

Richard Corbett Labour MEP



EUROPEAN ANIMAL WELFARE NEWS



February 2009



*Hello and welcome to my Animal Welfare Newsletter. This has been sent to you as someone who has contacted me to express your concerns on an issue of animal welfare. I hope that this newsletter provides you with information so you can see what the European Parliament and I are doing in working for the protection of animals. I hope that you find this information useful. If you have any queries or comments please contact me at the address below. Best wishes, **Richard***

8 Hours Campaign

I have joined forces with Danish MEP Dan Jørgensen to launch the 8 hours campaign to put a maximum limit on the transport of animals for slaughter.

Animals for slaughter are currently protected by some EU legislation which does require that they are given suitable amounts of water and breaks but it is not enough. Of particular concern is the trend of transporting animals for slaughter for days at a time. This is completely unnecessary and a maximum limit of eight hours is a reasonable objective that stands a realistic chance of being made into law.



But if this is going to happen we need your help! Please sign the online petition of the eight hours campaign on the website: www.8hours.eu

I would also be very grateful to those of you with a Facebook account if you could join the Facebook group and invite your friends to join so we can attract the maximum number of supporters:

<http://www.facebook.com/home.php?#/group.php?gid=42403912046&ref=mf>

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Diana Wallis MEP opposition to seal products ban

Diana Wallis, Liberal Democrat MEP for Yorkshire & Humber, has caused dismay among animal welfare organisations. She has argued against a proposal for an EU ban on seal products instead opting to support a labelling scheme that enables buyers to ascertain that products are from seals killed “without causing avoidable pain.”

But such a scheme is ineffective. As several animal welfare organisations have pointed out, seal hunting methods cannot be effectively verified, as it takes place over wide areas in remote locations.

Canada, for example, already has laws intended to protect seals from inhumane deaths. Yet seals in Canada, as the International Fund for Animal Welfare has discovered, are still killed with utmost brutality despite these laws, and it is for that very reason that I support proposals to implement a wholesale ban.

Whether Parliament backs the ban may depend on whether the Liberal Democrats continue to oppose it.

Ending testing on primates

Finally, last November the European Commission announced the long awaited revision of the directive on the use of animals in experiments. The revision of this directive, which is over 20 years out-of-date, is great news for the animal world and humans alike.

The directive, which is currently being examined by the European Parliament's Agriculture Committee, contains improvements to the conditions under which animals for experimentation are kept. It also commits the EU to replace, reduce and refine the use of animals in scientific experimentation.

I am, however, dismayed to discover that the Commission has failed to propose a timetable to end the use of primates in experimentation. Although the proposal introduces more stringent criteria for testing on non-human primates, there are a number of loopholes which would permit the continued use of primates for testing.

The use of monkeys and apes in testing is a barbaric practice. Not only are there ethical questions over the use of animals in testing, but also testing on primates also often produces inconsistent results and with scientific development providing real alternatives it is utterly indefensible in today's society. These highly intelligent creatures are often confined in appalling conditions and subject to rigorous invasive procedures causing varying amounts of pain, suffering and distress.

In the Parliament we need to show our support for the complete phase out of the use of primates for experimentation without the current loopholes in the Commission's proposal. With 55% of Euro MEPs having signed the original Written Declaration 40/2007 (which called for an urgent end to the use of great apes and wild-caught monkeys in experiments, and the establishment of a timetable to bring an end to the use of all primates in experiments) we can hope that this practice will soon be phased out in Europe, setting a global precedent.

For more information about the proposal and the effect on primates please see Animal Defenders International website: <http://www.savetheprimates.org/>

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Sheffield company wins ethical research award

Congratulations to Sheffield Company Simcyp, who are to receive an ethical award from the Dr Hadwen Trust for Humane Research (DHT). Simcyp scientist Professor Amin Rostami-Hodjegan will receive the award for Outstanding Scientific Contribution to Animal Replacements in recognition of Simcyp's ground-breaking work developing a computer-based virtual human population drug modelling system. The unique system can dramatically reduce the number of animals used in early drug development, improve the relevance of drug testing to humans and is now used by many of the world's top pharmaceutical companies.

I will be at the award ceremony to personally congratulate Professor Amin Rostami-Hodjegan and Simcyp for their efforts in reducing the number of animals used in testing.

For more information, please visit: <http://www.drhadwentrust.org.uk/>

Give Animals a Voice Campaign

The RSPCA has set up a website with various campaigns to help increase the welfare of animals. Currently, ongoing campaigns include:

Exposing the puppy traffickers

Puppy trafficking is a lucrative business. Tiny puppies are bred in large numbers to be sold by some pet shops, via the internet and through local newspaper adverts. Many puppies bred in this way fall sick and sadly some die, very often once you've paid out hundreds, or even thousands of pounds in vet bills. And that's on top of what you paid for the puppy in the first place.

Rooting for Pigs!

It has been law to label eggs with the method of production since 2004. Since then, there has been an increase in the sale of higher welfare eggs as consumers make an informed choice about the eggs they buy. We want to see the same happen for pigs.

Cut out the stuffing!

According to leading vets, pet obesity is one of the biggest issues affecting pets' health and one in three of the UK's dogs and cats are now overweight. Fat pets can develop serious health problems – including diabetes, arthritis and even organ failure.

To find out more and lend your support for their campaigns, please visit their website: <http://www.giveanimalsavoice.org.uk/>

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Birdlife set out priorities for Czech EU Presidency

Birdlife International has called for the EU Institutions, during the current Czech Presidency of the EU Council, to ensure progress is made in the following key areas:

- **Biodiversity protection**

The recently published (December 08) mid-term report of the European Commission on the EU Action Plan to halt the loss of biodiversity concludes that the EU is highly unlikely to meet its 2010 target of halting biodiversity decline. According to BirdLife the report reveals a huge gap between stated ambition and real action and therefore calls on the European Institutions and Member States to undertake major additional effort to put Europe on track towards achieving its 2010 biodiversity objective.

- **Climate change**

Under the Czech Presidency, the UN Climate Change conference in Copenhagen will be prepared. In this significant meeting, the EU must take a clear leading role in reaching an ambitious post 2012 climate change agreement. It is also necessary that the EU promotes a robust scheme to reduce emissions from deforestation in developing countries.

- **EU Budget review/reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)**

Publication of the Commission paper on the EU budget review will stir up further debate about future EU spending, including the future of the CAP. BirdLife advocates a new vision for the CAP that delivers value for taxpayers' money and properly addresses the great sustainability issues of agriculture in the 21st century.

I am extremely committed to arguing the case for all of Birdlife International's proposals, which I wholeheartedly agree with. I will certainly make my voice heard in the European Parliament for action to meet our biodiversity targets, ambitious climate change commitments and for the much needed reform of the Common Agricultural Policy.

RSPB express their thanks

I was moved by a message of thanks to me from the RSPB over concerns I had raised in the European Parliament over the issue of Bulgaria's failure to implement the EU's Bird Directive. Development projects in Bulgaria threaten the habitats of local birdlife, which are supposed to be protected by European Laws. In response to my concerns, the European Commission began an investigation into Bulgaria's progress on implementing the Bird Directive.

Sacha Cleminson, EU advocacy manager at RSPB, in a letter of thanks said: "We have been delighted to see people from Yorkshire and Humber getting involved to help save wildlife across Europe. It is thanks to the efforts of MEPs like Richard that there is a voice for nature in Brussels."

I would also like to thank everybody who wrote to me about this issue.

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The dangers of cloning animals for sport

The news that the importation of cells into Europe for the creation of cloned bulls is to be allowed is extremely worrying. It has been reported that the Spanish owner of the cells intends to use the resulting clones to breed bulls for the bullrings of Spain. The importation of these cells for cloning is to be permitted as new guidelines prohibit the importation of cells for cloning only if the animal created is destined for human consumption - otherwise there is nothing to stop it. Few people would have thought that this might allow for bullfighting bulls to be covered, although, apparently, permission has already been given for racehorses to be cloned for breeding in this manner.

The creation of clones for any purpose creates animal welfare issues, such as "large offspring syndrome" which results in serious physical deformities in the afflicted animals, as well as an increased risk of miscarriage and complications in the birth process. When reproduction can take place perfectly well through natural means, avoiding the harm to animal welfare which almost inevitably results from the cloning process, it is obvious that the use of cloned animals in breeding is unnecessary.

Leaving aside the animal welfare issues of cloning and the barbaric nature of bullfighting which results in the torture and death of thousands of animals every year, the cloning of champion animals for their use in sport is akin to the use of steroids by athletes: using unnatural methods to achieve that which is beyond what comes naturally is dishonest, and degrading to those athletes who wish to achieve the best that they, and not manufactured drugs, can achieve. The same is surely true for our use of animals in sports.

Moreover, if one owner chooses to clone his champion breeding animals, soon all breeders will be forced to do the same in order to keep up, and in such circumstances the temptation of genetic engineering to produce better and better breeding animals would seem difficult to resist. Who, one may ask, is to benefit from this? Initially, it may allow some owners to steal a length off others by this dubious technique. In the end, horse races will be between faster, artificially improved animals, but to what avail?

What is the Animal Welfare Intergroup?

The Animal Welfare Intergroup is an informal group consisting of Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) from a variety of parties who have a common concern about animal welfare. The group aims to mobilise cross party support for animal welfare and conservation. The group's executive meets every three months to consider which issues they would like the EU to discuss and deliberate on.

The group has had many important successes and helped to obtain a ban on imports of baby seal products into the European Union, and helped to phase out the battery-cage system for laying hens. The work of the Animal Welfare Intergroup is integral to ensuring that the welfare of animals is addressed at a European level, and as a member I will continue to do my utmost to ensure that I and my Labour colleagues continue our work to stop unnecessary cruelty to animals.

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