a result, we are calling for the Welsh Government to consult on the adoption of precautionary, preventative, and evidence-based policies to regulate the keeping of exotic pets, restricting private ownership to species likely to experience good welfare.

Ending the giving of pets as prizes

Following a successful campaign by RSPCA Cymru, all councils in Wales have banned the giving of pets as prizes at funfairs and events held on local authority-owned land. However, as these bans are not applicable to privately owned land, the practice still continues. 'Prize' animals, such as goldfish, are frequently kept and transported in conditions that do not meet their needs, often resulting in their death before their new owners can even get them home.

Animal ownership is a big responsibility that needs to be planned and well-thought out, as opposed to the result of a spur-of-the-moment event that often occurs at places such as fairgrounds. With RSPCA Cymru still receiving numerous reports associated with the welfare of pets being given as pets on an annual basis, we are continuing our calls for the next Welsh Government to introduce an outright ban to prevent the practice from continuing on private land.

Outlawing the keeping of primates as pets

Currently, keeping a primate as a pet is entirely legal in Wales, with estimates suggesting that hundreds of monkeys may be residing with people's homes around the country¹⁶. We believe that a household environment is wholly incompatible with primates' wild natures and complex needs, and that their welfare cannot be adequately protected within domestic settings. Since the last Senedd election, RSPCA Cymru has secured two prosecutions relevant to pet primates in Wales whose welfare had been seriously compromised.

As we consider the keeping of primates in domestic settings to be both cruel and dangerous, we are continuing our calls for this practice to be outlawed in Wales. By moving towards a system which outlaws the keeping of primates as companion animals, including those commonly

kept as pets such as capuchins, marmosets and squirrel monkeys, with a gradual phase out period for those currently being kept, we can end this outdated practice in Wales for good.

Strengthening Codes of Practice relevant to welfare

As part of our membership of the Animal Network for Wales (AWNw), we have worked with previous Welsh Governments on the development of numerous Codes of Practice (COPs) relevant to animal welfare. These comprehensive codes cover dogs, cats, horses, farm animals, racing greyhounds and animal welfare establishments.

However, some COPs are in dire need of updating such as those relevant to pet rabbits and gamebirds kept for sporting purposes. Concerningly, there is currently no COP that is relevant to the keeping of exotic pets such as reptiles and the many species of birds that are commonly kept as pets such as parrots. With our inspectors regularly distributing the relevant COPs to animal owners in need of advice, and with these COPs providing a vital source of guidance to pet owners, we encourage the next Welsh Government to ensure that all current codes are fit for purpose, are based on the latest scientific evidence, and that all animals are covered accordingly.



15. www.rspca.org.uk/adviceandwelfare/pets/other/concerns.

16. politicalanimal.rspca.org.uk/wales/issues/primates-as-pets



SUPPORTING WELSH WILDLIFE



Our work with wildlife in Wales sees us come into contact with **an array of species** such as seals, badgers, foxes, birds and more.

With wild animals facing more challenges than ever before due to human behaviour, illegal activity and habitat loss, stronger legal safeguards are needed to ensure that wild populations can recover and thrive for generations to come. Since the Senedd's last election in May 2021, we have dealt with 368 reports relevant to wildlife, with illegal activity and intentional harm accounting for almost two-thirds of these incidents.

Establishing a Wildlife Act for Wales

While 93% of people in Wales believe that protecting wildlife through legislation is important according to our latest Kindness Index, many of the relevant laws are weak, outdated and unnecessarily complex. A Wildlife Act for Wales could consolidate the relevant pieces of legislation into one accessible act which clearly summarises the relevant laws to help eliminate the legal complexities relevant to wildlife.

While those convicted of causing unnecessary suffering to kept animals under the Animal Welfare Act 2006 may face up to five years in prison, the maximum sentence for similar offences towards wild animals under legislation such as the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 is six months.



A new act with animal protection at its heart could provide stronger protections for the species that need them most, make wildlife crime notifiable and ensure that reckless and negligent acts are covered. The act could also make it an offence for a person to allow wildlife crimes to take place on their land, thereby introducing the concept of vicarious liability. The provision of General Licences could also be reviewed as part of this workstream and could see the incorporation of ethical principles to wildlife management within this system.

Eradicating bovine TB humanely

While RSPCA Cymru recognises the devastating impact of Bovine TB (bTB) on both human and animal welfare, we strongly oppose the culling of badgers as a solution. We accept that, in some cases, wildlife management may be necessary, but it must be done humanely with wildlife interventions as a last resort, and lethal control as the very last option. There is no scientific consensus that the culling of badgers is effective in dealing with bTB in farmed animals in the long-term, with the relevant data on bTB incidence being extremely variable and having a tendency to fluctuate¹⁷.

Previously, the Welsh Government has refused to cull badgers as a means of dealing with bTB and we are calling for this approach to be continued post 2026's election. This is based on the growing body of robust scientific evidence which demonstrates that the culling of badgers is ineffective at reducing bTB in cattle^{18 19 20}. New evidence demonstrates that badger vaccination can be an effective tool in reducing the severity and progression bTB within badgers, which are a spillover host for bTB. Wales has been vaccinating badgers since 2012²², while providing farmers with grants to support them in doing so on their land.

However, accelerating Wales' ambition to be TB free in a humane and sustainable way will also require a focus on stricter cattle control measures. These include mandatory biosecurity measures, a reduction of high-risk cattle movements, as well as the development of a safe and effective vaccine for cattle.

Wales has been vaccinating - as opposed to culling - badgers since 2012, while providing farmers with grants to support them in doing so on their land.

17. www.gov.wales/incidence-tuberculosis-tb-cattle-great-britain

18. Torgerson et al., 2024. Randomised Badger Culling Trial lacks evidence for proactive badger culling effect on tuberculosis in cattle: comment on Mills et al. 2024, Parts I & II. bioRxiv.

19. Langton, T.E., Jones, M.W. and McGill, I., 2022. Analysis of the impact of badger culling on bovine tuberculosis in cattle in the high-risk area of England, 2009–2020. *Veterinary Record*, 190(6), p.e1384.

20. www.nature.com/articles/s41598-024-67160-0

21. Woodroffe et al., 2024. Farmer-led badger vaccination in Cornwall: Epidemiological patterns and social perspectives. *People and Nature*, 6(5), pp.1960–1973.


22. www.theguardian.com/environment/2012/mar/20/badger-cull-wales-abandoned-vaccination

RSPCA CYMRU.

Royal Society for the Prevention
of Cruelty to Animals

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