

Making Tracks

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

VICTORY!

Cattle export subsidies end!

On 20th December 2005, the European Commission announced that the EU would immediately halt provision of refunds for live cattle exports. This move came just a few weeks after the adoption of a European Parliament Written Declaration calling for an end to the subsidies, which provided financial incentives for producers exporting cattle to the Middle East and North Africa. As one of the MEPs who tabled the declaration, I am especially delighted: such successes are rare, but they demonstrate the potential to achieve even more.



As a Member of the European Parliament, and Vice President of the Parliament's animal welfare committee, I aim to promote animal rights policies within the European institutions, and to campaign for improvements in animal protection legislation wherever possible. This newsletter outlines recent progress, including proposals for the first ever European Union Animal Welfare Action Plan, and the stunning victory in ending EU subsidies for live cattle exports. With your support, even more can be achieved. Please join me in working for change.

REACH – animal testing update

When the last *Making Tracks* was published, the European Commission's REACH (Registration, Evaluation and Authorisation of Chemicals) proposal was still to be voted on in the Parliament's Committees.

The proposal aims to improve protection of human health and the environment by controlling the use of harmful chemicals, but it includes a massive 'information gathering' exercise, based largely on outdated and cruel animal toxicity tests. Around 30,000 so called 'existing substances' (first marketed before 1981) will be subject to registration and possibly new testing under REACH. The expected death toll for animals is staggering, running into many millions, and the tests themselves are cruel and painful.

In response to the Commission's proposed animal test strategies, I took the unprecedented step of tabling an alternative, and entirely non-animal, test regime (see: www.reachnonanimaltests.org).

Unexpectedly, and to my enormous satisfaction, I was largely supported in this by a majority of members of the European Parliament's Environment Committee. The Committee vote

would have slashed the number of animal tests required under REACH by over three quarters. Although this success was short-lived – at the Plenary vote animal tests were reinstated – the Committee vote has sent shockwaves through the animal testing industry. Those who aim to preserve animal testing, despite evidence that it is often of dubious scientific value, always cruel, and sometimes downright misleading and dangerous, have had to realise that change will come.

Meanwhile, there is evidence that the European Commission is aiming to make more use of non-animal testing techniques in the coming years.

The REACH negotiations will continue throughout 2006, with another vote in the European Parliament expected by the end of the year. I will continue to monitor developments and campaign for full implementation of animal protection measures.

Thank you to everyone who supported me in submitting the non-animal testing strategy: despite not being adopted by the whole Parliament, it will always signal a milestone in the struggle to replace animal tests.

Animal Welfare Action Plan

First, I would like to thank everyone who responded to the European Commission's consultation on animal welfare. Details of the consultation were e-mailed to activists by my London office in December, and the response was phenomenal. Significantly, a majority of respondents indicated that much more needs to be done to protect animals in the EU, and – very encouragingly – 87% of respondents



Photo: Mark Rissi

believe that imported foods should be produced under conditions of animal welfare at least as high as those applied in the EU.

The Commission has now published the first ever **Community Action Plan on the Protection and Welfare of Animals**. I will be working on this over the coming weeks, and especially pushing for the EU to challenge World Trade Organisation (WTO) rules designed to force 'free trade' on countries that would prefer to block imports on animal welfare grounds.

The 'Action Plan' includes a clear indication that the Commission fully supports the principle of applying the '3Rs' (Reduction, Refinement, Replacement) to all areas of animal research. I will continue to scrutinise their actions as well as their political rhetoric (see: 'Shellfish toxins testing' on this page).

Shellfish toxins testing

On January 1st 2006, the Commission updated legislation requiring monitoring of shellfish intended for human consumption. Levels of marine biotoxins that may be present in shellfish are measured using a variety of tests, including an extremely cruel mouse test. Because EU law (Directive 86/609, on the protection of animals used for experimental purposes) states that where a non-animal test is available it should be used, the new legislation should require use of non-animal methods and forbid the mouse test. As it does not do this, and in some cases sets the mouse test as the 'reference test', I have tabled a Parliamentary Question pointing out this serious breach of stated '3Rs' policy, and apparent breach of Directive 86/609.



Photo: Eurogroup for Animal Welfare

In a recent letter to me (21.09.05), the Commissioner for Agriculture, Mariann Fischer Boel, confirmed that EU subsidies are paid to fur farmers under EU rural development programmes. I have responded by asking the Commissioner to ensure that the EU fulfils its own stated commitment to improving animal welfare by calling on Member States to cease such funding of fur production.



Photo: Compassion in World Farming

Broiler chickens

The European Parliament's Agriculture Committee has voted on the Commission's proposal to impose certain standards for the raising of broiler (meat) chickens. The stocking densities agreed are still far too high (30kg/m² rising to 38kg/m² subject to proof of 'good welfare standards'), but I am pleased to say that amendments supported by Green MEPs calling for consideration of genetic factors and welfare of breeding stock have been adopted.

The conditions under which broiler chickens are raised are wholly unacceptable, and although the planned legislation will standardise requirements, it will not tackle the more pressing need: to end factory farming entirely.

Cat and dog fur

Following the release of undercover film footage obtained in China showing cats and dogs being transported in horrific conditions and skinned, sometimes alive, for their fur, I have been inundated with correspondence from voters.

The EU Commissioner for Consumer Affairs, Markos Kyprianou, has stated that an EU wide ban on the import of cat and dog fur is intended, and the UK Government has pledged that it will ban the trade in dog and cat fur if such fur is found on sale in UK shops. If you find an item that you think may be made from dog or cat fur please contact: **Respect for Animals, PO Box 6500, Nottingham. NG4 3GB.**

KEEP WORKING FOR ANIMALS – MAKE A DIFFERENCE

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

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