

Respecting All Animals

Animal Welfare Policy Paper

Policy Paper 61



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Summary

Liberal Democrats believe that humans have a responsibility to care appropriately for animals. We should respect animals and understand that every animal has specific inherent needs, regardless of their circumstances. Liberal Democrats will take the lead in improving animal welfare at a global and European level. We will give UK animal welfare issues high priority by establishing an autonomous Animal Protection Commission. The Commission will bring all animal welfare related matters under the responsibility of a dedicated, expert body, and will be regulatory and advisory.

Liberal Democrats will reduce the number of animals used in experiments and improve their welfare by:

- Supporting the Three Rs for animal experiments - reduction, refinement and replacement.
- Repealing Section 24 of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 to facilitate access to information.
- Reviewing the Codes of Practice for the housing and care of laboratory animals.
- Increasing the number of Home Office inspectors beyond the existing plans.

Liberal Democrats will regulate the genetic modification of animals by:

- Prohibiting the genetic modification of animals to facilitate intensive farming methods.
- Requiring companies to share GM strains to a larger extent than at present in order to reduce the number of animals that need to be bred.

Liberal Democrats will improve the conditions and welfare of farm animals by:

- Requiring DEFRA to create a voluntary labelling system to ensure that those farmers who pay particular attention to animal welfare have their products clearly identified.
- Supporting vaccination as the preferable method for dealing with disease outbreaks.
- Establishing a network of local abattoirs in order to reduce the distances travelled by live animals.
- Requiring the Animal Protection Commission to carry out an investigation into slaughtering.

Liberal Democrats will protect the welfare of companion animals by:

- Introducing a self-financing system of compulsory registration for the ownership of dogs.
- Updating the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 to move away from breed-specific legislation.

Liberal Democrats will improve the welfare of wild animals and captive animals by:

- Requiring the Animal Protection Commission to carry out an investigation into methods of pest control.

- Prohibiting the use of all animals in circuses except domestic dogs and horses.
- Requiring all establishments falling under the definition of a 'zoo' to be licensed and to meet the standards of the European Directive 1999/22/EC.

Applicability: The majority of this policy paper applies to England and Wales only. However, Chapter 2 on "The Global Context" and the other policies relating to the EU are federal. The policies on local authorities (paragraph 3.3), the national curriculum (paragraph 3.3), slaughterhouses (paragraph 6.5.2) and hunting (paragraph 8.2.2) apply to England only.

Principles

Liberal Democrats have the long-term aim of achieving the elimination of poor welfare for animals kept or affected by humans.

1.1 Every animal has specific inherent needs, regardless of their circumstances. Animal welfare legislation should therefore be focused on the intrinsic welfare of the animal and not dependent on how an animal may be used or perceived.

1.2 It is not possible to eliminate poor animal welfare immediately but it is possible to keep pressure on the causes of poor welfare so that practices are steadily and positively changed and welfare is improved.

1.3 Humans depend on animals and must always take into consideration the effects of their actions. Humans can cause direct suffering to animals or indirect suffering, for example by damaging their habitat.

Liberal Democrats believe that:

- Where animals are affected by direct contact with humans, their welfare should be of as high a standard as possible.
- Humans should have respect for animals and should understand that vertebrate animals have considerable cognitive ability, are aware and are capable of experiencing many feelings including fear, pain, boredom and frustration.
- Humans have a responsibility not to cause poor animal welfare and to care appropriately for those animals that they keep in ways that meet the animals' specific needs.

1.4 The Farm Animal Welfare Council has developed a code of practice, 'The Five Freedoms', to be applied to farm animals. The RSPCA has recommended that it is useful

to apply these Five Freedoms to all animals. They refer to avoidable and unnecessary suffering and apply to animals which are cared for or are the responsibility of humans. Liberal Democrats endorse these Five Freedoms and aim to work towards achieving them.

- 1. Freedom from thirst, hunger and malnutrition**
- 2. Freedom from discomfort**
- 3. Freedom from pain, injury, disease or infestation**
- 4. Freedom from fear and distress**
- 5. Freedom to display normal patterns of behaviour.**

1.5 In order to achieve the Five Freedoms, efforts should be made not to cause thirst, hunger, malnutrition, discomfort, pain, injury, disease, infestation, fear or distress in animals and to allow animals to show normal patterns of behaviour. The needs of animals should be investigated with respect to all of these requirements and animals managed accordingly so that their needs are met.

The Global Context

Liberal Democrats believe that Britain should take the lead in improving animal welfare and should work with other EU Member States to bring about regional and worldwide improvements.

2.0.1 There is a concern that if regulations for animal welfare are only tightened in Britain then bad or unacceptable practices may be moved abroad. The ideal situation would be for standards of animal welfare to be improved in Britain and in the rest of the world at the same time. However, it is unlikely that this will occur in the short-term. Therefore, it is important to have aspirations and for Britain to push the agenda forward, even though it may take longer for such improvements to be made in the rest of the world. Britain should take a leading role and set an example to other countries but without creating a net export of poor welfare.

2.0.2 By educating the consumer about the issues involved it is possible to create an informed market with a consumer-driven demand. For example free-range eggs are now bought by over 30% of consumers in Britain. High animal welfare standards also help to protect animal health and human health and minimise a recurrence of bio-security problems such as the Foot and Mouth outbreak in 2001.

2.1 The World Trade Organisation

2.1.1 The World Trade Organisation (WTO) was established in 1995 to facilitate liberal trade and to resolve trade disputes. However, the WTO does not give sufficient consideration to the animal welfare implications of its decisions. For example, an attempt by the European Union to ban fur imports from countries such as Canada and Russia that use leghold traps collapsed

following several years of delay in its implementation.

Liberal Democrats believe that:

- The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, as interpreted by the WTO, should be reformed to allow much greater account of animal welfare concerns.
- Countries should be able to resist the import of products whose production caused poor animal welfare.

2.2 Wildlife Trade and Endangered Species

2.2.1 On average, 570 illegal wildlife items are seized by Customs in the UK each day. However, between 1993 and 2002 there were only 12 prosecutions and 18 convictions for illegal importation or exportation of endangered species. We welcome the fact that the government responded to pressure from the Liberal Democrats during the passage of the Criminal Justice Bill. The penalty for wildlife trade offences has been increased from two to five years imprisonment and the offences have been made arrestable. However, there are still only 10 customs officers dedicated either solely or primarily to stopping this illegal trade. Liberal Democrats believe that:

- All customs officers should receive more training for dealing with the illegal trade in wildlife products and endangered species.

2.3 International Seas

2.3.1 The oceans and the life they support are under threat as the technical efficiency of the fishing industry increases. This situation could deteriorate further, particularly bearing in the mind the growing impact of global climate change and other environmental

factors. Liberal Democrats were the first to openly criticise the European Common Fisheries Policy for being a disaster for fish stocks, fishermen and fishing communities. Liberal Democrats believe that the EU Common Fisheries Policy should be further reformed in order to give fishermen and scientists a real say in the management of stocks in Regional Management Councils.

In particular this would include:

- Working to protect depleted fish stocks through the greater use of closed areas and closed seasons.
- The early introduction of more selective fishing gear to reduce bycatch of non-target species.
- Banning fishing methods which are unable to introduce systems to avoid catching dolphin, porpoise or other protected marine life.
- Action to address the conservation of sharks, including a ban on shark-finning in EU waters and the import of shark fins.

2.3.2 There has been recent public discussion as to the degree of suffering that can be caused to fish by human activities. Although no definite conclusions have been reached, the number of fish affected by humans through various activities makes this an issue that needs to be considered further. Liberal Democrats will:

- Require the Animal Protection Commission to conduct research into the welfare of fish, in particular the fish farming methods that can encourage parasites.

2.3.3 Despite a moratorium on commercial whaling imposed by the International Whaling Commission (IWC) in 1986, Japan and Norway continue commercial whaling. Norway lodged a formal objection to the moratorium and Japan exploits a loophole in the IWC's founding treaty to conduct 'scientific whaling'. Since 1986 over 22,000

whales have been killed by whalers and all great whale species are now endangered or vulnerable. Liberal Democrats support a permanent ban on commercial whaling through:

- The adoption of regional whale sanctuaries to support the global moratorium on commercial whaling.
- A permanent and comprehensive ban on commercial whaling within EU waters and by EU nationals.
- Opposing so-called 'scientific whaling' and ongoing commercial whaling and supporting diplomatic and economic measures to enforce the commercial whaling moratorium.

The National Policy Framework

Liberal Democrats believe that animal welfare issues should be given a higher priority by government and should be brought together into a coordinated structure.

3.1 Animal Welfare generally falls under the responsibility of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), although some aspects are the responsibility of other departments. For example, the Home Office grants licences for animal experiments and the DTI has responsibility for certain international issues. Liberal Democrats will:

- Establish an autonomous Animal Protection Commission to bring all animal welfare related matters under the responsibility of a dedicated, expert body.

3.2 The Commission will be answerable to Parliament via a Cabinet Minister with environmental responsibilities, and the relevant departmental Select Committee. The Commission will be both regulatory and advisory and will investigate abuses, educate the public, enforce the law and publish reports on its own initiative.

3.3 The membership of the Commission will include representatives of relevant stakeholder groups, for example farmers, veterinarians, animal welfare organisations and members of the public. The Animal Procedures Committee and the Farm Animal Welfare Council could be incorporated into this structure in the form of sub-committees. Liberal Democrats also support:

- The implementation of animal welfare policies at a local level through Local Authorities with adequate funding and training for Local Authority employees.
- Rolling out best practice, which already exists in many police forces, by requiring all police forces to assign a self-

contained unit to deal with wildlife crime.

- The inclusion of Animal Welfare in the school citizenship curriculum.

3.4 At present most animal welfare provision is carried out through Codes of Practice, rather than through the use of the law. The laws which do exist are outdated and fail to adequately cover all aspects of animal welfare, for example companion animals and wild animals. Liberal Democrats will:

- Review the effectiveness of all existing animal welfare Codes of Practice and bring the existing piecemeal legislation together to include issues not already covered by legislation.
- Introduce a new offence for breach of duty of care, based on the Five Freedoms. This will be in addition to the existing animal cruelty offence under the Protection of Animals Act 1911.
- Give magistrates and police officers specific training on animal welfare-related matters and clarify existing police powers to enter properties and seize animals.

Laboratory Animals

Liberal Democrats aim, in the short-term, to reduce the number of animals used in experiments and improve their welfare and, in the long-term, to eliminate scientific procedures which cause animals pain, suffering or distress.

4.0.1 Laboratory animals are used for a broad range of purposes, including applied medical and veterinary research, fundamental studies of body structures and function, safety testing, direct diagnosis, education and training. Most procedures on animals are carried out for the purpose of pharmaceutical research and development. Animal research and testing in the UK is regulated by the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986.

4.0.2 2.73 million scientific procedures took place on animals in 2002 and 2.66 million animals were used for this purpose. The government does not currently keep a full record of the number of animals which are bred for experiments but are not actually used.

- Liberal Democrats support the Three Rs for animal experiments - reduction, refinement and replacement. This is particularly important for highly sensitive animals such as non-human primates.

Liberal Democrats believe that:

- There should be more accurate quantification of the number of animals which are bred for experiments but never used.
- All drugs should be clearly labelled to show that they have been developed and tested using animals and in which country they were tested.
- All household products should be clearly labelled to show whether they contain ingredients that have been safety tested

using animals, when the testing was conducted and in which country.

4.1 Alternatives in Toxicology

4.1.1 The consensus of scientific and medical advice at present is that toxicological testing in animals is still necessary and can provide information that cannot currently be gained using other techniques. However, there is scope for the scientific community to give a greater priority to the development of non-animal methods. A few methods already exist which can be used to replace some experiments on animals. For example, it can be possible to use computer-based systems to predict biological activity and toxicity in the process of drug discovery and development. Liberal Democrats believe that:

- Britain should work with other EU Member States to commit to a strategic approach to replacement, including providing additional resources.

4.2 Freedom of Information

4.2.1 There is currently too much secrecy surrounding animal experiments. Section 24 of the 1986 Act, known as the confidentiality clause, is widely seen as being overly restrictive and unnecessary. The House of Lords report (2002) into Animals in Scientific Procedures recommended that Section 24 should be repealed. In order to ease some of the concerns over animal experiments and to minimise the unnecessary duplication of experiments, Liberal Democrats will:

- Require freedom of information legislation to contain a presumption in favour of openness and accountability.

Specific justification should have to be made for any class of information that needs to be kept confidential, such as the identity of researchers or matters of commercial confidentiality and intellectual property. We recognise that this may particularly relate to those at risk of attack because of their involvement with animal experiments.

- Repeal Section 24 of the 1986 Act to facilitate access to information. Information sharing will be made compulsory.

4.3 Housing Conditions

4.3.1 Most laboratory animals spend the majority of their time in holding cages, so good housing is key to improving welfare. The laboratory environment is very different from the natural habitat of each species and so housing should be provided which allows animals to express as many of their natural behaviours as possible. The needs of the animals should be investigated carefully and new accommodation designed accordingly. Liberal Democrats believe that:

- All laboratory animals should be housed in adequately sized and environmentally enriched caging. We will review, and where necessary update, the Codes of Practice for the housing and care of laboratory animals.

4.4 Licensing and Inspection

4.4.1 The Home Office inspectors cover a huge geographical area and cannot carry out inspections of laboratories as thoroughly as necessary. The number of Home Office inspectors is currently being increased from 25 to 33 by 2004. Two thirds of the visits to animal facilities within establishments are made without notice. Liberal Democrats will aim to:

- Increase the number of Home Office inspectors beyond the existing plans and ensure that they are provided with the resources that they need to proactively promote replacement, reduction and refinement of animal experiments.

4.5 Non-Medical Procedures

4.5.1 Article 15.4 of Directive 67/548 enables an EU Member State to require companies dealing with the same chemicals to share data if they are both based in that country. Article 19 of the Directive identified such data as not being commercially sensitive, meaning that it could be shared by companies. However, Britain has yet to apply the Directive in national legislation. Liberal Democrats believe that:

- Legislation should be introduced to require the sharing of information about the testing of chemicals.
- Britain should work with other EU Member States and the WTO to move towards a ban on imports of cosmetics and household products containing ingredients that have been tested on animals.

4.5.2 Animals are used in experiments to develop knowledge for military use. For example, goats have been subjected to decompression experiments, pigs have been used to establish the effect of bullets on flesh and other animals have been used to test reactions to nerve gases. In 2001, 12,955 procedures were conducted on animals at the Porton Down Ministry of Defence establishment. Liberal Democrats believe that:

- Animals should not be used to test weapons.

Genetic Modification of Animals

Liberal Democrats believe that genetic modification of animals should only be permitted when the suffering is minimised and the benefit can be weighed favourably against the suffering caused.

5.1 A common use of genetic modification is to create mice which have a particular disease, for example cystic fibrosis, in order to study the disease and develop possible treatments. Genetically modified animals are also used in fundamental research and, in the case of farm animals, in the production of therapeutic products. Although suffering can be an inherent part of the process, some genetic modification may lead to better welfare, for example by producing farm animals with better disease resistance.

5.2 There are a range of objections which some members of the public have to the genetic modification of animals. Firstly, there can be a moral objection to the use of animals in a way that is not 'natural'. Secondly, there can be an objection on animal welfare grounds based on the suffering and wastage that may be caused when creating genetically modified animals. Thirdly, there can be concerns about the consequences of new strains of animals being released into the environment where they could have damaging effects which cannot be predicted.

We believe that the following policies should apply:

- Genetic modification of animals to facilitate intensive farming methods should be prohibited
- The Animal Protection Commission should consider the ethical issues and

consequences for animal welfare in each application before permitting the genetic modification of animals.

- Companies should be required to share GM strains to a larger extent than at present in order to reduce the number of animals that need to be bred. The patenting of GM and other biotechnology processes is acceptable but the patenting of animals should not be permitted.

Farm Animals

Liberal Democrats believe that intensive farming methods which prevent animals from showing normal patterns of behaviour are unacceptable and should be phased out.

6.1 Farming Conditions

6.1.1 Since the 1950s, the demand for low cost food has resulted in a smaller number of larger farms and abattoirs with high turnovers and low profit margins. In some of the more intensive livestock farming, animals can be kept in cramped, unnatural conditions.

6.1.2 It is important for the farming industry to have good animal welfare practices in order to gain the confidence of the market. However, our objective is not to improve standards of welfare in the UK in isolation, resulting in the import of cheaper animals products from countries with poorer welfare standards. The welfare of farmed livestock is protected by the Agriculture (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1968 which makes it an offence to cause or allow unnecessary pain or unnecessary distress to farm animals. Liberal Democrat proposals to strengthen this legislation include:

- Enforcing the 1968 Act with regards to the inspection of farms and offering a system of ongoing training to people who work with farm animals.
- A requirement for DEFRA to create a voluntary labelling system to ensure that those farmers who pay particular attention to animal welfare have their products clearly identified.
- Support and advice for farmers willing to change from intensive methods to more free-range methods, provided by the Animal Protection Commission.

6.1.3 Approximately 15 million egg-laying hens are housed in battery cages in the UK, producing 68% of the country's supplies. The EU has banned conventional 'barren' cages from January 2012 and has forbidden new ones being installed after January 2003. Farmers will still be able to use 'enriched' cages that have a nest box, perch and litter. However these 'enriched' cages still result in hens having inadequate space for exercise and do not fulfil other needs. Liberal Democrats believe that:

- Cages which do not allow birds to display normal patterns of behaviour should be banned in the EU from 2008 and Britain should work with other EU Member States to achieve this goal.
- Imports into the EU from countries which do not meet the same standards expected of EU producers should be prevented.

6.2 Mutilation

6.2.1 Beak trimming is carried out on chickens in order to reduce feather pecking and cannibalism. The process will be allowed until the end of 2010 under an EU Directive. Ideally, beak trimming should not be carried out but it can be necessary in certain, limited circumstances. Alternative measures should be identified to reduce feather pecking, for example environmental enrichment.

6.2.2 Tail docking is carried out on sheep in order to reduce fly-strike because dirt is less likely to become attached to a sheep without a tail. Tail docking is carried out on young piglets in order to reduce the risk of tail-biting. The risk of tail-biting with pigs is increased by failing to provide bedding material and by poorly designed or cramped housing conditions; it is not usually a problem where the conditions meet the

needs of the pigs. Liberal Democrats believe that:

- Tail docking should only be carried out where there is a clear animal welfare benefit and after adequate environmental enrichment has been provided.

6.3 Animal Health

6.3.1 We recognise that failure to prevent animal health problems from arising can seriously affect animal welfare, as well as the farming industry and the welfare of humans. The Foot and Mouth outbreak in 2001 highlighted the importance of effective measures for dealing with disease amongst farm animals. Culling was used to control the outbreak, resulting in 10 million animals being killed, according to a report by the European Parliament's Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development.

6.3.2 In future, much greater use could be made of vaccinations and, in the case of Foot and Mouth disease, prompt response to an outbreak and a ban on animal movement. Liberal Democrats support:

- Farming practices which make the outbreak of animal diseases less likely to occur and easier to control should they occur.
- Vaccination as the preferable method for dealing with disease outbreaks. National emergency plans should also be developed to address the implications of any future outbreak.

6.4 Transportation

6.4.1 The transportation of live animals can cause suffering and distress, particularly if the journey is long and the conditions are poor. Total journey times can currently exceed 20 hours, with the animals kept in cramped, hot conditions. In November 2001, the European Parliament voted in favour of

imposing a maximum limit of eight hours or 500km on journeys to slaughter or for further fattening. Liberal Democrats support this restriction and believe that a network of local abattoirs (see paragraph 6.5.2) could help to reduce the problem of longer journey times in remote areas. Liberal Democrats believe that:

- The regulations for the transportation of live animals should be properly enforced across all EU Member States.

6.5 Slaughterhouses

6.5.1 Many small slaughterhouses have closed and the industry has become concentrated on fewer large-scale businesses, resulting in longer transport distances for live animals. In the last 15 years the number of slaughterhouses has fallen from more than 1,000 to fewer than 400. Small slaughterhouses are being forced out of existence by high costs as they are more expensive to operate, per unit of meat, compared with large slaughterhouses.

6.5.2 A return to smaller slaughterhouses could lead to an increase in the price of their meat and may cause people to buy cheaper meat from larger slaughterhouses. However, by shortening the supply chain and streamlining the regulatory framework, it is possible that such a structure could be economically viable. Liberal Democrats believe that:

- A network of local abattoirs should be established with the aim of reducing the distances travelled by live animals.
- The regulations for slaughterhouses should be reviewed in order to better support small slaughterhouses and to encourage slaughter nearer to the place of rearing.
- The trend towards the use of information technology in the sale of farm animals has potential benefits for animal welfare, such as reducing the spread of disease.

6.6 Slaughtering Methods

6.6.1 The law requires that animals are not subjected to avoidable excitement, pain or suffering before or during slaughter. Animals must be stunned before slaughter so that they are unconscious and cannot feel pain, except in the case of religious slaughter.

6.6.2 Some animals are improperly stunned, indicating that they may be conscious when they are slaughtered. Instances of birds receiving electric shocks prior to the stunning, and animals regaining

consciousness before or after throat cutting, do occasionally occur in British slaughterhouses. Gas stunning using argon, or other non-aversive gas mixtures, renders animals unconscious without the need for stressful handling. Liberal Democrats will:

- Require the Animal Protection Commission to carry out an investigation into all aspects of slaughter, including financial incentives for fast throughputs of animals, whether sufficient electrical currents are being used and whether different species should be stunned by different methods such as inert gas.

Companion Animals

Liberal Democrats believe that animals should only be kept as pets if they can be cared for appropriately and their needs can be met.

7.0.1 Companion animals can greatly improve our quality of life, providing enjoyment, company and exercise. Most pets are well looked after and enjoy happy lives but there can be instances of ill-treatment and neglect. People do not always fully consider the consequences of owning a pet and can find themselves unable to manage the responsibility.

7.0.2 If all dogs were fitted with microchips identifying their owner it would be easier to hold irresponsible owners to account and to deal with stray dogs. Microchips do not harm the animals and are already used by the RSPCA. The government-sponsored Dog Identification Working Group recommended in 2000 that a system of microchipping should be introduced and that 75% of dogs could be registered within 5 years. Liberal Democrats will:

- Introduce a system of compulsory registration for the ownership of dogs, involving clear identification, ideally through microchips. The scheme would be self-financing with the registration fee paying for the microchip, the national register and the dog warden network.

7.1 Acquiring Animals

7.1.1 Pet shops are regulated by the Pet Animals Act 1951 (amended 1983). Anyone running a pet shop is required to apply for a licence from the local authority where the pet shop is situated. This licence has to be renewed every year. Liberal Democrats will:

- Prohibit the giving of live animals as prizes.
- Update the current legislation so that it takes account of modern methods of pet sales, such as the internet, and so that it also covers the welfare of animals being displayed in pet shops.

7.2 Exotic Animals

7.2.1 Exotic animals are not always suitable to be kept as pets because it can be impossible to replicate and maintain their natural environment and appropriate food may be difficult to obtain. Species-specific husbandry and veterinary skills may be required and such species may not be habituated to the close human contact associated with pet-keeping. Difficulties particularly arise if exotic animals grow to such a size that it is impractical for them to be kept in a domestic situation. Liberal Democrats believe that:

- The needs of many exotic animals cannot be adequately addressed within a domestic environment.

We will therefore:

- Introduce a licensing system for exotic animals which would be on a par with those faced by zoos. This would ensure that the number of exotic animals kept domestically in inadequate conditions is much reduced.

7.3 Animal Sanctuaries

7.3.1 Animal sanctuaries that do not meet the criteria of a zoo are not effectively regulated in any way. A loophole exists in the law whereby animal boarding establishments have to be licensed but sanctuaries do not. Ian Cawsey MP introduced a Private Members

Bill on this subject in 2001. The government has yet to introduce its own legislation, despite expressing an interest. Liberal Democrats will:

- Properly define animal sanctuaries, establish operating standards for sanctuaries and introduce legislation requiring sanctuaries to be licensed and inspected.

7.4 Dangerous Dogs

7.4.1 There have been many serious incidents involving dangerous dogs attacking humans, sometimes fatally. In 1991, the Dangerous Dogs Act was passed in response to a spate of attacks across the country but it was a rushed and poorly thought out piece of legislation. Problems still exist with dangerous dogs. In 2001, 3,400 people were hospitalised after dog attacks - a 25% rise over the previous five years.

7.4.2 In Germany, the police can confiscate dogs suspected of being dangerous. The dogs are then subjected to a series of tests to prove whether they are actually dangerous. If the dog passes the test it is returned to its owners. If the dog fails the test it is given one more chance to be re-trained and re-tested and if it fails again it is destroyed. Liberal Democrats will:

- Update the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 to move away from breed-specific legislation and towards a system which is similar to the German system.

Methods of Pest Control

Liberal Democrats believe that, where animals need to be controlled, the most humane method possible should be used.

8.2.1 Pest control is necessary in terms of health and safety but animal welfare is often ignored because of a lack of sympathy for the species concerned. Unwanted individuals or populations of animals are often killed by methods which would not be allowed for killing animals in other contexts. Certain poisons are extremely cruel. For example strychnine, which is used to kill moles, is inhumane and anti-coagulant poisons have severe effects on welfare. Many poisons also kill non-target species.

8.2.2 Traditional traps and snares can cause slow painful deaths to the animals they catch. As well as the target species, animals such as cats, deer, sheep and birds may also be caught and killed. Live traps are far more humane, provided they are checked regularly and those animals caught in them are dispatched quickly and humanely.

8.2.3 With regards to fox hunting, we re-assert our existing policy of supporting a ban on hunting with dogs, as set out in Federal

Green Paper number 27 (1992). This remains an issue that would be decided by a free vote in Parliament.

Liberal Democrats will require the Animal Protection Commission to carry out an investigation into methods of pest control with the aim of:

- Banning the methods which are found to be unnecessarily cruel.
- Encouraging the use of live traps.
- Supporting the development of poisons that do not have a secondary poisoning effect.

Animals in Sport and Entertainment

Liberal Democrats believe that human entertainment is never a sufficient benefit to justify poor animal welfare.

9.1 Greyhound Racing

9.1.1 Greyhounds are generally well looked after and appear to enjoy both the running and the chase. However, there are concerns about the dogs' welfare. Some vets have reported putting down around ten dogs a week from broken backs or legs. There is a Charter for the Racing Greyhound which sets out some recommendations including a home-finding scheme. The Retired Greyhound Trust successfully re-homes 2,000 dogs a year. Some retired greyhounds are put down and then used for teaching veterinary students. Liberal Democrats will:

- Require all greyhound tracks to be licensed and only licensed dogs will be allowed to race.
- Require all tracks to have a welfare monitor and for there to be a welfare representative on racing councils.

9.2 Horses in Sport

9.2.1 There are many different sports that involve horses and ponies and each one has its own governing body. Each governing body makes and enforces its own rules that are designed to protect the welfare of the horses and ponies involved. Since such bodies are self-regulating, members who feel that their organisation is not effectively dealing with welfare complaints have no overarching organisation to report their governing body to. Liberal Democrats will:

- Equip the Animal Protection Commission to deal with complaints against mishandling of welfare cases by a governing body.

9.3 Shooting

9.3.1 Many different types of birds and mammals are reared for the purpose of being shot. It is estimated that 35 million pheasants are reared each year in hatcheries for this purpose. The poor conditions in which some game birds are reared is a matter of concern. The rearing of game birds should be regulated more consistently and practices that are forbidden in poultry rearing should not be permitted. Liberal Democrats will:

- Bring together the existing Codes of Practice for the rearing of game birds so that consistent standards apply.

9.4 Animals in Circuses

9.4.1 There are currently thought to be 12 circuses with animals in the UK. These usually tour the country from Easter onwards and during the winter the animals are kept in wintering quarters. The wintering quarters are licensed to an individual under the Performing Wild Animals Act 1925, the only legislation which specifically regulates circuses.

9.4.2 Keeping animals in circuses results in poor welfare due to the travelling and harsh training regimes. The barren trailers and temporary enclosures do not and cannot provide wild animals with their needs. The All Party Parliamentary Group for Animal Welfare concluded in its 1998 study that "circus animals do experience compromised welfare. Animals do show psychological, physical and physiological signs of stress." Liberal Democrats will:

- Prohibit the use of all animals in circuses except domestic dogs and horses.

9.5 Animals in Zoos

9.5.1 The UK is one of the most zoo-populated countries in the world and currently there are approximately 250,000 animals in 430 collections. Following the implementation of the EU Directive 1999/22/EC, all zoos in the European Union have to demonstrate a significant commitment to conservation and education.

9.5.2 The following types of animal collections are classified as 'zoos' under the Zoo Licensing Act 1981: zoos, safari parks, aquaria, butterfly farms, farm parks with exotics, sanctuaries open to the public and aviaries. A study in 2002 showed that 20% of zoological collections did not have a zoo licence. It is vital that all animal collections which fall under the definition of a zoo are licensed and inspected.

9.5.3 Some animals, such as elephants, are not suited to being kept in confined spaces in zoos. Elephants in zoos are known to have poor breeding success, high infant mortality and do not live as long as they

would in their natural environment. While safari parks may be regarded by some as more suitable for large animals, they cannot recreate the conditions of the natural habitat. Liberal Democrats will:

- Require all establishments falling under the definition of a 'zoo' to be licensed and to meet the standards of the European Directive 1999/22/EC.
- Empower the Animal Protection Commission to set minimum standards for the housing and care of animals held in zoos.
- Require zoos to be inspected every four years with a full inspection team including the Secretary of State's appointed Zoo Inspectors.

This paper has been approved for debate by the Federal Conference by the Federal Policy Committee under the terms of Article 5.4 of the Federal Constitution. Within the policy-making procedure of the Liberal Democrats, the Federal Party determines the policy of the Party in those areas which might reasonably be expected to fall within the remit of the federal institutions in the context of a federal United Kingdom. The Party in England, the Scottish Liberal Democrats and the Welsh Liberal Democrats and the Northern Ireland Local Party determine the policy of the Party on all other issues, except that any or all of them may confer this power upon the Federal Party in any specified area or areas. If approved by Conference, this paper will form the policy of the Federal Party, except in appropriate areas where any national party policy would take precedence.

Many of the policy papers published by the Liberal Democrats imply modifications to existing government public expenditure priorities. We recognise that it may not be possible to achieve all these proposals in the lifetime of one Parliament. We intend to publish a costings programme, setting out our priorities across all policy areas, closer to the next general election.

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Note: Membership of the Working Group should not be taken to indicate that every member necessarily agrees with every statement or every proposal in this Paper.

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