



A BETTER LIFE FOR ANIMALS

A Proposed Animal Welfare Manifesto for animals and people

(Prepared by Labour Animal Welfare Society)

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ANIMAL WELFARE PLEDGES:

- Help struggling families keep their pets happy, healthy and at home
- Strengthen animal protection laws and punish animal cruelty
- Work with farmers to maintain high farm animal welfare
- Ensure animal welfare is included in international trade
- Accelerate the transition to animal-free science
- Tackle the collapse in biodiversity and protect wild animals

SEE PAGE 3 FOR MORE DETAILS...

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A BETTER LIFE FOR ANIMALS – A PROPOSED A

Labour has shown itself to be the only party to trust on issues of animal welfare. Just as the Party works to protect vulnerable people in Britain and around the world, it has championed animals against mistreatment and suffering. In Government, Labour brought in the Animal Welfare Act, banned fur farming, won better standards for farm animals across Europe, ended testing of cosmetics on animals and introduced the hunting ban.

Bold animal welfare policies can help Labour connect with voters. The Labour Animal Welfare Society (LAWS) is suggesting, here, a set of policies for a Labour Animal Welfare Manifesto. The policies are practical, demonstrably popular, attractive to voters, involve little or no costs and would be effective.

This new initiative mirrors Labour’s hugely popular, 1997 New Life For Animals policy document, which led to the Labour Government introducing significant improvements in animal welfare.

By supporting Labour, all of us are helping move to a more compassionate society based on a sustainable environment in which animals are treated with respect and maltreatment for sport or commercial gain becomes a distant memory.

The Conservatives have consistently shown disinterest in and even contempt for animal welfare issues. They have shelved the Kept Animals Bill and failed to even bring the Animals Abroad Bill to Parliament. Both would have gained support from the Labour Party.

By producing a pledge card to the electorate, a pact would be made with voters to show a commitment to a better life for the animals we share the planet with.



“The Tories have overseen the inhumane badger cull and turned a blind eye to those circumventing the Hunting Act... I am particularly concerned that the protection of animal welfare will be ignored in this (Tory) government’s pursuit of trade deals.”

Sir Keir Starmer (2020)



“I am pleased Labour is committed to strengthening and properly enforcing the Hunting Act. There are still too many hunts getting away with hunting foxes with dogs and avoiding prosecution... Similarly, I was proud of our policy to end the importing of fur and want to ensure that commitment is kept.”

Angela Rayner (2020)

We know that animal welfare is important to a huge number of people in the UK and that during election time a party’s position can have a great impact. Look at what happened when Theresa May said she would introduce a vote to bring back hunting with dogs. Conservative voters contacted me to say they could no longer vote Tory if that was their policy.

The Tories talk about animal welfare, carry out numerous consultations, make constant promises, yet deliver very little. Manifesto promises have been watered down or ditched completely – the bans on fur imports and foie gras have disappeared into the long grass. We cannot trust them to keep the hunting ban, let alone bring in new legislation to strengthen it and close the existing loopholes.

They continue with the badger cull and negotiate trade deals that raise serious questions over animal welfare standards. Most people do not want our standards to be undermined by lower welfare imports. They also believe Parliament should be able to debate, amend and vote on trade deals.

Animal welfare policy must be put on a serious and credible footing, driven by science and best practice and working with communities, farmers and businesses. We need to continually work to drive up standards in line with the most recent advances and understanding so that no animal is made to suffer unnecessary pain and degradation.

We are in the middle of a cost-of-living crisis, with inflation spiralling and energy bills out of control. But this does not mean that we should stop pushing for better animal welfare.



We cannot allow animals to become the innocent victims of our economic crisis. Instead, we need action to strengthen animal welfare law, promote the highest level of care for domestic animals, improve welfare for animals used in sport and research, and increase efforts to protect wild and marine animals.

Sue Hayman

Baroness (Sue) Hayman of Ullock (LAWS President)

UNDER THESE SIX PLEDGES

Under these clear headings, here are a list of specific policies that a Labour government could achieve. These policies are demonstrably popular with voters and would make significant, much needed, improvements to animal welfare. They would also help to put clear blue water between the Labour and Conservative Parties:

1 Help struggling families keep their pets happy, healthy and at home

- Bring in a positive list for petsⁱ, end exotic pet marketsⁱⁱ and the sale of mutilated breeds
- Tackle puppy and kitten smuggling effectively
- Work with care homes, sheltered accommodation and hostels to help people keep their pets where possible and ensure safe houses are available for the pets of those fleeing domestic violenceⁱⁱⁱ
- Review the ineffective Dangerous Dogs Act^{iv}
- Ban shock collars^v
- Work with veterinarians to explore ways in which low income households can access emergency vet care

2 Strengthen animal protection laws and punish animal cruelty

- Make all crime against animals recordable and reportable^{vi}
- Give statutory powers in England and Wales to RSPCA inspectors^{vii}
- Ban sky lanterns and dangerous forms of plastic which can hurt pets, wild animals and livestock^{viii}
- Take action to counter sheep worrying and fatal attacks by dogs^{ix}
- Remove two-tier sentencing for animal cruelty^x
- Make pet abduction a specific criminal offence^{xi}

^{*} Should the Hunting Trophies (Import Prohibition) Bill become another Tory broken animal welfare promise, Steve Reed has said that 'Hunting endangered animals is barbaric and must be confined to history', pledging that Labour would bring in a ban.

3 Work with farmers to maintain high farm animal welfare

- Develop a Food and Farming Strategy, incorporating Environmental and Land Management Scheme subsidies to support a shift to sustainable, climate and animal welfare-friendly agriculture
- Empower consumers to make informed buying choices and reward high-welfare farmers with mandatory Method of Production labelling for farm animals^{xii}
- Commit to phasing out cages and crates in consultation with farmers^{xiii}
- Make the Better Chicken Commitment, including banning fast growing breeds and reducing stocking densities^{xiv}
- Work with farmers to tackle bovine TB and end the ineffective badger cull^{xv}
- Introduce legal minimum welfare and slaughter requirements for farmed aquatic animals and include decapod crustaceans in the existing Animal Welfare Act^{xvi}

4 Ensure animal welfare is included in international trade

- Establish core standards in animal welfare for trade deals; refuse trade concessions to imports not meeting the core standards^{xvii}
- Ban import and sale of real fur and foie gras^{xviii}
- Ban live exports for slaughter and fattening
- Ban the import of hunting trophies^{*}

5 Accelerate the transition to animal-free science

- Develop a cross-departmental action plan to accelerate the transition to animal-free research and testing^{xix}
- Immediately reinstate the full ban on animal testing for cosmetics to cover all ingredients used exclusively and predominantly in cosmetics
- Establish a non-animal science innovation hub bringing representatives from government, industry, academia, venture capital and non-governmental organisations together in a pro-active transition initiative

6 Tackle the collapse in biodiversity and protect wild animals

- Strengthen the Hunting Act, removing exemptions and closing loopholes that allow for illegal hunting of foxes, deer and hares, including by ending trail hunting^{xx}
- Prohibit the manufacture, sale, possession and use of snares^{xxi}
- Improve enforcement and prosecution of illegal persecution of birds of prey^{xxii}
- End the import and release of pheasants and partridges for shooting^{xxiii}
- Review environmental impacts of driven grouse shooting
- Review wildlife law to consolidate, reform and update to produce a single statute, including tackling marine mammal bycatch, and protecting seals from disturbance

LAWs would also like to see an annually-reviewed five-year animal welfare strategy, for which Ministers are accountable to Parliament. Such a plan would facilitate a cross-departmental approach to ensuring that the needs of animals are given proper consideration throughout policy making, in keeping with the intentions of the Animal Welfare (Sentience) Act 2022. We would also like to see a review of the current committee structure, created

under the Act and consideration of an appointed Animal Welfare Commissioner. As part of this process, a review of any practices that may be inconsistent with the welfare obligations enshrined in the Animal Welfare Act 2006 should be conducted. Future legislation and regulation (such as species licensing policy) should embrace the ethical principles (as drawn up by the Wild Animals Welfare Committee) to govern wildlife management interventions.

- i. A positive list is a tool to more effectively and efficiently regulate the pet trade, by producing a list of animal species that are allowed to be traded as companion animals: any species not on the list is de facto illegal to keep. This would provide a mechanism for banning the keeping of primates as pets. Belgium, the Netherlands, Cyprus and Italy have all adopted positive lists for pets. https://www.eurogrupforanimals.org/files/eurogrupforanimals/2023-03/2023_03_efa_EU%20Positive%20List_White%20Paper.pdf
- ii. Exotic pet markets are opposed by the British Veterinary Association.
- iii. Fear of leaving pets can prevent victims leaving home with, sometimes, terrible consequences.
- iv. The Dangerous Dogs Act (DDA) does not work and should be replaced with a Dog Control Act. There is no robust research to demonstrate that the dog breeds or types covered by the DDA are any more aggressive than other dogs. Aggressive behaviour can be influenced by factors such as how they are bred, reared and experiences throughout their life. Breed isn't a good way to predict risk of aggression. Despite the prohibition of certain types of dogs, in the past 20 years (1999 to 2019), dog bites have increased from 3454 to 8775 p.a. A three-pronged approach is needed to better protect public safety:
 - Effective legislation and enforcement to tackle dog-related issues regardless of breed or type and based on their behaviour
 - Interventions including education that focus on safe behaviour around dogs
 - A better understanding of why dogs bite.
- v. Banning shock collars is supported by groups including the RSPCA, the Dogs Trust and the Kennel Club. Michael Gove announced that the government was to ban them in 2018, saying "We are a nation of animal lovers and the use of punitive shock collars cause harm and suffering to our pets". The ban is yet to become law and this may become yet another Conservative broken promise.
- vi. This would fit Labour's wider crime strategy <https://labour.org.uk/missions/making-britains-streets-safe/>
- vii. The Scottish government has started a consultation on its proposal to extend the powers of the Scottish SPCA to investigate wildlife crimes, giving them more authority to search, examine and seize evidence in incidents of illegal hunting and killing of animals.
- viii. See 'Calls from rural groups to ban 'devastating' sky lanterns continue' which refers to a campaign by 18 organisations – including Countryside Alliance, NFU, the British Horse Society and the Country Land and Business Association who have formed a coalition and have written to environment minister Rebecca Pow, calling on Government to make the use of sky lanterns illegal <https://www.countryside-alliance.org/resources/news/calls-to-ban-devastating-sky-lanterns-continue>
- ix. According to the Countryside Alliance: 'More than 1,800 farm animals have been killed by dog attacks in the past four years. 92 dogs have been shot as a result of sheep worrying between 2013 and 2017. The cost of sheep worrying claims in 2017 amounted to £1.6 million for NFU Mutual, alone. Increased housing in rural areas means the chances of attacks have increased rapidly. Sheep worrying can cause ewes to miscarry and lambs to be separated from their mothers.' Along with Police and farming organisations it wants a review of the laws around the definition of livestock, the Dangerous Dog Act, and other legislation surrounding the problem to make it a more prosecutable offence and dog attacks on livestock to be made a recordable crime. It also suggests trialling the use of DNA as a tool to identify offending dogs.
- x. So that all animals, whether domestic, under human control or wild, are protected by the same five-year maximum sentence for animal cruelty.
- xi. Pets are often seen as family members. Their abduction can be a traumatic experience. Despite this, stolen pets are regarded as personal property, with sentences dependent on monetary value. A 'pet abduction' offence would recognise the emotional & welfare impacts this crime has on people & pets.
- xii. This July, the Conservatives dropped its plan for labelling, despite Defra's research finding high levels of public support. Requiring mandatory Method of Production labelling is an important way of honouring consumers' right to know how their food has been produced.
- xiii. This represents another Conservative broken promise. The European Union is currently responding to a call to 'End the Cage Age' – an initiative prompted by a successful European Citizens Initiative which was subsequently supported by the European Parliament. A similar reform is necessary to ensure Britain remains a world leader in animal welfare. Over 90% of the British public find small cages for pigs and chickens unacceptable. But Compassion in World Farming ranked the UK only ninth out of European countries by percentage of cage free farm animals. Banning cages and crates, including for game birds, will keep the UK as a world leader in animal welfare.
- xiv. This would be one of the most effective ways to improve farm animal welfare, and British industry is already supportive: <https://betterchickencommitment.com/uk/> 200 companies across Europe, including M&S and KFC have already made the commitment.
- xv. Ending 'the Government's ineffective and inhumane badger culls' was a Labour Manifesto pledge in 2015, repeated in 2019. A majority of the public support a ban, as do a number of organisations and Trade Unions including the GMB. A more effective strategy to combat Bovine TB is needed urgently.
- xvi. Fish are recognised as sentient beings under the Animal Welfare (Sentience) Act 2022, but they have been too often and for too long neglected in conversations about animal welfare. Despite being legally recognised as sentient and able to feel pain, decapod crustaceans routinely have their tails ripped off (to be served as scampi) whilst alive and full conscious. Such treatment is possible due to a "loophole" in legislation that fails to protect these sentient animals. Labour's landmark Animal Welfare Act can be used to close such anomalies.
- xvii. A Labour government ought not to let British farmers be undercut by low welfare imports. California recently introduced Proposition 12, prohibiting the sale of low-welfare pork from other states, and the EU is considering introducing similar measures soon. Regulating low-welfare imports would support British farmers and maintain our status as a world leader in animal welfare.
- xviii. The Labour Government banned fur farming in 2000 (Fur Farming (Prohibition) Act 2000) and Labour politicians in Europe provided significant support for the EU ban, in 1991, on the use of steel-jawed leghold traps (Council Regulation No 3254/91). Since the main methods of fur production are now banned in the UK, it would be hypocritical to continue to allow the sale of real fur. California and Israel, as well as a number of US cities have now banned the sale of fur. 73% of the British public support banning the import and sale of fur (YouGov, February 2022) yet the Conservatives broke their promises to do so.
- xix. Strengthening the NHS and boosting the economy have emerged as central priorities for ensuring that people in Britain have a bright and sustainable future. Recent years have seen increasing recognition of the role that innovative, future-focused biomedical research techniques can play in this mission, such as artificial intelligence, bioinformatics and advanced human tissue cultures. The *Transition Programme for Innovation without the use of animals* in the Netherlands, set up by the government, brings together core partners active in government, civil society, academia and business to innovate most effectively for animals and humans. YouGov research shows that the public wants to see action taken to end animal testing with 65% wanting to see a plan to phase out animal experiments in the UK. With ever greater recognition that animal experiments are not working for human health, we need to act proactively to speed up the transition, including putting in place a framework to: prioritise public funding for Non-Animal Methods and secure private investment, end severe suffering, facilitate the use of non-animal methods within the testing process, review the use of a second species (often dogs or primates) in testing and require the inclusion of data from human-specific methods within safety evidence.
- xx. In October 2021, National Trust members voted to ban trail hunting on its land amid fears it was being used as a "smokescreen" for illegal foxhunts. 78% of the British public support strengthening the ban, including 76% of rural voters (FindOutNow/Electoral Calculus, 2022). Priorities include the removal of the many exemptions exploited for continued hunting and the inclusion of a 'recklessness' clause to prevent the use of trail hunting as a cover for illegal hunting.
- xxi. The Labour Welsh government has recently banned the use of free-running snares (self-locking snares are already banned throughout the UK) ensuring that the use of all snares will be banned when the latest legislation comes into force later this year. The Scottish government has recently announced a proposal to ban snares. 77% of the British public think snares should be illegal (Ipsos MORI, 2014) and 68% of MPs also support a ban on snares (Dods poll, 2015).
- xxii. RSPB research shows that persecution is still the main cause of death of endangered hen harriers.
- xxiii. More than 45 million pheasants and partridges are mass produced each year. The RSPB has called for an immediate ban on the release of captive bred gamebirds and mallards for shooting in the UK due to avian influenza (Poultry News, 18 May 2023).