

LAWS welcomes the recent publication of the government's world-leading Animal Welfare Strategy – an ambitious action plan to deliver the biggest boost to animal welfare in a generation. This briefing sets out some highlights of the Strategy, which will improve the lives of millions of animals on farms, in our homes, and in the wild, alongside recommendations for swift delivery.

1. Ending cages for hens and pigs

We applaud the Strategy's commitment to consulting on ending the use of enriched cages for hens and farrowing crates for pigs. Each year, approximately 7 million layer hens in the UK spend their lives in cages with little more than the space of an A4 piece of paper each, and around 200,000 mother pigs in the UK are confined in farrowing crates unable to turn around.

LAWS agrees that this reform is of the highest priority and we commend the government's swift launching of a consultation on ending cages for hens, published in January 2026.

Given that many farmers have already voluntarily transitioned to higher welfare systems, we recommend that a consultation on ending farrowing crates be launched this year and that both bans be implemented as soon as possible.



RECOMMENDATION

By end of 2026, lay secondary legislation to phase out enriched cages for hens and farrowing crates for pigs, with a short transition period.

2. Banning the CO₂ gassing of pigs

The Strategy pledges to ban the CO₂ gassing of pigs, subject to consultation. This is a critical reform to improve the welfare of pigs: over 90% of pigs in England and Wales are currently slaughtered using this method, contrary to long-established scientific evidence that it is aversive to them. The government's Animal Welfare Committee has recommended that CO₂ stunning be prohibited to prevent pigs experiencing avoidable pain and distress at slaughter, in accordance with existing legal requirements.

RECOMMENDATION

Publish a consultation in 2026 on banning the CO₂ gassing of pigs and then implement the ban by amending the Welfare of Animals at the Time of Killing (England) Regulations 2015 to phase the practice out within three years.



3. Delivering manifesto commitments to ban trail hunting and snare traps to protect wild animals

The Strategy commits to delivering Labour's manifesto promises to ban trail hunting and snare traps. Over 20 years after the last Labour government banned fox hunting under the Hunting Act 2004, there is evidence that illegal hunting continues to be carried out under the guise of trail hunting.

Foxes and other wild animals also face ongoing harm through the use of snare traps. These traps catch running animals by the neck with a wire noose and can inflict considerable pain and suffering on them.

RECOMMENDATION:

Introduce primary legislation as soon as possible to amend the Hunting Act 2004 to ban trail hunting and introduce a ban on snare traps.

4. A Working Group on Fur

The government will bring together a working group on fur, as well as publishing the results of the previous government's call for evidence on the fur trade and publishing and considering carefully the Animal Welfare Committee's forthcoming report on the fur trade.

These commitments reflect the wide public concern that exists for the welfare of animals killed in the global fur trade, more than 20 years after the Labour government banned fur farming in the UK.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Publish in the first half of 2026 the results of the previous government's call for evidence on the fur trade and the Animal Welfare Committee's report on the fur trade.
- Commence in the first half of 2026 the working group on the fur trade, with the goal of moving towards a full ban on the import and sale of fur.

5. Further Protections for Companion, Wild, and Farmed Animals

LAWS welcomes the many other important policy commitments contained in the Strategy, including:

- implementing humane slaughter standards for farmed fish
- introducing a close season for hares
- reforming dog breeding to improve health and welfare and help end puppy farming

LAWS looks forward to working with the government to deliver these commitments and the many other vital reforms in the Strategy. Together, these policies will make Britain a world leader in animal welfare again and will cement Labour's proud legacy as the party that protects all animals.