

Ahead of the Scottish Parliament elections, the British Veterinary Association is calling on all parties to sign up to key pledges to enhance animal health and welfare, support the veterinary profession, and protect public health in Scotland.



Protect the welfare of animals at slaughter

Slaughter without pre-stunning compromises the welfare of millions of animals. While there's currently no non-stun slaughter in Scotland, we're calling for clear labelling of meat and meat products from animals that have not been stunned before slaughter, to improve consumer choice. Millions of fish are farmed each year as part of Scotland's world-leading aquaculture sector. To maintain Scotland's reputation as a leader in animal welfare, we're calling for specific legislative protections for the welfare of farmed finfish at slaughter.



Direct agriculture funding towards improving animal health and welfare

Public money to replace the Common Agricultural Policy should be used to incentivise and support good animal health and welfare outcomes, based on veterinary expertise. In shaping the new agricultural policy for Scotland, we must ensure that animal health and welfare, sustainability, and responsible antimicrobial use, are central to those plans and vets are involved.



Commit to evidence-based disease control

Poor animal health leads to welfare problems. It can also result in economic costs for Scottish agriculture and can contribute to climate change as low productivity is not sustainable. Endemic diseases can only be eradicated through partnership working between farmers, vets and government, and maintaining the current level of government resource spent on the scanning surveillance network.



Improve welfare during transport for Scotland's livestock

We're calling for evidence-based improvements to welfare at transport legislation. Proposals should avoid a disproportionate emphasis on journey times and instead recognise the importance of improving journey conditions for animals, while ensuring they are workable for rural and remote areas such as the Highlands and Islands.



Enshrine animal sentience in law

Animal sentience must be enshrined in law as a priority, covering all animals including decapod crustaceans and cephalopods. This principle recognises that animals are sentient and importantly puts a duty on the state to have due regard for animal welfare in the development and implementation of policy.



Strengthen legislation against illegal puppy imports

There has been a steep rise in demand for 'pandemic puppies' and we're concerned that people may be turning to illegal breeding activity or imports. We're calling for strengthened pet travel legislation to clamp down on illegal puppy smuggling by raising the age at which puppies can enter the country.



Boost the veterinary workforce

Vets play a vital role in trade, protecting public health, food safety and animal health and welfare. To continue to trade, we need enough vets to meet the additional demands for export and import certification associated with leaving the EU. We're calling for increased funding for veterinary school places and attractive salaries for vets undertaking government work.



Ban the import of dogs with cropped ears

A recent spike in cases of illegal ear cropping points to the need for urgent action to curb this worrying trend. It is an unnecessary, painful mutilation with no welfare benefit. While illegal to crop in the UK, it is not illegal to sell ear-cropped dogs, import them, or take dogs abroad to be cropped. We want to close these loopholes and end the trend in ear-cropped dogs for good.



Ban aversive training devices

Evidence shows that reward-based training is not only the most effective training method for dogs and cats, but also makes sure animals are protected from any pain or suffering as part of their training. We're calling for a complete ban on the sale and use of electric shock collars for dogs and cats.



Improve traceability in dog breeding

We're calling for anyone using a dog for breeding to be required to register with their local authority to improve traceability for local authorities and transparency for prospective dog owners.



Tighten the regulation of fireworks

Fireworks impact the health and welfare of animals, humans, and our environment. We're calling for the recommendations of the Fireworks Review Group, including the introduction of no-firework zones, to be implemented as soon as possible.



Put animal welfare on the national curriculum

The Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act puts a duty of care on individuals to provide for the five welfare needs of animals. It is essential that children learn about the welfare needs and the concept of a duty of care to ensure animals have good health and welfare and a life worth living.