

SPICe**The Information Centre**
An t-Ionad Fiosrachaidh

Rural Affairs, Islands and Natural Environment Committee

**10th Meeting, 2021 (Session 6), Wednesday
10th November 2021**

Introductory session with the Scottish Animal Welfare Commission

Background

This session was rescheduled due to technical difficulties from the introductory session for the RAINE Committee for Session 6. Suggested themes to discuss with the Commission are provided below.

General background information on animal welfare issues can be found in the [SPICe Animal health and welfare Subject Profile](#).

Witnesses for this session are members of the [Scottish Animal Welfare Commission \(SAWC\)](#). The SAWC was established in 2020 under [The Scottish Animal Welfare Commission Regulations 2020](#). The SAWC is an independent Commission with a focus on protecting wild and domestic animals and providing scientific and ethical advice to the Scottish Government on its areas of responsibility.

Witnesses

Witnesses for this session are:

- [Professor Cathy Dwyer, SRUC, Chair of SAWC](#): Prof Dwyer is Professor of Animal Behaviour and Welfare, and is Head of the Animal Behaviour and Welfare Research Group at SRUC. Prof Dwyer's research interests include mother-offspring interactions, welfare of extensively managed animals, and human behaviour change for animal welfare.

- [Dr Pete Goddard, James Hutton Institute](#): Dr Goddard is a veterinary surgeon with a particular interest in animal welfare, focusing especially on investigating behavioural and physiological correlates of welfare in ruminants under extensive systems of management.
- Libby Anderson, Policy Advisor: From 2015 to 2020 Libby was the Policy Advisor for OneKind (formerly Advocates for Animals) and was previously the charity's Policy Director from 2006 to 2015.
- [Paula Boyden](#) – has been the veterinary director at Dogs Trust since 2011. An expert on their campaign to ban Puppy Smuggling, as well as all aspects of animal welfare including UK and EU legislation, compulsory microchipping and associated veterinary matters.
- [James Yeates](#) – Was chief Executive Officer of Cats Protection until October 2021. He is now the chief executive of the World Federation for Animals, which advocates for animals at the United Nations.

The Scottish Animal Welfare Commission's Work Programme

Animal welfare in SAWC terms is relevant to [sentient animals - those with 'the ability to have physical and emotional experiences, which matter to the animal, and which can be positive and negative'](#).

The Commission will specifically look at:

- how the welfare needs of sentient animals are being met by devolved policy
- possible legislative and non-legislative routes to further protect the welfare of sentient animals
- the research requirements to provide an evidence base for future policy development

The Commission will produce an annual report setting out how it has delivered against its work plan, to be laid before the Scottish Parliament.

An [updated work plan for the SAWC was published in July 2021](#) which outlines priority projects for the Commission. Some of those project themes are:

- **Animal sentience** - to prepare a report which builds on SAWC's previously published definition of animal sentience ([published in February 2021](#)), to demonstrate SAWC's approaches and explain why cephalopods (e.g. octopuses, squid and cuttlefish) have been included in the definition. The SAWC defines animal welfare as: 'the mental and physical state of an individual as it experiences and engages with its environment'. There are live campaigns by Scottish animal

welfare NGOs calling on the Scottish Government to introduce legal protections for decapod crustaceans (e.g. Crabs and lobsters) and cephalopod species on the basis of increasing evidence about their sentience.

- **Exotic pets** - to consider and report on issues relating to current practices, regulation and issues with importation, and recommend whether there is a need for further statutory measures to regulate ownership of certain types of pets.
- **Wildlife welfare** - to review the Scottish Government's Strategic Approach to Wildlife Management.
- **Beavers** - to investigate and make recommendations on welfare issues associated with the management and control of wild beavers in Scotland (NB this was paused while a judicial review, considering the issue of licences for killing beavers, was underway – [the case was decided recently on 21 October](#). NatureScot [has since issued a statement on the ruling](#), as [have Trees for Life who brought the judicial review](#)).
- **Aquaculture** - to identify potential welfare issues and prepare a report on the areas of initial focus – salmon farming and acoustic deterrent devices.
- **Dog training** - to provide an opinion on how dog trainers, groomers, walkers and other service providers can be regulated, including whether there should be licensing. This is expected to include consideration of training practices, such as the use of electronic collars, and may link to livestock worrying and responsible dog ownership. The Scottish Government [consulted on the use of electronic training devices for cats and dogs in 2016](#). The Government decided that legislation was not required, [and issued guidance stating that it did not condone the following dog training devices](#): electronic shock collars and anti-bark collars, electronic containment systems, or any other method to inflict physical punishment or negative reinforcement.

Published work by the Commission so far includes:

- An [interim report on exotic pets in Scotland](#), published in September 2021 – which states that there is a “lack of consistent, objective information about the import, capture, breeding, trade, transport, keeping and regulatory monitoring of a wide variety of animals in Scotland in a wide variety of settings”. The Commission has requested that the Scottish Government facilitate the commissioning of a full independent literature review to inform final conclusions;
- In August 2021 the SAWC published “[Principles for ascribing sentience to animals and case study of the evidence for sentience in cephalopods](#)”. In the report, the SAWC recommends that the Scottish Government consider whether the welfare considerations and legal protection that have been afforded to

vertebrates should now be extended to cephalopods (e.g. octopus, squid, cuttlefish), in light of scientific evidence about their sentience.

- On the use of rodent glue traps - the [SAWC recommended banning their sale and use as a priority, but also offers alternative ways forward](#);
- A response to the [Deer Working Group report](#) - the SAWC reported the [extent to which it agrees with each recommendation of the report](#);
- In April 2021, the SAWC wrote a letter to the (former) Minister for Rural Affairs and the Natural Environment [outlining concerns and recommending measures to discourage ear cropping of dogs](#).

Other potential areas raised in the workplan for the medium and longer term include:

- Exploring wider issues in relation to **trapping and snaring** (NB NatureScot is required to review snaring practices every 5 years and last conducted a review in 2016. The ECCLR Committee [recommended in its legacy report](#) that successor committees may wish to engage with outcomes of these reviews);
- **Greyhound racing** - to explore welfare concerns, recognising that currently the Greyhound Board of Great Britain only covers licensed tracks, to address issues with unlicensed tracks. A [petition to end greyhound racing in Scotland](#) was lodged in the Scottish Parliament in 2019 and the Committee has agreed to take evidence from the petitioners;
- **Abattoir provision** and opportunities for mobile slaughterhouses.

The Commission published its [first annual report on 15 October 2021](#). It notes that SAWC “began under difficult global circumstances, and the Commissioners have still not yet been able to hold a face to face meeting” however it has been active in developing a workplan, setting up work groups and publishing initial reports.

In relation to how the Commission determines its work programme, the report states:

“Although SAWC takes guidance and requests from Scottish Government and others, it is independent in forming the workplan, and any recommendations are arrived at on the basis of evidence, considered from the point of view of animal welfare costs or benefits.”

Regarding working with other groups and Committees, the report states that the Commission has:

“developed strong working links with related groups, through regular attendance at meetings of the Animal Welfare Committee (formerly Farm Animal Welfare Committee), invitations to the Chair of AWC to attend SAWC plenary meetings, close working with the Wild Animal Welfare Committee, and membership of

EURO-FAWC. Through these links and contacts, SAWC intends to be able to provide a strong and impartial view on animal welfare for Scottish farm, companion and wild animals.”

Members may wish to discuss:

1. How the SAWC has prioritised/created its work programme, including any involvement of the Scottish Government, and what progress it has made so far in relation to achieving objectives of the work plan;
2. Regarding the SAWC’s work on animal sentience, how sentience in groups of animals is determined, and what recent determinations of sentience in cephalopods and crustaceans mean for policy.
3. The Commission’s approach to engaging with stakeholders and UK-wide or other UK-based organisations including the UK Animal Welfare Committee;
4. In relation to aquaculture and the SAWC’s aim to prepare a report on welfare issues in relation to salmon and acoustic deterrent devices used on fish farms, whether the SAWC is engaging with the [independent review of aquaculture regulation being led by Prof Russell Griggs](#).
5. Any major barriers or obstacles to work on animal welfare that the SAWC has identified – including any significant research gaps.

Scottish Government Programme for Government commitments on animal welfare

The [2021-22 Programme for Government commitments](#) on or related to animal welfare include:

- To commission an independent review of fish farming regulation - Professor Griggs has been tasked with making recommendations by December 2021. Also on aquaculture, to take forward a programme of work to better protect wildlife and the environment, responding to the Salmon Interactions Working Group, including to strengthen controls on sea lice, wrasse and fish escapes.
- To create a dedicated Scottish Veterinary Service to ensure there are highly trained staff to provide Scotland with good animal health and food safety to meet needs across the public and private sector for animal health issues.
- Before 2025, to review animal welfare legislation (required by the Animals and Wildlife (Penalties, Protections and Powers (Scotland) Act 2020).

- To introduce a Bill to strengthen the law relating to the use of dogs to hunt and flush foxes and other wild mammals, and introduce further measures such as preventing trail hunting.
- To work with other UK administrations on legislation to control exports of livestock and imports of dogs, modernise zoo licensing, and control import and sale of products that raise ethical concerns such as fur.
- To consult on proposals to improve animal transport legislation, and phase out cages for gamebirds and laying hens, and farrowing crates for pigs.
- To consult on legislation to extend the framework for licensing of activities involving animals, to new areas such as performing animals and animal care services.
- To implement recent livestock worrying legislation which will come into force in November 2021.
- Through an independent taskforce, to consider whether the SSPCA should be given extra legislative powers to investigate wildlife crime.
- To review the wider species licensing system with a view to ensuring that the law is being applied correctly and that lethal control is only licensed where the conditions required for such a licence are demonstrably being met.

Members may wish to discuss:

6. **How the SAWC might support areas of legislative and policy development set out in the 2021-22 Programme for Government and whether any of the PfG announcements impact on its work programme.**

The UK Animal Welfare (Kept Animals) Bill and other UK legislation

The [Committee is considering a legislative consent memorandum](#) on several provisions in the [UK Animal Welfare \(Kept Animals\) Bill](#) which apply to Scotland.

The Bill **makes provision to ban the export of live animals from Great Britain for slaughter outside the ‘British Islands’** (the UK, Channel Islands, and Isle of Man, but not the Republic of Ireland). These provisions apply in Scotland, and allow for the continued transport from, for example, Scottish islands to the mainland.

The UK Government held a [call for evidence on controlling exports for slaughter and improving animal welfare during transport in 2018](#). At the same time, [a systematic review undertaken by the University of Edinburgh and SRUC was commissioned by Defra and the devolved administrations to look at animal welfare during transport](#).

Following the call for evidence, the UK Farm Animal Welfare Committee (now the Animal Welfare Committee), which reports to Defra and the devolved administrations, was commissioned to produce an opinion on the welfare of animals during transport. [The](#)

[FAWC Opinion on the Welfare of Animals during Transport report was published in April 2019.](#)

The [Scottish and Welsh Governments responded jointly to the recommendations](#), and both the UK and Scottish governments published consultations on the Committee's recommendations. The [Scottish Government consultation was published on 4 December 2020.](#)

The Scottish Government has not yet published its response to the consultation. In the 2021-22 Programme for Government, the Scottish Government committed to “start consultation this year on proposals to improve animal transport legislation”.

The Bill also makes provision about the movement of ‘relevant animals’, namely dogs, cats and ferrets, into Great Britain for the purpose of promoting animal welfare. It provides the appropriate national authority (in Scotland, Scottish Ministers) with powers to make regulations to prohibit or restrict imports of relevant animals that are below a prescribed age, have been mutilated e.g. a dog with a docked tail or are heavily pregnant. The Bill also reduces limits on the number of dogs, cats and ferrets that may be moved into Great Britain on a non-commercial basis. The number of dogs, cats and ferrets that may be moved into Great Britain in a motor vehicle is limited to five animals, and the number of pets that may accompany a person when travelling by any way other than a motor vehicle (i.e. by air or as a foot passenger by train or ferry) is limited to three.

The Committee previously heard from the British Veterinary Association who provided follow-up written evidence on these provisions of the UK Bill (Annexe A). It states that the BVA is supportive of the existing provisions in the Bill, but would also like to see the Bill address the movement of dogs with unknown health statuses into the UK – by introducing “mandatory, reliable, pre-import testing for dogs with unknown health statuses from countries that have endemic diseases which are not currently considered endemic in the UK e.g. brucellosis, babesiosis, ehrlichiosis, dirofilariasis and leishmaniasis”. They raised concerns that a dog with an unknown history may be moved into the UK whilst it is still incubating a disease, including potentially zoonotic diseases (infections that can pass between animals and humans).

Proposed modernisations in the Bill of the Zoo Licensing Act 1981, which apply in Scotland, are intended to introduce “more meaningful requirements for conservation activity”. Legislation on zoo licensing, although devolved, has to date happened at GB-level under the 1981 Act. In follow-up written evidence on this issue, the BVA said that more clarity is needed as to what the transition period will be for any new zoo conservation standards, with some concerns that if the transition period is too narrow, this may not be financially viable for some smaller zoos, resulting in them closing and animals having to either be euthanised or rehomed, which may have adverse impacts on animal welfare.

The LCM states that “Allowing the UK Government to introduce legislation on behalf of all GB administrations on areas that are within the legislative competence of the Scottish Parliament in this particular case will be the most efficient way to ensure that these changes are introduced as soon as possible and can be brought into force at the same time throughout Great Britain”.

In addition to the UK Animal Welfare (Kept Animals) Bill, the UK Government also introduced the [Animal Welfare \(Sentience\) Bill](#) in May 2021. The Bill does not extend to Scotland, but applies in Scotland in reserved areas. It places a duty on the Secretary of State to create an Animal Sentience Committee which may produce a report in relation to any government policy regarding “whether, or to what extent, the government is having, or has had, all due regard to the ways in which the policy might have an adverse effect on the welfare of animals as sentient beings”. The Secretary of State is required to respond to any report within three months and the response must be laid in the UK Parliament.

Members may wish to discuss:

7. **The SAWC’s views on the UK Animal Welfare (Kept Animals) Bill with respect to provisions on livestock exports, movement of domestic animals and modernisations to zoo licensing which apply in Scotland;**
8. **Views on animal welfare regulation being UK-wide and/or being done at UK level, and any views on implications for engagement of Scottish stakeholders in UK-wide legislation in devolved areas.**
9. **Views on the provisions in the UK Animal Welfare (Sentience) Bill to create an Animal Sentience Committee to advise the UK Secretary of State; how the SAWC might engage with a future Animal Sentience Committee; and views on the provisions in place in Scotland to have regard to animal sentience.**

EU Exit

Following EU Exit there are a number of developments that are still underway which may constrain Scottish Ministers’ ability to exercise their powers within devolved competence, particularly in relation to:

- **International trade and new free trade agreements:** Farm animal welfare can be impacted by trade agreements. Modern free trade agreements often make provisions in relation to agriculture. This is because the negotiating parties will seek access to each other’s domestic agri-food markets. The terms of a trade agreement may present challenges for the competitiveness of domestic agricultural producers. For example, an agreement permitting tariff free access to

UK markets for agricultural products from other countries whilst not requiring those imports to meet the same standards for animal welfare might mean the costs of production are lower allowing lower quality goods to be sold on the UK market in competition with higher quality and consequently higher priced UK produce. This outcome would present a choice for UK consumers in terms of whether they wish to purchase higher or lower quality produce. The UK and Scottish Governments have committed to maintaining high standards post EU Exit and to ensuring imports also meet the same standards.¹

- **The UK internal market and common frameworks:** new and developing structures to manage divergence within the UK internal market may impact the Scottish Government's policy choices in relation to animal welfare. The market access principles of the UK Internal Market Act 2020 provides that any good that can be legally sold in one part of the UK may also be sold in another part (**principle of mutual recognition**) and that there is a prohibition on indirect or direct discrimination against incoming goods (**principle of non-discrimination**). In addition, **common frameworks** are still to be established for most of [the areas set out by the UK Government in its frameworks analysis](#). 'Animal health and welfare' is one of the areas in which a common framework is expected.
- **The option for regulatory alignment with EU regulations:** The Scottish Government has made a general commitment to no regression in standards or protection. In addition, the 'keeping pace power' set out in the UK Withdrawal from the European Union (Continuity) (Scotland) Act 2021 ('the Continuity Act') provides that Scottish Ministers may, by regulations, make provision corresponding to activities at EU level. It is set out that the purpose of that power is, among other things, to contribute towards maintaining and enhancing standards in relation to several areas, animal health and welfare among them.

In addition, EU exit has changed the arrangements for ensuring good animal health and disease prevention.

Whilst a member of the EU, the UK had access to the EU's disease surveillance and notification system. The [EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement](#) does not provide the UK with continued access to this system, however, there are provisions in Articles 80 and 81 requiring parties to notify one another about animal disease related issues, food safety issues and some other matters, and the ability for the parties to take emergency measures.

Moreover, the UK no longer has input to [EU Animal Welfare Reference Centres](#) which function to synthesise often large scientific literature fields to inform advice. The role of the centres is to

¹ UK Government commitment on standards: <https://deframedia.blog.gov.uk/2020/07/28/environment-secretary-george-eustice-delivers-a-message-to-new-trade-and-agriculture-commission/>
 Scottish Government commitment on standards: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/continuity-bill-equality-impact-assessment/>

“provide technical support and coordinated assistance to EU Member States in carrying out official controls in the field of animal welfare. This in particular by providing scientific and technical expertise, carrying out studies and developing methods for improving and assessing the welfare level of animals. In addition, they contribute to the dissemination of good practices on animal welfare in the EU.”

In following up his appearance at the Committee on 29 September 2021 (Annexe A), Dr Simon Turner (SRUC) raised that there may be merit in the creation of a Scottish Animal Welfare Reference Centre

“to augment the role of the Scottish Animal Welfare Commission. This would provide independent evidence-based views stemming from synthesis of scientific literature with a particular focus on issues of relevance to Scotland (e.g. aquaculture, the challenge of remote island-based farming, trade in companion animals). It could also have a role in identifying research gaps and training needs. Such a reference centre would support and complement rather than replicate the role of the Scottish Animal Welfare Commission.”

In addition, trade with the EU is now requiring additional veterinary capacity to support border controls such as trade documentation.

Finally, Members may be aware that Scottish Ministers have published a [policy statement](#) and [annual report](#) on its use of the powers in the [Part 1 \(section 1\(1\)\) of the UK Withdrawal from the European Union \(Continuity\) \(Scotland\) Act 2021](#) to keep pace with EU regulations. In the documents, the Scottish Ministers highlight that they have not used the power, nor do they intend to use it in the near future, but that alignment with the EU may occur through primary legislation and existing powers as well as through non-legislative means. It is therefore not yet clear where alignment with development of EU animal welfare policy and regulation e.g. [as part of the EU Farm to Fork Strategy](#) is intended or how it will be achieved.

Members may wish to discuss:

- 10. Implications of EU exit for animal health and welfare in Scotland e.g. any gaps in regulation following EU exit, operational gaps with regard to veterinary or biosecurity capacity, need for UK-wide approaches (e.g. in Common Frameworks);**
- 11. Areas where Scotland should/should not be seeking to align with developing EU standards – including any relevant recent or forthcoming developments.**
- 12. Reflections on the loss of access to EU Animal Welfare Reference Centre, and whether there is merit in the creation of a Scottish Animal Welfare Reference Centre to support the Commission’s work through**

synthesising scientific literature, identify research gaps and training needs.

Covid-19 and animal welfare

In March 2021 the UK House of Commons Library published a briefing, [Effect of the Covid-19 outbreak on animal welfare](#). It states that “During the Covid-19 pandemic, a number of welfare issues have arisen relating to pets, especially dogs, such as theft, smuggling, breeding conditions, a surge in unwanted animals and funding for rescue centres”.

The UK Animal Welfare Committee (AWC) has also published two reports assessing the immediate and medium to longer term risks to animal welfare as a result of Covid-19. [The first AWC report](#) considered the impact of Covid-19 restrictions on areas such as animal breeding, transport, health, animal welfare personnel, charities and veterinary services in the short-term. The report concluded that some of the initial concerns about the impact of Covid-19 had not been borne out but would require further monitoring. The main threat identified was the ability for business and charities involved with animals to maintain required levels of service and standards e.g. markets, abattoirs, veterinary practices, kennels or charities.

[The second opinion report covered medium to longer term issues](#) and singled out the companion animal sector as being at greatest risk from animal welfare issues as a result of increased pet ownership during the pandemic, with associated risk of future abandonment.

Members may wish to discuss:

13. Implications of the pandemic on animal welfare in Scotland.

Alexa Morrison, Anna Brand, Senior Researchers, SPICe Research

10 November 2021

Note: Committee briefing papers are provided by SPICe for the use of Scottish Parliament committees and clerking staff. They provide focused information or respond to specific questions or areas of interest to committees and are not intended to offer comprehensive coverage of a subject area.

The Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh, EH99 1SP www.parliament.scot

Annexe A – Further information provided by the panel from the animal welfare evidence session on 29 September 2021

British Veterinary Association Scottish Branch

Dr Romain Pizzi, President of Scottish Branch

Question asked by the Convener at the end of the meeting on [29 September](#):

The provisions of the UK Animal Welfare (Kept Animals) Bill on the controlling of imports of domestic animals and modernising zoo licensing will have specific implications in Scotland. It would be most helpful if you could feed back your views on whether those implications might cause issues here, and comment on any engagement or consultations that you have had on that bill.

I have separated our response out as below:

Domestic animal imports:

We're supportive of provisions in the KAB to restrict the number of pets per non-commercial movement to 5 per motor vehicle, or 3 per person if travelling via air or on foot

We're also broadly supportive of introduce secondary legislation that may prohibit or restrict the import of pets below a specified age, pets that have been mutilated, or animals that are more than a specified number of days pregnant. See our response to the current Defra consultation, which we've just submitted:

<https://www.bva.co.uk/media/4344/bva-and-bsava-response-to-defra-consultation-on-commercial-and-non-commercial-movements-of-pets-into-gb.pdf>. This sets out our thoughts on the detail.

However, we'd also like to see the Bill address the movement of dogs with unknown health statuses into the UK. Government should **introduce mandatory, reliable, pre-import testing for dogs with unknown health statuses** from countries that have endemic diseases which are not currently considered endemic in the UK eg. brucellosis, babesiosis, ehrlichiosis, dirofilariasis and leishmaniasis.

Under current pet travel regulations, stray dogs can be moved to the UK as long as they are compliant with existing pet travel regulations, including receiving the rabies vaccination and completing the 21-day wait period. However, a stray dog with an unknown history may be moved into the UK whilst it is still incubating a disease, including rabies, as there is no longer the requirement for the titre test before travel.

In addition, dogs that are non-compliant with pet travel regulations are quarantined until they are compliant. Therefore, an unvaccinated dog could be vaccinated, quarantined for three weeks and then allowed to enter the UK whilst incubating a disease upon which a vaccination would have little to no effect[1]: [2] These

diseases may not be detected in non-clinically affected dogs and are difficult to eliminate from the carrier animal. This puts the UK at a higher disease risk from rabies and diseases which are not endemic in the UK and potentially zoonotic eg. brucellosis, babesiosis, ehrlichiosis and leishmaniasis.

We therefore question whether it is appropriate to be moving stray dogs with unknown health statuses from rabies-positive countries and countries with diseases not endemic for the UK. Ultimately, the wider consequences for the UK dog population should outweigh the benefit to the individual animal being imported.

APHA has also recently recognised that cases of *Brucella canis* appear to be rising due to increasing numbers of untested imported dogs, some of which are infected, and the first identified cases of within-UK transmission of this disease have now occurred.[3] *B. canis* also presents a zoonotic risk with diagnostic laboratories now having in place safety measures to minimise risk to staff.[4]: [5]

The Human Animal Infection and Risk Surveillance (HAIRS) Group [Risk review and statement on the risk *Brucella canis* presents to the UK human population](#) sets out that:

*“As of February 2021, more than 40 canine cases of brucellosis (confirmed and probable based on laboratory, clinical and epidemiological investigations), including one large household cluster in England with evidence of dog-to-dog transmission, have been reported in the UK. Apart from the household cluster, for which the source of infection is still under investigation, the remainder are believed to have acquired their *B. canis* infection outside of the UK. These imported cases have all been diagnosed in dogs adopted by UK owners from organisations specialising in rehoming dogs from overseas, the vast majority are in young dogs imported from Romania. The young age range in canine cases reported to date may not be a consequence of clinical disease being more explicit in younger dogs but could be due to a large influx of younger dogs in recent months or years. A review of domestic dog commercial import data by Defra found that to end of November 2020, commercial imports of dogs from Romania had increased in 2020 by 51% compared to 2019 imports with 29,348 dogs brought into the country by commercial means by the end of November 2020.”*

[1] Boyden, P, 2015. What is the true risk of imported dogs to the UK? [Vet Rec.](#) 2015 Jun 27;176(26):670-1. doi: 10.1136/vr.h3344.

[2] Day, M, 2010. *Veterinary Immunology: Principles and Practice*, Second edition

[3] <http://apha.defra.gov.uk/documents/surveillance/diseases/Canine-Brucellosis-Summary-Final-260421.pdf>

[4] Ibid.

[5] https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/eid/article/27/9/20-4701_article

Zoo licensing:

Further clarity is needed as to what the transition period will be for the new conservation standards and more broadly the reviewed SoS standards for zoos. We're conscious that stakeholders have not yet had sight of these standards.

In terms of transition periods, we're concerned that if the transition period is too narrow, this may not be financially viable for some smaller zoos, resulting in them closing and animals having to either be euthanised or rehomed to private individuals/traders, which may have adverse impacts on animal welfare, biosecurity, and make their future monitoring more difficult, if of species not subject to DWA inspection oversight. The tremendous current difficulties (and expense when it is possible) with export of zoo animals to Europe post-Brexit could also exacerbate the problem (currently export of zoo primates, even from major zoos has practically been impossible this year).

A transition period for compliance with new SoS standards for zoos and adequate closure insurance may help to protect animal welfare, health, biosecurity, and human public health, however it is difficult to elucidate points more fully without sight of the updated Secretary of State's Zoo standards.

More specifically, we think that at "15(b) a specialist in one or more species of animals which are kept in zoos", in the draft Bill, 'specialist' should be amended to 'expert' – as in the veterinary profession 'specialist' is a restricted term used to describe those with defined qualifications and experience, so it could be that a veterinary surgeon not technically be a veterinary 'specialist' in a specific species, but they may have the sufficient species-specific animal health, welfare and husbandry knowledge to conduct the inspection.

And then regarding two other points of follow-up:

Livestock Vaccination:

Romain was asked about the potential merits of a national vaccination scheme to address the quoted 20 per cent preventable mortality in livestock, and we said that we would respond in more detail. I'm afraid I'm still waiting for some background on this one from our Senior Vice President, who's currently away, but I'll come back to you on this as soon as I can.

Domestic violence:

Finally, Romain said that in terms of the discussion about the LINKS project and improving vets' recognition of possible domestic violence, with time being tight he didn't have a chance to mention some of the existing work within this space. Specifically, he wanted to also flag that BVA has teamed up with the Scottish SPCA to deliver an event for vets with a focus on veterinary forensics, including a session on how to spot the link between potential domestic violence and animal cruelty. More information is here: <https://www.bva.co.uk/news-and-blog/news-article/new-one-day-virtual-conference-for-vets-lifts-the-lid-on-animal-welfare-casework-and-veterinary-forensics/>

Scotland's Rural College

Dr. Simon Turner, Senior Researcher, Animal Behaviour and Welfare Team

I would be grateful if the committee could consider the following points in their deliberations of the evidence given by Panel 1 on the 29th September 2021.

Programme of Government

SRUC looks forward to contributing to the consultation on the phasing out of cages for layers, gamebirds and farrowing sows. We have previously studied the welfare impacts of cages and alternative systems for layers and gamebirds and have world-leading expertise in free farrowing systems.

EU exit and Scottish animal welfare policy and regulation

Scotland currently lacks proposals for a post-CAP payment system for farmers to adopt welfare enhancements. Developments are progressing elsewhere (e.g. Defra are exploring a payment by results system and other options; the EU are developing CAP 2023-9 funding for animal welfare under an 'ecoschemes' mechanism). Scotland previously incentivised farmers under the Animal Welfare Management Plan within the SRDP which has now ceased. It is important that, when a Scottish system is developed, any actions required of farmers or outcomes measured are thoroughly based on scientific evidence of which actions will benefit animal welfare. SRUC would welcome the opportunity to provide advice in this regard.

For poultry, there would be value in finding ways to incentivise the reduction in keel bone damage in laying hens. This is particularly necessary as we move away from cage systems which are associated with less keel bone damage than non-cage systems. Incentives to promote greater use of in-house sexing and hatching of layer chicks to prevent the need for transporting very young birds would also be welcome. Finally, there is a pressing need to find alternatives to carbon dioxide stunning of pigs as work by SRUC and the Universities of Glasgow and Edinburgh indicate that low atmospheric pressure stunning is associated with pain and fear responses and cannot be regarded as an improvement over carbon dioxide. I would be happy to point the committee towards SRUC experts in these fields.

Animal transport and the Animal Welfare (Kept Animals) Bill

Both FAWC (now the Animal Welfare Committee) and a Defra funded systematic review by SRUC and the University of Edinburgh have highlighted a number of pressing research gaps where there is a stark lack of scientific evidence to support policy and regulation on animal transport. These include: research to underpin maximum journey times and safe thermal limits for very young animals or adult animals at the end of their productive life such as layer hens and sows; whether transport by sea and time in markets constitutes a part of the journey, is neutral or a rest period from the animals' perspective; and the welfare of animals transported across borders for breeding purposes that may face very long journeys. Finally, there

is also a recognised need to improve and harmonise compliance with transport regulations, particularly with regard to fitness to travel.

There is concern regarding the fate of animals who may be of low value and can no longer be exported, such as male dairy calves and surplus female dairy calves. We need to find ways to increase the domestic market value of these animals and we have proposed work to address this issue in the new Scottish Government Strategic Research Programme beginning in 2022. This work would focus on quantifying public demand for beef from calves reared by their mother, identifying ways to reduce the stress of later weaning in these systems, and seeking solutions to the blockages that prevent dairy calves being attractive to the dairy-beef sector.

There is a need to research the welfare impacts of mobile abattoirs, as well as their dependency on veterinary input during operation and the management of waste.

Requirement for a Scottish Animal Welfare Reference Centre

The UK no longer has input to EU Animal Welfare Reference Centres which function to synthesise often large scientific literature fields to inform advice. There would be merit in the creation of a Scottish Animal Welfare Reference Centre to augment the role of the Scottish Animal Welfare Commission. This would provide independent evidence-based views stemming from synthesis of scientific literature with a particular focus on issues of relevance to Scotland (e.g. aquaculture, the challenge of remote island-based farming, trade in companion animals). It could also have a role in identifying research gaps and training needs. Such a reference centre would support and complement rather than replicate the role of the Scottish Animal Welfare Commission.

Funding for animal welfare research

The Scottish Government is a world leader in explicitly supporting animal welfare research in its strategic research funding. We welcome the funding of animal welfare as a topic in its own right in the 2022-2027 Strategic Research Programme. Animal welfare remains a priority area for the public despite other calls on peoples' attention, and we hope that the clarity and commitment to funding animal welfare research will remain in the long term.

Scottish Veterinary Service and SRUC Veterinary School

I would be very happy to direct the committee towards SRUC colleagues who can provide evidence on these matters.

OneKind

Thank you once again for the opportunity to speak to the committee. Below are some further comments, responding to questions from the committee that we did not have time to answer, and also highlighting some areas that we are especially concerned about but that were not covered during the meeting.

Links between abuse of humans and other animals

We support the Scottish SPCA's call for more awareness raising and intelligence sharing in this area.

The concept of link(s) between violence towards animals and humans is a major international area of research and practice. This is a nuanced and complex association including animal abuse, child abuse, intimate partner violence (IPV) and abuse of other vulnerable adults, such as elders. Experts believe that Adverse Childhood Experiences or poor attachments in early life can lead to a lack of empathy, an inability to regulate emotions, hyper-responsiveness to perceived threats, and poor mental health. These factors, especially lack of empathy, are associated with violence and animal abuse. Children in violent homes can become desensitised to violence and may replicate the behaviour that was modelled to them. These factors may contribute to a cycle of violence which continues down generations.

As such, programmes such as the Scottish SPCA's Animal Guardians, which fosters empathy and animal knowledge amongst children at risk of harming animals (and who are often traumatised themselves) are very valuable.

Awareness of these links also reaches further, to our criminal justice system, for example. Last year representatives from OneKind and the Scottish SPCA were both on the steering group for Scottish Government commissioned research into the possibilities of introducing restorative justice and rehabilitative approaches for people who have offended against animals, recognising that the root causes of such offences may lie in trauma. We have attached a briefing on this concept in case it is of interest to the committee.

Provisions in the Animal Welfare (Kept Animals) Bill

We welcome the provisions made in the Animal Welfare (Kept Animals) Bill and agree with the rationale for the Legislative Consent Memorandum (LCM), and the position of the Scottish Government that consistent and simultaneous changes to legislation in all administrations in Great Britain will be important and beneficial. We do not foresee any problems with the new measures. We engaged with the public consultations mentioned in the LCM and have had further discussions with Ministers and the Scottish Government animal welfare team on some of these issues.

The Convener asked specifically about the provisions relating to importation of companion animals and updating zoo licensing so we will comment briefly on those topics here.

The severe welfare risks and large scale of the low welfare puppy trade are now well known and have been exacerbated by the pandemic. The Scottish SPCA, BVA and others have reported on this extensively. A good, recent overview of the problems, including case studies from Scotland, is here: [041220 advert report puppy smuggling a4 v15.pdf \(dogstrust.org.uk\)](#)

The provisions in the Animal Welfare (Kept Animals) Bill will help tackle this issue. Reducing the number of dogs, cats and ferrets that may be moved into Great Britain on a non-commercial basis is important, as many of the puppies who are brought in to be sold are brought via this route under pretence.

The further provisions will also be valuable: prohibitions on importing animals under a certain age, those who have been mutilated, and those who are in the latter stages of pregnancy. We would prefer to see these prohibitions on the face of the Bill, rather than, as is currently, giving devolved governments powers to make regulations. However, if this remains as a regulation making power, we recommend that the Scottish Government enact all of these measures to their full extent.

Prohibiting the import of puppies and kittens under six months of age would significantly reduce young animals coming in to be sold, as they are older than the 'cute' age at which most people buy puppies and kittens. It would also aid enforcement, as it is very difficult for officials to ascertain if animals are under 15 weeks, which is the current minimum age for import. At around six months old dental changes in dogs and cats allow age to be more readily identified.

Prohibiting the importation of heavily pregnant animals will close a loophole being exploited since the ban on third party sales of puppies came into force in England, requiring sellers to show the puppies with their mothers; illegal importers have started bringing the dams over to give birth in the UK and returning them to their country of origin after the puppies are sold, to be bred again.

There is a worrying and growing trend of ear-cropped dogs in the UK, despite the practice being banned here. It is likely that they are coming from other countries and so the power for devolved governments to prohibit animals that have been mutilated will close that loophole and bring an end to ear-cropped dogs in the UK. This is important as ear-cropping is a cruel and unnecessary practice. The inclusion of tail docking in this provision is also welcome, though we would like to see the exception for working dogs removed. We would also recommend that declawing of cats is included in the list of prohibited mutilations.

In summary, we support all the provisions relating to importation of companion animals in the Animal Welfare (Kept Animals) Bill and would recommend that the Scottish Government make full use of the powers granted in Clause 46. We would also recommend that all the provisions available in this clause include all pets, not only dogs. This is not currently the intention of the UK Government, as the numbers involved for cats and ferrets are lower than for dogs, but it is important to protect the welfare of all species, not only the most numerous.

The updates to Zoo licensing are fairly minor and are unlikely to make any changes to animal welfare, but we do not object to them, and some are necessary to reflect recent changes such as the ban on wild animals in circuses. On this topic more generally, we would like to see far more significant changes in the operation and regulation of zoos, to better provide for the wellbeing of the animals confined within them.

Agricultural subsidies

We are very concerned that improvements to animal welfare are being left out of the discussions around a new agricultural support system, the Scottish Government consultation on agricultural transition, and the suggestions made by the farmer-led groups. The reports of these groups focus mainly on emissions reduction, as they were asked to and as is important. However, this must not come at the expense of animal welfare. The reports are written in a language of production; their suggestions do not seem likely to bring improvement in animal wellbeing and could compromise it.

The proposals for increased use of genetic and genomic information, and possibly gene editing eventually, have the potential to intensify health and welfare problems farmed animals already experience due to people selectively breeding them for production. These include chickens bred for high meat yield who cannot bear their own weight¹, laying hens who have osteoporosis and frequent fractures as their high egg production absorbs all available calcium², and dairy cows who are metabolically starving due to the high energy demands of excessive milk production³.

One suggestion we found particularly worrying was made by the suckler beef group: that reducing the age at first calving would reduce the 'unproductive' time a heifer spent on the farm and potentially reduce her mature size and therefore feeding requirements. This is just one example of production being prioritised over animal welfare and it is not the direction we should be heading.

Any plans for emissions reduction must not rely on increasing the 'productivity' of farmed animals. Successive generations of animals have each suffered more in this pursuit to push animals to and beyond their biological capacity. It is time to reverse this trend and start breeding for welfare rather than production. Emissions reductions must be found elsewhere, and a new agricultural subsidy scheme should prioritise animal welfare improvements overall.