



The Associate Parliamentary Group for Animal Welfare

An all party group for members of both houses at Westminster formed to promote and further the cause of animal welfare by all means available to the Parliaments at Westminster and in Europe

MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 24th April 2012 The Minister for Animal Welfare

Attendees: Tania Ledger, Carol Fowler, David Cavill (Animal Care College), Gail Williams (Association of Animal Physiotherapists), Clarissa Baldwin (Dog's Trust), Laura Vallance (Dog's Trust), Denisa Delic (Kennel Club), Victoria Brown (Kennel Club), Chris Laurence (RSPCA Trustee), Vanessa Hudson (Animal Count), Lorraine Platt (Conservatives Against Foxhunting), David Sewlyn (NHSTA), Dr Davies (RCVS), Anthony Davies (RCVS), Alpesh Patel (Dr Hadwen), Paula Boyden (Dog's Trust), Katie Baxter (ASSVAP), Christian McSween (Lion Aid), Pieter Kat (LionAid), Harvey Locke (BVA), Sally Burnell (BVA), Libby Anderson (OneKind), Jacqui Bunn (Dog Assessment Focus Group), Steve McCulloch (RCVS), Emma Milne (BVA AWF), Daniel Webb (PuppyLove), Christina Dixon (Network for Animals), Dan O'Neil (Vet Compass), Victoria Brown (Kennel Club), Nicola Cooper (Poole Dog Wardens), Claire Robinson (RSPCA), Gavin Grant (Chief Exec RSPCA), Rachel Cunningham (Blue Cross), Dennis Baker (Wood Green Animal Rescue), Linda Cantle (Wood Green Animal Rescue), Mark Jones (HSI), Peter Stevenson (CIWF), Prof Sheila Crispin (Dog Breeding Advisory Council), Alpesh Patel (Dr Hadwen), Andre Menache (vet), Rob Jervis-Gibbons (Battersea Dog & Cats Home), Jessamy Korotoga (ADI), Christina Dodkin (ADI), Angie Greenaway (ADI), Tom Quinn (IFAW), Keith Evans (Dangerous Dog Unit, Police), Keith Davenport (OATA), Chris White (OATA), Paul Smith (Dog Rescue Federation), Peter Egan (Dog Rescue Federation), Libby Anderson (OneKind), Katie Baxter (ASSVAP), Liz Tyson (CAPS), Gabriel Fowe (Born Free), Gemma Glanville (Born Free), Bob Bayliss (RSPCA), Helen Ashby (Cats Protection), Peter Jinman (RCVS), Tim Morris (Animal Health & Welfare Board for England), Neil Parish MP, Simon Hart MP, Roger Williams MP, Lord Grantchester, Jim Fitzpatrick MP, Lord Jones of Cheltenham, Lord Taylor.

Lord Taylor, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs update on animal welfare issues for the Department

This is a useful gathering to be involved in. It is good that I have this particular agenda as I enjoy it and I would like to thank those of you here for your engagement in the issue of animal welfare. I don't handle farm animal welfare, more domestic and wild but I recognise this is an area where people have strong feelings and I believe that the way we treat animals is an indication of the way our society deals with other important matters. It is a significant subject and we should take it seriously.

I want to touch on a couple of areas of real progress. Yesterday we made the announcement on tackling irresponsible dog ownership. The Government is determined to address this and many of you will have seen the package of measures announced aimed at promoting more responsible dog ownership. The

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criminal law in relation to dogs being dangerously out of control should be extended to all places including private property. Additionally, the Government proposes compulsory micro-chipping of all newly born dogs and the requirement for police to kennel prohibited dogs where court hearings are pending is being removed if they feel it is unnecessary. The Government has proposed to increase fees for placing dogs on the Dangerous Dogs Index thus reducing the cost to the taxpayer. It is currently at £20 and now will be £70.

In addition to these proposals, we are also supporting other work that we consider will tackle this problem including more local level projects, designed to promote more responsible ownership. To enable this to happen, Defra will fund innovative projects in London and hotspots outside London. One criticism is the perception that the way law varies between police forces with some being better at performing tasks than others. We are training dog legislation officers and are working with APCO to improve this. There is also work with Home Office on-going to ensure anti-social behaviour measures take into account the use of dogs to intimidate others or cause a nuisance.

We will also provide guidance to the police, courts and public, The Sentencing Council is looking at new guidance for the Courts on dog-related cases.

On the use of wild animals in circuses, on 1st March we reaffirmed our ban in England. Many groups have requested we set out a timetable. I am not privy on what might be in the Queen's Speech so am not able to say when as it will be primary legislation. However, when the Parliamentary timetable allows us, we will introduce a ban via primary legislation on ethical grounds. There is insufficient scientific evidence to use welfare grounds to introduce a ban. Having wild animals perform in travelling circuses is an out-dated practice and out of keeping with the standards of our times. In the meantime we recognise the welfare of these animals is paramount so have opted for a two-prong approach licence scheme urgently whilst we proceed with a ban. This will ensure higher welfare conditions are in place quickly as it can be done under the Animal Welfare Act. It is my objective to bring forward regulations to both Houses before summer recess.

We are working on other welfare issues on the companion animal agenda. I am in contact with Professor Crispin from the Dog Breeding Advisory Council and am being updated on their progress and groups like Wild Futures on private keeping of primates. Defra is determined to continue to work towards high animal welfare standards and develop what we have so it are fitting for age we live in.

Carol Fowler (Cavalier Campaign)– The recent documentary 'Pedigree Dogs Exposed 2' called for the setting up of an independent regulatory body for dog breeding. This has also been endorsed by the Companion Animal Welfare Council, the Chairman of Advisory Council on the Welfare Issues of Dog Breeding and formally by the Green Party. Would the Minister and his Department consider supporting this idea and implement the setting up of such a regulatory body? Also the RSPCA / BVA AWF Puppy Contract was presented at the recent BSAVA Congress. Will the Government give its support to this major welfare initiative?

Lord Taylor – You are raising an area which I am very interested in myself and I am concerned about dog breeding practices. It is currently covered under the AWA and local authorities are responsible for prosecutions. Having said that, I am prepared to consider any proposals which would improve the welfare of dogs at breeding establishments as long as it does not place a disproportionate burden on those running such establishment. If you would like to send me any proposals I will look at them. We would need legislation to empower an actual body to oversee it but there may be another way around it. I would like to consider aspects of what you are suggesting which are not based on legislation because it

is difficult to get a slot to get legislation through. I think the Puppy Contract is a great initiative and welcome it.

Chris Laurence (RSPCA) – There continues to be a huge over-supply of dogs and cats as witnessed by the numbers abandoned or straying, and in spite of welfare charities' efforts over the past couple of decades. Does the Minister see any scope for legislation in helping to resolve the issue? Does he consider that a population management working group would be helpful?

Lord Taylor – It is an idea but I am not overwhelmed with enthusiasm. How would you achieve its objectives without a mass-neutering programme?

Victoria Brown (Kennel Club) - Could the Minister provide an assessment of how effective the Clean Neighbourhood and Environment Act's dog control orders are in tackling canine related matters? And whether we have witnessed an increase in responsible dog ownership? Also what assurances can the Minister provide to ensure the protection and continuation of current permissive access rights under any prospective sale of Forestry Commission land?

Lord Taylor – I think to some extent one of the great triumphs of the RSPCA recently has been the notices which they serve to owners of dogs which have no statutory standing and are just RSPCA advising dog owners but it has a considerable influence for making sure people take notice. We are not selling any of the Forestry Commission forest at the moment. I have been given forestry as another responsibility and we understand access with dogs is an important reason why people value forests and woodlands so will take that into account.

Dee McIntosh (Battersea Dogs & Cats) - Yet another consultation on dogs will delay meaningful progress whilst dog attacks continue. How high a priority is irresponsible dog owners for Defra?

Lord Taylor – We are determined to drive home our policy on this issue and we are not dragging our feet. To get consent across Government is difficult. This is an important task but I do see responsible dog ownership as something we must tackle.

Daniel Webb (PuppyLove) - Can the Minister confirm when the government intends to use powers in section 12 and 13 of the Animal Welfare Act 2006 to simplify and strengthen the regulation of commercial breeding and sale of dogs?

Lord Taylor – I gave some indication before that I am interested in the proposals regarding a Code of Practice on Breeding. We are moving in the right direction.

Lorraine Platt (Conservatives Against Foxhunting) - A close season for hares operates throughout much of Europe and Scotland. Would Lord Taylor support the introduction of the same protection for our own vulnerable hare populations which are not covered under the Animal Welfare Act 2006 as they are wild animals?

Lord Taylor – Currently as the law stands we cannot just impose a closed season but the Law Commission is looking at this issue. Richard Benyon MP has recently written to key stakeholders to initiate a discussion on what measures could be taken to protect hares.

Chris Draper (Born Free Foundation) - I would like to thank the Minister for his commitment to ban travelling circuses. Could the Minister confirm this ban when it comes in will apply to wild animal

currently in circuses and those brought in between that time? Therefore, will it be illegal for any wild animals to be in circuses?

Lord Taylor - Yes, that is right.

Dr Hadwen Trust – With the Government currently undertaking a review of the Animals in Scientific Procedures Act in line with the EU Directive 2010/63 we would like Lord Taylor to direct the Government to place particular emphasis during this transposition process on Article 47 of the EU directive on the development and use of alternatives to animal experimentation, not just in toxicological studies, where much of the focus and emphasis lies, but in fundamental research, where much of the increase in animal use, particularly in the use of genetically modified animals, is happening.

As there is currently no statutory requirement to use alternatives to animal experiments in fundamental research, we strongly recommend that the Government place particular emphasis in this area by requiring an animal license applicant to formally and fully explore the use of alternatives instead.

Lord Taylor - I am thinking it would be useful for you to take this up with Lord Henley as the Minister in the Home Office. You write to him telling him I told you to contact him.

Jacqui Cuff (Cat Protection) - Cats Protection is part of the Animal Welfare Education Coalition and runs a voluntary education programme with schools and community groups. 89% of adults recently surveyed agreed it was important to teach pet welfare within schools. 78% of primary teachers and 70% of secondary teachers also said how important it was to teach responsibility through learning about pets.

Can the Minister confirm that he will resist any moves to weaken the opportunities within the current curriculum to teach about caring for pets and animals. Further, will he support a call for animal welfare to be specifically added into the National Curriculum as part of the curriculum review being conducted by the Education Secretary Michael Gove".

Lord Taylor - I do agree children learn an enormous amount from animals, learning how to care and look after them is very important part of education. I hope any curriculum this Government comes up with should include this. I will drop Michael Gove a line with the point of view you are expressing.

Steve Goody (Blue Cross)– Is the Minister aware that anecdotal evidence from local authorities and animal wardens in London suggests that changes to the Rabies requirements in Jan 2012 may be resulting in large numbers of underage puppies with inadequate vaccinations, entering the UK for sale from Eastern Europe, and what if any assessment will be made of this?

Lord Taylor – The department is aware of reported increase of illegal imports. We still maintain 100% checks on pets and strong penalties are in place for those who breach the law. We are working closely with HLV and taking other operational steps necessary to deal with this. It is useful you are monitoring it yourself too.

David Cavill – Just a brief point on the statement on tackling irresponsible dog ownership, messing around on the periphery with micro-chips is not going to have much impact. What is required is enforcement of what we have. Also animal welfare needs to be a continuous thread through education.

Harvey Locke (BVA) – Returning to the previous point on illegal imports, the 100% checks on dogs coming into country is not actually happening. There has been a marked rise in dogs coming in without

checks. Since changes in pet travel regulations and no need for testing or the 21 day wait, people seem to have taken this as a green light to bring animals in without properly checking them. In vet practices we are seeing these animals coming in everyday.

Gavin Grant (RSPCA) - We also have concerns with animals going the other way – animals not being checked going out of ports.

Lord Taylor – It had not come to me as such a serious point until this meeting so I am grateful for you highlighting it. The pet control scheme was something we wanted to do but we don't want to run the risk of allowing dogs in that have not had the proper process. We will respond to this.

Vanessa Hudson (Animals Count) - After the Welsh Government decided in March to drop plans for a badger cull in favour of a vaccination programme, after “carefully considering the scientific evidence”, is the argument that a badger cull should still take place in England now considerably weakened?

Lord Taylor – We considered the evidence and feel we are in a different place from the Welsh Government. The Welsh are dealing with a more localised area. The advice of their Chief Veterinary Officer was that a cull was the best way of dealing with TB but the political judgement has changed there. I don't want to attack the Welsh for their decision but I stand by our decision in Defra to proceed with pilot culls based on evidence presented to us. As it is a matter for Judicial Review it is not proper for me to comment in length.

Vanessa Hudson – There is clear evidence that people who inflict deliberate cruelty on an animal (domestic, farm or wild) are also a danger to people, especially children. However, most punishments for animal cruelty, like the one handed down last week to Dollkeith Jarrett, who threw his son's kitten of a balcony to its death because it has soiled his sofa, are pitifully lenient. Jarrett received a 16 week sentence and a ban on keeping an animal for 10 years. Does the government recognise the link between animal and human abuse? What action does it plan to take to greater protect animals and people alike? Should the maximum sentence for animal cruelty be extended to act as a greater deterrent to this type of crime?

Lord Taylor – I find it difficult to comment having not heard the case and not being able to judge it and pass sentence. I do not want to take a position which judges are appointed to do. Having said that, I said that sentencing guidelines are just the sort of things being looked at and we are looking at modifying the guidelines to reflect what you have said. Often those who mistreat animals are not only mistreating other humans but were mistreated or abused themselves and this needs to be recognised. Opportunities for education at school is important here to teach people to learn how to treat animals as it them links to other areas of their lives. There is no doubt it with young children you introduce value systems which they take across their lives.

Neil Parish – I might take this up with Oliver Letwin as he looks at policy across Government.

Harvey Locke – What is the Government's view regarding the keeping of non-domesticated species as pets and does Defra have any plans to deal with the health and welfare issues relating to the import, sale and keeping of such animals?

Lord Taylor – There are an enormous number of exotic pets, in fact I was surprised by how many. Some animals probably can be kept satisfactorily as pets, others perhaps not. I don't have a view and I

am not going to announce a policy. I did meet Wild Futures last week and the Monkey Sanctuary which was useful.

Neil Parish MP – Do you need to review the types of animal which is being kept?

Lord Taylor – I have no plans currently as I had not thought about it until you suggested it. I am interested in receiving more information on it.

Harvey – Often these creatures are abandoned and they impact on native species and even present a public health risk too.

Lord Taylor – As I said I would be happy to receive some more information on this. If people feel they have ideas to contribute towards better animal welfare you should let me know. I want to be informed.

Emma Milne (BVA AWF)– It has generally been assumed that any welfare "costs" for wild animals are as a result of natural events and thus no human responsibility is involved. In relation to managed wildlife, the more recent notion has been that as management impacts increase, responsibilities for welfare increase in parallel. This has been incorporated into guidelines produced by the former Deer Commission for Scotland (now Scottish natural Heritage). Where does the Minister see the responsibility for the welfare of wild animals lying?

Lord Taylor –There are difficulties with wild populations, it is not strictly speaking something I deal with as it is Richard Benyon's territory. It is fair to say where managed populations are controlled we have to make sure that management programmes are done in a proper and humane fashion.

The Ivory Trade (International Fund for Animal Welfare)

Tom Quinn - I have some graphic images taken in the last few weeks in Cameroon where hundreds of elephants have been butchered. In fact around 300 elephant carcasses have been found and poachers have claimed 650 elephants which is around half of the elephant population in the Bouba Ndjida National Park. Last year saw a record number of ivory seizures with at least 30 tonnes of ivory taken which represents approximately 3000 dead elephants. Yet customs officials suggest that only 10% of total traffic is seized. Part of the rise is because of stockpile sales - the most recent being in 2008. 108 tonnes were agreed to be sold to China and Japan. Seizures of ivory skyrocketed following legal trade increase as this makes the demand rise and also acts as a smokescreen for the illegal trade. The UK Government is supportive on stopping the ivory trade and must take this positive view to the EU when it votes as a block at the CITES Key summit in March next year. We are expecting proposals from Southern Africa countries for further trade so it is vital we oppose it.

The UK does give money for enforcement on stopping the illegal trade but we need more. The EU is third largest for trade after China and the trade on internet is increasing, APCO recognise it as a key wildlife crime priority and the National Wildlife Crime Unit does good work but funding is only protected by the Government until March next year. At the moment the illegal trade is seen by criminals as a low risk and high reward crime. .

Neil Parish MP– We need to go and see the Minister about putting pressure on for the Summit. I know Richard Benyon MP is keen to see a ban. It is essential to get other EU countries onside. It is much about trade so we need to take international action. Lifting ban has not worked out so we need to learn from that. We do trade a lot with China, we can raise it when we are doing deals on other issues.

Sheila Crispin (Advisory Council on Welfare Issues of Dog Breeding) –As soon as you have legal trade it is difficult to separate it from illegal trade and this need to be recognised.

Mark Jones (HSI) – Part of the problem is several species which are threatening by trade which are split listed so populations are in different appendixes. This is causing problems as opening possibility of illegal trade. It would be interesting to look at pursuing populations to be up-listed into Appendix 1.

Tom Quinn – Certainly up-listing would be a good way of securing their future by preventing international trade.