

Welsh Government - Cabinet Minister for Rural Resilience and Sustainability

Dear Cabinet Minister,

As hopeful animal lovers and supporters of the possibilities that lie ahead as result of the formation of a new Welsh Government, we are writing to you to request that animals remain at the top of the political agenda in Wales. As a nation of animal enthusiasts with growing pride in our welfare standards, we must ensure that animals are afforded the strongest legal protections possible.

Now that you are settled in your Ministerial role, we would like to outline some key welfare issues that are facing animals in Wales. Under Plaid Cymru's Welsh Government, there are promising opportunities for Wales to take action on the issues that matter most to our nation of animals and their advocates. We're sure you will agree that this is an exciting time for Wales, following May's historic Senedd election.

While we have made significant progress over the years, there is still so much more to be done, and we have the opportunity to make huge strides in our animal welfare standards under the government you are a part of.

We were pleased to see a number of ambitious commitments relevant to animals outlined in Plaid Cymru's election manifesto such as the development of a renewed Animal Health and Welfare Plan, the introduction of essential regulations for animal welfare establishments and the promotion of responsible pet ownership and breeding. We are further encouraged by the specific references relevant to dog ownership, along with the promise to bring forth a new legal right for pet owning renters, ensuring fairer rules for this demographic.

We are especially happy to see that these promises align with the expert opinions of animal welfare organisations such as the RSPCA, and we encourage you to work alongside these organisations to develop a kinder Wales for animals.

While it is incredibly encouraging to see that animal welfare appears to be a priority for Plaid Cymru, there are still other issues that still need your attention.

These include:

- **Providing the RSPCA with limited statutory powers.** While the RSPCA is the only charity with officers on the ground responding to calls of animal cruelty and neglect, their officers and inspectors currently have no more legal power than any other member of the public. Providing limited statutory powers to the RSPCA would enable them to be there for more vulnerable animals in the coming years, while also relieving some of the pressure on the police and local authorities they are heavily reliant upon.
- **Preventing pet theft.** For dedicated pet owners, the theft of their beloved companion animals would prove devastating. We are among the many members of the Welsh public who were disappointed by the previous Welsh Government's decision to not progress a Pet Abduction Act for Wales. With such action having been taken in other UK nations, pets in Wales are currently under less protection from theft than those elsewhere. To protect pets from theft and to ensure that Wales does not become a hotspot for illegal activity, we encourage Plaid Cymru to revisit the potential introduction of specific penalties for this crime, recognising the relevant emotional impacts

- **Ensuring there's no horsing around with equine welfare.** Through better consideration of equine welfare, progress could be made towards securing improved protections for the thousands of horses and ponies that call Wales home. This could be achieved by ensuring that local authorities are better equipped to enforce the relevant legislation, namely the Control of Horses (Wales) Act 2014. The regulation of livery yards would also mark a significant step forward with the majority of owned horses kept within such settings. Urgent action to address the persistent issues associated with horse tethering is also much needed, with this issue resulting in several calls to the RSPCA every year.
- **Farm animals are more than just food - and they deserve better standards.** As the home of millions of farmed animals, protecting their welfare is an issue that is particularly relevant to Wales. With huge attention being paid to farm animal welfare across the UK at the moment, Wales has the potential to be at the forefront of historic changes for these animals. This could be partly achieved by outlawing the use of outdated husbandry methods such as farrowing crates and 'enriched' cages for laying hens. Meanwhile, the introduction of mandatory methods of production and slaughtering labelling on animal derived products would benefit the produce of the many farmers in Wales who adhere to the highest standards of animal welfare.
- **Eradicating Bovine TB effectively and humanely.** We understand that tackling Bovine TB is a key priority for Plaid Cymru and we share your party's desire to see an end to this disease. However, we agree fullheartedly with the RSPCA that the culling of badgers should never occur in Wales, with us being among the many members of the public who are against such action. We encourage you to instead focus on the cattle-based measures which have been shown to be effective, as opposed to resorting to the use of inhumane and unscientific methods such as badger culling.

Thank you for your attention to these calls - we now await the much-needed progress that animals in Wales need and deserve.

Yours sincerely,

Animal lovers from Wales