

Media Reports

Supermarket chain pledges CCTV in abattoirs to stamp out cruelty

The Independent, Friday, 19 November 2010

On Friday 19 November, the Independent reported that Morrison's supermarket had promised to install CCTV at its abattoirs to reassure the public after Animal Aid captured secret footage of breaches of welfare laws at six out of seven randomly selected abattoirs – including one supplying organic meat, where pigs were kicked in the face. Across the UK animals were kicked, slapped, stamped on and thrown into stunning pens.

The newspaper reports that despite a claim by one firm that it worked 'to the highest standard of animal welfare' undercover footage had shown sheep being decapitated straight after their throats were cut, despite the requirement under the **1995 Welfare of Animals Slaughter or Killing Regulations**, that 20 seconds must elapse after throat-slitting to ensure animals have bled to death. Whilst the company disputed that it had broken the law, the FSA said there had been breaches and stepped up veterinary checks and "recommended improvements". It is reported that no legal action is likely.

The report highlights suspicion that many, if not most, of the 370

abattoirs in England and Wales break the rules.

Judge not the breed

Guardian.co.uk, Sunday 14 November 2010

On 14th November 2010, the guardian website published an article arguing that dog owners should be charged with a duty of care, whether they have a pit bull or a Pekinese. It was contended that only one dog in a

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thousand is born irredeemably dangerous, whereas the other 999 are more the product of their upbringing than of their genes. The so-called fighting breeds – particularly the much-maligned **Staffordshire bull terrier** – are as much in need of protection as the people who fear them.

The Guardian piece argues that the first task of the **dog advisory council** ought to be the replacement of the **Dangerous Dogs Act** with laws that aim to eliminate dangerous

owners. It goes on to argue that the introduction of dog 'asbos' and canine control orders, which are expected to be included in the forthcoming consultation report on the act, are only a minor part of the solution. The new bill needs to do far more than impose harsher penalties on owners who teach their dogs to menace and to fight. Dogs should be judged by their behaviour rather than their breed, and the owners of those that behave badly should be held to account. First and minor offences should be punished in the way that police hold to account motorists who break the speed limit by a couple of miles an hour – the attendance at courses in improved dog care. Anyone found to encourage aggression should be banned from owning a dog for life – with prison as the consequence of defying the prohibition.

A "duty of care" to their pet should become a legal obligation. Anyone who owns a dog accepts – or ought to accept – obligations that are exacting. Every owner ought to be obliged formally to accept the duty that the privilege of processing a dog requires. Facing the facts from the start would not only reduce neglect. Fewer dogs would be abandoned when the hard reality of ownership was recognised.

There is an urgent need for tougher breeder regulation – based on a contract, which every new owner must sign. It should make care and protection a legal obligation.

To make regulation a reality, every dog would have to be microchipped. That is an obligation responsible dog owners already accept as protection against loss or theft. Even though it costs very little, the government should meet the bill for pensioners.

The article anticipates that the call for regulation will be greeted by cries of anguish from the vested interests and in particular opposition from the pedigree lobby.

New powers would make landowners liable for wildlife crimes committed on their estates following upsurge in bird deaths

The Guardian, Wednesday 3 November 2010

On 3rd November 2010, the Guardian reported that proposals to tackle wildlife crime by making employers responsible for their employees' illegal poisonings were outlined by the Scottish Government.

Giving evidence at the Rural Affairs and Environment Committee, the Environment Minister Roseanna Cunningham announced the Scottish Government's intention to bring forward a Stage 2 amendment to the Wildlife and Natural Environment Bill.

She told the committee that the intended amendment would create a new vicarious liability offence that would target those who control or manage others who are involved in criminal bird persecution. Those found guilty could face six months in jail, be fined up to £5,000 pounds. There will be a defence for those who can show that they took steps to prevent persecution. The powers would, for the first time in the UK,

make landowners directly liable for wildlife crimes committed by their employees, after an upsurge in cases where rare birds of prey have been deliberately killed to protect grouse stocks on shooting estates.

It was reported that the proposals were welcome by conservation charities and political leaders at Holyrood, but condemned by estate owners as unnecessary and potentially damaging to the rural economy.

The article also reports that the RSPB urged ministers in London to introduce similar powers in England, because existing wildlife laws were not effectively enforced by the police and the courts, and were being widely flouted by shooting estates. The charity said hen harriers were on the brink of extinction in England because of systematic persecution on grouse moors in the Pennines, Peak District and north-east.

Law banning use of lead shot in duck hunts ignored

The Guardian website, Wednesday 10 November 2010

The Guardian reports that according to a government funded study, *A report on the Compliance with the Environmental Protection (Restriction of the use of lead shot)(England) Regulations 1999 - WC0730*, the law banning the shooting of ducks and other wildfowl with lead shot is being widely flouted across England. Seven in 10 of the ducks checked at game-dealers, butchers and supermarkets were killed with lead ammunition, while surveys of shooters and shoot organisers revealed that many admitted they did not always comply with the regulations introduced in 1999 intended to stop the death of water birds from lead poisoning

The RSPCA had laid an information on 11 June 2008 against Mr. Johnson for causing unnecessary suffering to an animal

caused by mistakenly eating spent shot which they mistook for food or grit.

The report notes that no one is known to have been prosecuted for breaking the law, which could result in a £1,000 fine. The regulations also ban lead shot being used to kill any birds below the coastal spring-tide high-water mark or in specified wetlands.

The report notes that the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust (WWT), which wrote the report with the help of surveys by the British Association for Shooting and Conservation (BASC), said there had been no improvement since the trust conducted a smaller study with the RSPB in 2002. Non-compliance remained "high and widespread". Businesses selling duck killed by lead pellets are not breaking the law. The checks indicated how the law was particularly poorly observed on inland game and duck shoots. The BASC surveys found up to 45% of those responding admitted not always complying with the law.

The WWT is calling on the government to do more to ensure the law is obeyed. It recommends that offences are reported, and said shoot organisers should make compliance with the law a condition of taking part, and that game-dealers should demand that all their suppliers had behaved legally. The BASC agrees all regulations applying to the use of lead shot should be observed. The Lead Ammunition Group, a panel established by environment department Defra and the Food Standards Agency, is to report on the health impacts of lead shot on both wildlife and humans next summer.