

FOCUS

On Animal Welfare



Animal welfare is top priority for British public



The belief that we are a nation of animal lovers has recently been confirmed by RSPCA figures. The poll showed that 8 out of 10 people in the UK now believe that animal welfare is a key priority for a civilised society.

Fiona Hall, Lib Dem MEP for the North East, supports moves to improve conditions for animals at home and abroad.

"Some choices are clearer than others. We can all choose to buy free range eggs or British pork reared under a strong welfare regime. But in many areas consumers do not have the information they need to make those choices. Labelling rules should be stricter so that the true origin of products is clearer. Produce merely packaged in the UK should not be labelled as British."

"I'm a firm supporter of animal welfare and would like to see legislation go further in protecting animals."

Fiona backs EU ban on bull fighting

Fiona Hall MEP signed a declaration in the European Parliament calling for an EU wide ban on bull fighting.

"Bull fighting is undeniably a source of animal suffering and runs completely contrary to EU plans for improvements in animal welfare.

"Bull fighting is based on putting bulls under severe physical torture, resulting in over 40,000 bull deaths a year in Europe. In the twenty-first century such a barbaric practice as bullfighting is no longer acceptable. Attitudes to bull fighting are changing even in Spain."

Bull fighting campaigner, Jordi Casamitjana, said: "Bull rings rely heavily on subsidies from local governments just to survive. Hundreds of bulls are slaughtered in Spain, France and Portugal on a regular basis. They die a slow agonising death. This archaic and brutal blood sport needs to end now".

Fiona Hall's Animal Welfare Action File:

- 1 Fought for a ban on bull fighting across the EU.
- 2 Fought to ban live transport of horses for slaughter.
- 3 Supported the European Parliament's moves to ban seal products in the EU.
- 4 Campaigned successfully to ban cat and dog fur imports into the EU
- 5 Called for better pig welfare standards in the rest of the EU.

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Save the Seals!

Fiona Hall voted in Strasbourg to halt the sale of products made from seal pups, which are killed in huge numbers in Canada.

More than 300,000 baby seals may be killed for their white pelts each year in what has been described as the largest slaughter of marine mammals on earth.

Opinion polls suggest that a majority of Canadian citizens oppose the hunt.

The EU ban will hit Denmark and Italy most strongly, but is not expected to have major economic consequences. Seal products from traditional hunts by Inuit and indigenous communities in places like Greenland will still be permitted.

Goose-down duvets are not so cosy

Lib Dem MEP Fiona Hall is calling for an end to the inhumane practice of live plucking of geese. Recent documentaries shown in Sweden and Germany have revealed that millions of birds are being plucked alive each year in order to obtain goose down and feathers for use in articles such as duvets and padded jackets.

Fiona Hall is calling for this practice to be stopped immediately and has signed a declaration in the European Parliament urging proper enforcement of regulations which make the practise illegal.

"I was shocked by the evidence of geese being plucked alive in Hungary and other European countries. This procedure causes birds to suffer from a great deal of stress and unreasonable pain - up to four times during their life times."

"It is hard for North East consumers to avoid duvets and jackets filled with live-plucked feathers and down as there is no information on labels about how the stuffing is obtained. I want to see proper enforcement and labelling so that concerned North East shoppers can "shop European" in the interests of animal welfare."

Bird reserve visit



The RSPB's Saltholme bird reserve provides a summer home for the Common Tern which migrates from Africa each May. Fiona Hall MEP and Simon Hughes MP visited the RSPB's Saltholme bird reserve to offer their support to the RSPB's work in supporting biodiversity in the North East. Both Fiona and Simon work on climate change and environmental issues in their respective parliaments and are concerned about the impact that climate change will have on our wildlife in the UK. Fiona said: "Land managed specifically for nature conversation has a better chance of safeguarding species. This is particularly important as currently 38% of UK priority habitats are in decline and the EU's commitment to halt loss of biodiversity by 2010 is unlikely to be met."

Simon Hughes praised the conversion of former industrial land at Saltholme into a "safe haven for some of the rarest species of birdlife in England".

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