

Making Tracks

Spring 2004

ANIMAL RIGHTS FROM CAROLINE LUCAS GREEN PARTY MEP FOR SOUTH EAST ENGLAND

“ I am Vice-President of the European Parliament’s animal welfare committee and this is the fourth of my occasional newsletters which explains the many activities within the EU that affect animal rights.

When I became an MEP, I saw it as an opportunity to make changes for

the better. We have achieved a considerable amount by influencing proposals from the European Commission and we could do more – with your support. Please read on to find out what has been done already – and how you can help. ”



European Parliament begins discussing new Chemicals Directive

The European Parliament has now begun to consider the new Chemicals Directive, which may result in millions of animals being used in cruel, outdated and unnecessary tests. The tests would be conducted to acquire safety data on thousands of chemicals which are already in use.

I will work to ensure that human health, the environment and wildlife are fully protected. However, together with the National Anti-Vivisection Society, I will work to ensure that this is done with an entirely non-animal test strategy.

Animal testing has actually helped to allow the chemicals industry to escape proper regulation for decades. Animal data are frequently obtained for unrealistic doses, duration of exposure, or inappropriate dosing routes. Differences between species in absorption, distribution, metabolism or excretion of individual chemicals can ensure that instead of taking a precautionary approach and restricting substances of concern, regulators tend to seek further animal test data, using a new species, route of exposure or dose level.

Indeed, some animal tests are so bad that even the scientists working to replace them have difficulty using the animal data to check results of alternative tests under development.

LOST OPPORTUNITY TO END LIVE EXPORTS

The European Parliament has just completed its deliberations on the new EU laws designed to protect the welfare of farm animals during transport – and to my horror a majority of MEPs voted in favour of allowing long journeys for farm animals to continue.

Every year thousands of sheep are exported from the UK to countries as far away as Italy and Greece. Even the laws that do exist to protect their welfare are often not enforced, particularly on the continent. This results in animals being transported across Europe in overcrowded conditions often in the summer heat without bedding or sufficient rest or water.

Since live exports started again in July 2002 – following the FMD outbreak – a total of 186,000 sheep have been exported on cruel journeys as far afield as Italy and Greece.

Determined to end live exports, I tabled a number of amendments to the draft legislation in the Parliament. My key amendments were to give Member States the power to ban live exports and to impose a maximum eight hour journey limit for both ‘slaughter’ and, crucially, ‘further fattening’ animals. Although my amendments were accepted by the

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Photo: Compassion in World Farming

Environment Committee, it's a tragedy that a majority of MEPs voted against these amendments in the full sitting of Parliament (Plenary).

Although the Parliament did vote to end journeys of longer than nine hours for animals going to slaughterhouses, it failed to improve the situation for animals being transported for 'further fattening'. Since the vast majority of sheep exported from the UK are exported as 'further fattening' animals, this vote will do nothing to end live exports from the UK. Indeed, even the few sheep which are exported as 'slaughter' animals could in future just be re-classified as 'further fattening' animals prior to their journey to the continent.

The final decision is to be made by the 15 Agriculture Ministers in the Council of Ministers soon. It is here that the Labour government has spent the last 6 months trying to sabotage these new laws and to ensure that cruel live exports can continue. The Parliament's vote, rather than sending a strong signal to the UK government that live exports must end, has allowed the UK government to continue to argue that live exports must continue.

Will horse exports from the UK start?

Furthermore, during negotiations in Brussels the UK government has failed to defend its right to retain its ban on the export of horses which could result in thousands of New Forest ponies and ex-race horses being exported from the UK to continental slaughterhouses. As a nation of horse lovers, it is shocking that the UK government has done so little to prevent the export of possibly thousands of horses each year.

The UK government should have been arguing that it has the right to continue its ban on the export of live horses for slaughter but it failed to do this. Instead it sought to do a deal with the European Commission for a

series of half measures which will simply fail to stop thousands of horses being exported for slaughter. Yet animal welfare is clearly more important than free trade.

Please urgently write to the Minister responsible for animal welfare urging him to do a U-turn and ensure that both 'slaughter and 'further fattening' animals can not be transported for more than eight hours and that live exports – including horses – are banned.

You can contact the Minister for Animal Welfare, Mr Ben Bradshaw MP, at: DEFRA, 17 Nobel House, Smith Square, London SW1P 3JR



Photo: Ian McAllister www.raincoast.org

A success for Grizzly Bears – but more help is needed!

Thanks to everyone who wrote to the European Commission urging them to ban the import of grizzly bear hunting trophies from the Canadian province of British Columbia in order to support international efforts to ensure the survival of the remaining grizzly population.

Canada's Grizzlies are officially classed as threatened or vulnerable across most of their range, yet on average 300 are shot for trophies in BC every year. Their hunting should be banned and a protected habitat set up to ensure a bright future for Grizzly Bears.

As a result of our pressure, in

January the European Union suspended the import of all grizzly bear hunting trophies from the Canadian province of British Columbia. This is a major achievement that will greatly aid conservation efforts for grizzly bears in British Columbia. However, we need to get this suspension into EU law as soon as possible so please thank the Commissioner and urge her to act quickly. Please write to **European Commissioner for the Environment, Margot Wallström at Rue de la Loi 200, 1049 Brussels, Belgium.**

Parliament votes to ban bushmeat

Following a great deal of work by fellow Green Party MEP, Jean Lambert (London), who sits on the Petitions Committee, the Parliament voted in January to bring forward urgent measures to stamp out the illegal trade in endangered species (known as 'bushmeat'). This is a direct result of those of you who signed and organised the largest ever petition presented to the Parliament.

The 1.9 million-signature petition was presented to the Parliament's Petitions Committee and as a direct result the Parliament called for an end to the import and sale of illegally poached wildlife as meat in the EU. The Parliament also demanded that the EU and its Member States must work closely with developing nations to stamp out the poaching of wildlife that fuels the trade.

Keep working for animals – make a difference

For more information on my work visit www.carolinelucasmep.org.uk

Office of Caroline Lucas MEP
Suite 58, The Hop Exchange, 24
Southwark Street, London SE1 1TY
Tel: 020 7407 6281 Fax: 020 7234 0183