

Richard Corbett MEP



# EUROPEAN ANIMAL WELFARE NEWS



**May 2008**



*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*

## **Pressure mounts for a ban on all seal product imports**

In April, Parliament welcomed a very special guest to speak to the Intergroup on the Welfare and Conservation of Animals. Sheryl Fink, speaking on behalf of the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW), had travelled all the way from her native Canada to drum up support for an EU-wide ban on the import of all seal products into Europe.



New regulations implemented by the Canadian authorities, supposedly to make the Canadian seal hunts more "humane", have done little to increase the welfare of the seals. Most hunters are ignoring the regulations and the authorities seem unwilling to take action. Indeed, the group was shown a highly distressing video filmed by IFAW proving that seals were not killed quickly or humanely.

The Eurosceptic Tory MEP Roger Helmer, who was in the audience, attempted to pass Sheryl Fink's presentation off merely as a "slick" gimmick from the animal welfare lobby. Helmer asked what effect a ban on the seal hunt would have on those who relied on the trade to make a living, and what effect would a ban have on Canada's fish stocks. If Helmer hadn't left immediately after asking his questions, he might have heard the answers!

Canada's seal hunt is not economically viable. The C\$11million industry would not survive without the subsidies paid by the Canadian government. In fact, no hunter relies on the trade for a living - the hunt only makes each hunter around £1000 extra income per year. It is merely an extra bit of pocket money for them. Add to that the fact there is no evidence that seals have any significant adverse effect on fish stocks, and there appears very little justification in continuing the inhumane seal hunt, and hopefully, an EU ban on seal products will finally see an end to it.

For more information, please visit IFAW's website: [www.ifaw.org](http://www.ifaw.org)

---

**Richard Corbett, Labour Member of the European Parliament for Yorkshire and Humber**

2 Blenheim Terrace, Leeds, LS2 9JG, Phone: 0113 2458978 Fax: 0113 2458992 Email: [richard@richardcorbett.org.uk](mailto:richard@richardcorbett.org.uk)

---

## EU bans Maltese Spring Hunt



April was a great month for animal welfare as the European Court of Justice finally banned the Maltese Spring Hunt. As many of you will know, Malta, in defiance of the EU's Bird Directive, had continued to host their annual spring hunt during which hunters would shoot migratory birds on route from Africa into Europe and thereby undermining the joint effort across the EU to protect their routes all the way. These birds were hunted before they had had a chance to breed, severely affecting their numbers.

As many of you will know, the European Commission, following the concerns of animal rights groups across Europe, took the Maltese

government to Court for having allowed, every spring since the country's accession to the EU in 2004, hunting and trapping of European Turtle-dove and Common Quail, in direct contravention of the EU Birds Directive. Now, the Court of Justice has upheld that complaint and Malta's spring hunts will become a thing of the past.

Birdlife International's EU police manager, Konstantin Kreiser, said: "Although we regret it had to come this far - and Europe-wide embarrassment has been caused for Malta - we are now confident that government-authorized spring hunting has become a thing of the past in Malta. At the same time we hope that the Maltese government, police and all stakeholders will work together to clamp down on the still widely spread illegal hunting and trapping in the country"

For more information, please visit Birdlife International:  
[http://www.birdlife.org/news/news/2008/04/malta\\_interim\\_measures.html](http://www.birdlife.org/news/news/2008/04/malta_interim_measures.html)

## Boycott sick "artist"

Guillermo Habacuc Vargas, a Costa Rican "artist" has caused outrage amongst animal lovers across the globe by seemingly starving a dog to death in the name of "art". Vargas appeared to starve a stray dog called Natividad to death when he displayed it at an exhibition last year at the Códice Gallery in Managua, Nicaragua. Vargas tethered the animal without food and water under the words 'Eres Lo Que Lees' - 'You Are What You Read' - made out of dog biscuits while he played the Sandinista anthem backwards and set 175 pieces of crack cocaine alight in a massive incense burner.

There is no way, under any definition, that a sick act like this could ever be described as "art" even if later reports (that he didn't actually do so) are true. But the disgusting episode gets worse – Vargas has been invited to the prestigious Visual Arts Biennial of Central America to *repeat* his exhibition. A petition has been organised to oppose this, and so far, well over a million people have signed it.

You can also sign the petition to show your opposition and disgust:  
<http://www.petitiononline.com/ea6gk/petition.html>