

Labour Animal Welfare Society

Animal Welfare Policy



WHY AN **ANIMAL WELFARE** POLICY?

Animal welfare is a well-established, important ethical issue which voters have an interest in. Some people consider animal welfare policies when deciding who to vote for. This LAWS policy document is based on the shared belief that cruelty to animals is wrong, just as cruelty to humans is wrong. It is right that we have laws to prevent cruelty and that those who break them are treated as criminals.



In the UK there are four times the number of animals under human control as there are people. Nearly a billion animals are slaughtered each year.

MORI polling in 2005 showed that 14% of respondents said animal welfare was an issue that would be 'very important' in helping to decide which party they would vote for. The Labour Party was clearly identified as the party with the best policies on animal welfare.

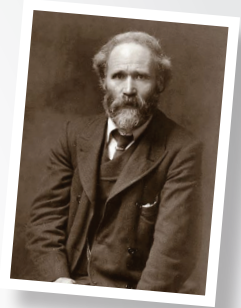
In July 2011, an ORB poll confirmed that 'animal welfare is something that most people say is important when deciding which political party to support and for 16% it is "very important".'

As part of the 1997 election campaign Labour published 'New life for animals' containing a clear set of animal welfare policies. Most of these were subsequently delivered. The leaflet and the policies proved popular with voters.

LAWS proposes that the next Labour election manifesto should include a section on animal welfare (suggestions for which are set out below) and a leaflet presenting them should be prepared. Most of the options are low or zero cost but many will have broad, distinctive, appeal.

BACKGROUND

Early initiatives to introduce animal welfare legislation in Parliament won support from prominent Labour MPs. George Lansbury MP was amongst those who tried to improve slaughtering conditions for animals in 1911. Although this failed, other initiatives were successful. Kier Hardie helped to secure better conditions for pit ponies, for instance.



Labour has a long and proud tradition of improving the welfare of animals and supporters of the Humanitarian League - whose aims included the banning of all hunting for sport - included Keir Hardie, Thomas Hardy, George Bernard Shaw and Christabel Pankhurst.

Hunting with hounds and the culling of badgers are issues that draw clear lines between Labour and the Conservatives and command widespread public support. Labour banned hunting with hounds but the Tories seem determined to bring it back and hunts have remained active in this hope.

Labour also brought in a new Animal Welfare Act, banned fur farming, driftnet fishing (which helps protect dolphins and sea birds) and the testing of cosmetics, toiletries, alcohol and tobacco on animals. Labour also refused to license testing on great apes (such as chimpanzees) and established the National Centre for the Replacement, Reduction and Refinement of Animals in Research which funds research into alternatives to animal testing. The Labour Government and Labour MEPs worked to secure an EU-wide ban on the commercial trade in seal products¹ and domestic dog and cat fur.

The last Labour government achieved much but could have done more.



“But just as the Labour government failed to remain sensitive to the values of our voters on issues like inequality and the extent of state influence, so too we failed to achieve everything we could have in animal welfare.”

Ed Miliband MP, Leader of Labour Party

DISCUSSION AND PROPOSED POLICIES



Slaughterhouses

There is extensive evidence that cruelty and lawbreaking takes place in slaughterhouses. Animals have been filmed being kicked, beaten, stamped on, punched and burnt with cigarettes. Many animals are not properly stunned before having their throats cut.

Animals are transported to the continent for slaughter and further fattening where they can face conditions illegal in the UK through ports that have no ability to opt out of the trade.

The European Commission has proposed a 'country of origin' label for meat products but this will not give information on how the animals have been reared or slaughtered, only where. Consumers want better information on which to base purchase decisions. Egg labelling shows it works.

Whilst it is still legal to slaughter without pre-stunning, meat from these animals is sold and marketed without labelling leaving the consumer ill-informed.

- *Slaughterhouse workers should have mandatory and independent training with re-assessment every three years and, when necessary, retraining. Clear criteria for what constitutes a 'fit and proper person' to be a slaughterer is needed and those with convictions for violence, sexual assault, or animal cruelty should be disqualified.*
- *CCTV should be installed in all slaughterhouses to help vets, government inspectors and independent parties monitor activities,*

support training and retraining, and provide evidence of any inappropriate or illegal activity. Such a system would also help to avoid further horsemeat and other scandals.

- *The Harbours, Docks and Piers Clauses Act 1847 should be amended to allow ports the discretion to allow transport of animals through their facilities.*
- *Seek agreement in the EU for maximum journey time of eight hours for the transport of animals.*
- *Bring in mandatory labelling for any meat sold in the UK on the method of slaughter and seek mandatory EU labelling to give information on method of production.*



Approximately 900 million animals are killed in British slaughterhouses each year. In addition, some 30 million day-old male chicks are killed as part of the egg laying industry.

Animals and Society

Meat eating and climate change

Prior to the 2009 Copenhagen climate change conference Sir Paul McCartney and European Parliament President Jerzy Buzek MEP launched a “meat free Monday” initiative. “It is very doable,” said Sir Paul and eating less meat has an immediate impact - unlike energy conservation schemes and clean energy which involve long lead times and considerable investment.

The Conservative/Liberal Democrat government's new policy for food (Food 2030) is silent on vegetarian issues, despite both welfare and climate change arguments.²

The public sector spends more than £2.2 billion on food each year, including meals in schools, hospitals, care homes and prisons. Most chicken and pork used in public sector meals is factory farmed.

- *Use public procurement policy to ensure that public bodies only use food and ingredients that have been produced to high health, animal welfare and environmental standards. As an example, only cage-free eggs and free-range meat should be purchased. The range of meat-free and vegan options made available should be increased where possible.*



Fur

The UK has banned both fur factory farming (under the last Labour government) as well as the use of cruel and indiscriminate steel-jawed leghold traps – one of the main tools used by fur trappers to catch wild animals abroad.

Since we have banned the main methods of producing fur, it is hypocritical to continue to allow the sale of fur items. Fur labelling, as a policy, was agreed by Labour's National Policy Forum at its Warwick Conference in 2008 and Ed Miliband has said: “We could (when in government) have taken our opportunity to institute mandatory labelling of fur products....”

- *Ban the fur trade and clearly label real fur products until such a ban can be introduced – consumers are buying real fur items without even realising it.*

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Companion Animals

Exotic animals are not good pets. A recent study showed that at least 75% of reptile pets (animals with natural longevities from 8 to 120 years) die within their first year in the home. The trade in wild animals poses a threat to some species. Exotic animals are still sold through pet markets – a form of trading, in theory, outlawed by the Pet Animals Act 1951, but which some Local Authorities still allow. These ‘markets’ have little or no regulation or scrutiny. They are opposed by the British Veterinary Association.

Many people are still choosing to breed from their pets, including dangerous dogs, for financial gain, while stray and feral cats and dogs are a problem in the UK due to the large number of un-neutered animals.

13 million (45% of) households in the UK accommodate almost 71 million furry, feathery or scaly pets.

There are thousands of pet shops in the UK and many do not provide suitable conditions for their animals or ensure that the animals they sell will end up in suitable homes or with people capable of ensuring their welfare.

Where exotic pets are sold, often pet shop staff and local authority inspectors lack sufficient expertise to safeguard their welfare, and the public from animal-to-human disease risks.



Women who are the victims of domestic violence will sometimes not seek help or refuge for fear of leaving the family pet behind where it may be abused, tortured or even killed. Safe houses are generally not able to take animals in and a new way of dealing with this important shortfall is required. Providing temporary, secure homes for the animals would help victims to escape.

Similarly, elderly people who need to go into care should be able to keep their pets where there is not a specific reason why this would not be possible.

The Dangerous Dogs Act is seriously flawed. Dog charities do not support or condone breed-specific legislation, believing it is the deed, not the breed that is the issue.

- *Ensure that Local Authorities take enforcement action under the Pet Animals Act 1951 to bring an end to 'pet markets'.*
- *Bring in improved standards for pet shops to improve welfare – requirements to include regular, qualified local authority inspections, 24 hour supervision of animals in shops and improved record keeping.*
- *Pet shops selling live animals should be required to give adequate information on the needs of the animals.*
- *Introduce positive lists of species that make suitable pets.*
- *Work with relevant agencies to provide 'safe houses' for pets of women and families escaping from domestic violence.*
- *Support for elderly people to keep pets when moving into sheltered or residential care.*
- *Include humane education, the care of companion animals and how to stay safe around dogs in the national curriculum.*
- *Ban the use of electric shock collars.*
- *With animal welfare groups, promote a 'National Neutering Day' for cats and dogs.*
- *The Dangerous Dog Act 1991, the Dogs Act 1871 and the Breeding and Sale of Dogs Acts should be consolidated with a new, up to date Act. The threshold for dog breeders should be reduced from five litters annually, to two.*
- *Introduce legislation to regulate cat breeding.*
- *Support the Pet Advertising Advisory Group (PAAG) set of minimum standards for the online advertisement of pets and consider statutory regulation.*



Violence and animal abuse

The link between the abuse of animals and human violence is well established and has far reaching implications for crime prevention and animal welfare. More needs to be done to examine this link as well as its implications for social policy.

- *Commission a multi-departmental government committee report on the links between animal abuse and human violence and act upon its recommendations.*

Marine mammals

Marine mammals face a number of threats in UK waters from fishing activity to disturbance, pollution and discarded rubbish.

- *Bring in legislation to mandate use of pingers to prevent marine mammal bycatch*
- *Bring in legislation to help reduce marine debris especially plastics and discarded nets that cause suffering and deaths to many marine mammals.*
- *Introduce a comprehensive, viable network of Marine Protected Areas without delay.*

Seals

The UK is home to globally important populations of grey and common seals but they do not enjoy the protection from killing and deliberate disturbance that whales and dolphins do. They face threats from climate change, deliberate killing to 'protect' aquaculture and fisheries, pollution, entanglement in fishing gear, ship strikes and prey depletion as well as disturbance and loss of habitat.

The Conservation of Seals Act (1970) needs to be reviewed in England and Wales. It has been repealed in Scotland where seals can only be killed under licence as a last resort. Meanwhile in the rest of the UK seal populations face unregulated and unreported killing.

There are fewer grey seals in the world today than African elephants, and common seal numbers are fewer still.

LAWS would like the next Labour government to increase protection for seals from deliberate killing and disturbance.



Whales and dolphins

The North Atlantic is now the global epicentre of whaling with levels of killing now at pre-commercial whaling moratorium levels while its main perpetrators Norway, Iceland and the Faroe Islands enjoy preferential fisheries and other trade deals with the EU. The whaling and fishing industries in these countries are inextricably linked. The EU should include the ending of whaling in any preferential trade agreements with these countries.

- *Raise the issue of resurgent whaling in the European Union with a view to applying sanctions against those countries that persist in killing whales.*



Animal experiments

The Labour Party was at the forefront of making the UK one of the first countries in the world to ban the use of animals for testing cosmetic products. Animal researchers often try to justify animal experimentation by the role it plays in medical breakthroughs but in 2012 only 12% of the more than 4 million animal experiments carried out were to test new human medicines and fewer than 1 in 10 experiments were required by medical or chemical regulators.

The number of animals being experimented on has increased in recent years and the number modified genetically now accounts for 59% of all animals used in experiments. Parliament has never had the opportunity to discuss the scientific or ethical implications of this research.

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better research and is likely to lead to fewer animals being experimented on.

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Animal research in the UK is now governed by a new European Directive. This legislation allows researchers to apply to force animals to exercise until exhausted, use electric shocks to induce a state of helplessness and keep social species such as dogs and primates in isolation for prolonged periods.

Genetically Modified animals are being bred on an industrial scale and the welfare of these animals may be compromised. Many are killed simply for not exhibiting the required characteristics.

Most experiments on animals are publicly funded either directly or indirectly yet researchers can veto information being disclosed – even to Parliament. Researchers' personal details and genuinely sensitive commercial data can still be protected but more disclosure leads to closer scrutiny and therefore



- *End experiments on cats and dogs. Less than 1% of experiments on animals carried out in the UK are on cats and dogs but the public are disturbed that they are still allowed.*
- *End the secrecy surrounding animal experiments while protecting researchers personal details and genuinely sensitive commercial data.*
- *End non-medical experiments which do not even claim to benefit humans – allowing a proper debate on those that remain and focus research on more humane and effective techniques.³*
- *Set up a commission of scientists and animal welfare organisations to review the issues raised by Genetically Modified animals.*
- *Ban the trade in non-human primates. The majority of these animals used in UK laboratories are imported from outside the EU. They can suffer traumatic journeys and come from breeding centres where the conditions are appalling.*
- *Stop animals suffering in the most extreme experiments.*
- *More funds and incentives should be made available to support non-animal research with a view to fully implementing the Three Rs (replacement, reduction and refinement).*



Animals in entertainment and sport

More than 45 million pheasants and partridges are mass produced each year in the UK. The young birds are fattened and released as moving targets for shooters. The last Labour government introduced a Code of Practice for game bird rearing, effectively ending the use of battery cages for breeding pheasants (but not for partridges). One of the first acts of the new Conservative Minister Jim Paice was to overturn this ban with a new, ineffectual, Code of Practice.



Whips are used in horseracing to push horses to their physical limits and beyond. A racing correspondent summed up the situation in a 2010: 'If the horse didn't feel it, there would be no point in using it.' In a poll, 57% of people said they wanted the whip to be banned. Norway did so in 1982 – a move enthusiastically approved by racecourse officials, horse trainers and spectators.

The same welfare issues exist for racing greyhounds as when the current form of self regulation came into play in 2005. The industry still remains secretive over its welfare record and any regulatory action it takes. The current framework was set up by Statutory Instrument and is due to be reviewed in 2015. Public scrutiny of the industry is needed.

Touring circuses cover thousands of miles each year carrying animals from site to site. The animals spend most of their lives in temporary, highly unsuitable accommodation and may be confined for hours or even days, in travelling cages. It is impossible for a travelling menagerie to provide animals with the conditions they need.

- *End the factory farming of game birds (pheasants and partridges) for shooting.*
- *Ban the use of the whip in horseracing.*
- *Introduce a requirement for public scrutiny of the greyhound industry.*
- *Ban all performing animals in circuses.*

Wildlife

One of Labour's greatest achievements in the area of animal welfare, and one that is invariably cheered when mentioned at conferences, was the ban on hunting with hounds. Although there have been many prosecutions under the Hunting Act, its wording needs to be tightened as hunts today continue and evade justice. The penalties are inadequate and present no deterrent. One judge has described the Act as "hard to interpret, apply and prosecute".

Free running snares are cruel, unnecessary and indiscriminate. Snares set for foxes and rabbits also catch protected species such as badgers and otters as well as pets.

Wildlife crime in the UK is a serious issue. The National Wildlife Crime Unit deals with the trade in endangered species, illegal taxidermy and auction sales, bat and badger-related offences, marine species, reptile smuggling, wild bird netting, egg collecting and dangerous wild animals. In the past decade, more than 600 cases of poisoning wild birds have been reported – many involved illegal poisons. The NWCU's funding is inadequate and under threat.



The current government has asked the Law Commission to look at the effectiveness of existing wildlife law but it's aim appears to be to free up shooters and landowners from "red tape". The advisory panel is dominated by "country

pursuit" interests. The Law Commission needs a different brief to look at animal welfare outcomes.

Current wildlife law is a mess and needs reviewing and modernising.

- *Bring in an effective strategy to enforce the ban on hunting with hounds. Breaching the Act should be a notifiable offence.*
- *End all government backed culls of wildlife including badgers.*
- *Ban the manufacture, sale and use of snares.*
- *Adequate long-term funding should be provided for the National Wildlife Crime Unit.*
- *Conduct a review of wildlife legislation in conjunction with the Law Commission and animal welfare organisations.*

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Existing and future legislation

One of the major steps the last Labour government took was the introduction of the Animal Welfare Act but it now needs to be enforced. Only 50% of Local Authorities have appointed the inspectors required under the Act.

Data shows a three-fold increase in the number of convictions for animal fighting and badger baiting. The penalties for these offences are inadequate and do not provide a sufficient deterrent.

- *Establish an Animal Welfare Act Support Team within DEFRA – regionally based to give support and advice to Local Authorities as they implement the Animal Welfare Act and ensure that inspectors are appointed in all authorities.*
- *Create a national register of animal offenders.*
- *Provide resources to ensure secondary*

parts of the Animal Welfare Act are fully implemented

- *Review the effectiveness of Dangerous Wild Animals Act.*
- *Make a commitment that any policy that potentially impacts on animals will always have a welfare assessment published for inspection.*
- *The maximum sentence for those convicted of serious cruelty offences such as dog fighting and badger baiting should be (at least) doubled.*
- *Ensure that each police force has officers trained and responsible for enforcing animal welfare legislation.*



REFERENCES

1. The EU seal ban has recently been upheld by the WTO, following challenges from Canada and Norway
2. According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation, the livestock industry globally generates 14.5% of all human-caused greenhouse gases (GHG) – more than the entire transport sector.
3. Exceptions would need to be made for scientific work such as wildlife surveys, tagging, etc.

Mahatma Gandhi said
“The greatness of a nation
and its moral progress can
be judged by the way its
animals are treated”.

No election will ever be won
on animal welfare policy
– nor should it be – but by
extending a sense of social
justice to animals, the Labour
Party would distinguish itself
from others and would secure
many of the votes of those
who share that same value.



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www.labouranimalwelfaresociety.org.uk
info@labouranimalwelfaresociety.org.uk
Published by Labour Animal Welfare Society
13 Camborne Court
Camborne Road
Walsall WS5 3JE