

National Assembly for Wales All Party Group for Animal Welfare (APGAW)
Summer Conference – 19th July 2006

In Attendance:

- Sgt Ian Guildford, Wildlife and Environmental Crime Officer, South Wales Police, Countryside Council for Wales
- Chair, Lorraine Barrett AM (Lab, Cardiff South and Penarth)
- Claire Lawson, RSPCA Cymru Wales
- Roy Peckham, Pit Pony Sanctuary
- Sarah Marsh, Greyhound Rescue Wales
- Paul Pavia, Welsh Assembly Conservative Group
- Sian Edwards, Dogs Trust
- Ifan Lloyd, British Veterinary Association
- Allan Evans, Rhondda Valleys Animal Welfare
- Matt Collis, IFAW
- Peter Heathcote, Exotic Animal Welfare Trust
- Huw Thomas NFU Cymru
- Ben Kind, League Against Cruel Sports
- Lionel Ford, Donkey Sanctuary
- Mickey Davenport, Badger Watch and Rescue, Dyfed
- Mike Sharratt, Badger Watch and Rescue, Dyfed
- Alain Thomas, Greyhound Rescue Wales
- Secretariat: Rahel Jones and Rhian Jones, Morgan Allen Moore Cymru

Apologies

- Phil Jones, International League for the Protection of Horses
- Wendy Davies, British Horse Society
- Christianne Glossop, Chief Veterinary Officer, Welsh Assembly Government
- Brynle Williams AM (Con, North Wales)

Session 1: Wildlife Crime

Sgt Ian Guildford, Wildlife and Environmental Crime Officer, South Wales Police, Countryside Council for Wales:

- Explained that his role was part of an unique set up in the UK, where a partnership was operating between the police and the Countryside Council for Wales (CCW), and where he is paid by the CCW. The North Wales equivalent, Pete Charleston, is paid by North Wales Police.
- Noted that Richard Brunstrom, Chief Constable of North Wales Police is very supportive and does excellent work in the area of wildlife crime, adding that he tries to get this model of policing right in Wales to act as a role model for the rest of the UK.
- Pointed out that wildlife crime is not, and never will be a priority for the police force, and this was one of the reasons that the CCW had bought his services.
- Informed the group that he worked on SSSI site issues, environment and wildlife issues, working with divisional wildlife crime officers, who undertake this role in addition to their normal duties. This is explains why people often find these officers difficult to locate.

During his presentation, Sgt Guildford made the following points:-

Issues dealt with:

- **Birds**
 - Explained that this issue was driven by the RSPB in the early nineties and is historically something that has been dealt with by the police.
 - Highlighted the main problems being:
 - The illegal poisoning of peregrins;
 - Poisoned baits, and reports of them teathered alive, although incidents have fallen recently
 - Secondary poisoning, for example from poisons intended for foxes;
 - Shootings, of swans in particular. Swans are easy targets and many cases are encountered;

- Illegal falconry. Offered the example of a recent case where a person was keeping birds of prey in a basement. The birds were legally kept, but in illegal conditions. Noted that cases have gone down, due to the fact that the market for these animals has largely disappeared, and enforcement and breeding techniques have also improved.
 - Finch trapping – pointed out that it is ‘not a great earner’, but incidents still occur. A recent example occurred in Wales, where he described his working in partnership with the RSPCA to successfully deal with the incident.
 - Egg collecting – highlighted two factors that has contributed to a reduction of cases. Firstly, the Rights of Way Act means that egg collecting can now result in a prison sentence. Secondly, *Operation Easter* in Scotland, where officers closely track the movements of egg collectors, creating a bigger risk for the collectors of being caught. Noted that those collectors that do exist and will go to great length to conceal the eggs, and behave in this respect in the same way as drug dealers.
- **Crimes against Badgers**
- Stated that during the 2005 – 2006 there has been a rise in instances of crimes against badgers.
 - Mentioned that there had been some successes in dealing with the crimes and offered an example in Gloucester where five men were arrested, but explained that despite receiving the names of a great number of suspects, it was often difficult to prosecute and prove the crime beyond ‘reasonable doubt’ in a court of law.
 - In terms of methods, the criminals ‘crown down holes’ before killing the badger or setting their dogs on the badger. They then dispose of the dead animal’s body.
 - Explained that the reason for this crime was usually just for the sport, and also some dog owners see it as an opportunity to prove their animal’s bravery.
- **Illegal Snaring and Use of Traps**
- Illegal snaring was highlighted as another problem, noting that some snaring is still legal, but things can go wrong if it is not done properly.
 - Traps are sometimes used illegally to catch birds of prey, and ‘gin traps’ are still sometimes seen in use on allotments.

Sgt Guildford noted that the above issues were all things that the police had historically dealt with, and they had now also moved on to deal with newer issues, many of which were related to conservation. He outlined these newer issues as following:

- **European Protected Species**
- Exemplified issues in terms of enforcement with these species by mentioning dormice, where it is very difficult in a court of law to prove beyond reasonable doubt that a crime has been committed because the Act is not clearly defined, merely stating that proof is needed that the animal has been disturbed.
 - Added that it is very difficult to prove that dormice have been disturbed.
 - Moved on to discuss Great Crested Newts, informing members that they had been far more successful in dealing with disturbances of this species.

Explained that the difficulty with wildlife crime and prosecution was that the victim could not be interviewed, as the victim is always an animal.

- **Other issues**
- Bats is an area of concern. Much protection is afforded to bats and the police do get involved.
 - Cetaceas is a growing problem. Issues of disturbance with boat trips going on tours looking for dolphins are common. The difficulties lie in defining a place of rest of a dolphin, stating that regulations need to be amended.
 - Noted that poaching still goes on, and again, old Acts and regulations need to be brought up to date.
 - Offences on Sites of Special Scientific Interest – explained that this issue was to do with gaining consent to carry out operations on these sites, but in terms of enforcement it was very expensive for the CCW as they have to go through private solicitors.

- Illegal off-roading and use of 4x4s is a big problem, and can affect the work of farmers unable to reach their animals due to the devastation created by off road vehicles.
 - Plant crime suffers from under reporting, but this kind of criminal activity is active, with illegal moss collecting and plants taken for specialist collections noted as the greatest problems.
 - Finally, crimes against non-native species were highlighted as the offence which carries the biggest fine and sentence under the Countryside Act.
- **Illegal Trade in Endangered Species**
- Live animals such as parrots, tortoises and other exotic pets are often illegally traded.
 - Products are also a problem, with certain endangered species entering the country as forms of Chinese medicines, shatoash, illegal taxidermy, and bushmeat, adding that bushmeat has not been as great a problem as was initially feared.
 - Noted that in terms of smuggling, Customs were responsible at our borders to prevent smuggling. It is the police's responsibility to prevent the illegal sale of products and animals in the country.
 - Clarified that bear bile is a popular illegal product, as is rhino horn which is a product with a high value. Added that 96% of rhino horn has disappeared since 1970.
 - Mentioned *Operation Charm* which is targeting the Ivory Trade.
 - Commented on the problem of tourists buying illegal products and trying to bring them into the country – items like reptile remains.
- **UK Conservation Priorities**
- Conveyed to members that the police had historically been reactive when dealing with conservation and wildlife crime issues, but that Richard Brunstrom, Chief Constable of North Wales Police had decided that they needed direction, which led to the formation of a list of priorities.
 - The priorities decided upon on a UK level were
 1. Bat crime – elucidated that a large number of cases are seen, and that every control room now has a guide to help staff deal with enquiries and report, and that *Operation Bat* should be quoted by member if they were submitting information through this channel. Added that training and awareness raising programmes was offered by the police.
 2. Cites – outlined that this included crimes against tortoises, ivory, and Chinese medicines.
 3. Operation Artemis – this operation deals with hen harriers.
- **Welsh Conservation Priorities**
- Explained that a separate set of priorities had been decided upon which were Wales specific and that these are as follows:
 1. European Species;
 2. Illegal Burning;
 3. Illegal Off-Road.
- **Partnership for Action Against Wildlife Crime (PAW)**
- Informed the committee that he was involved with PAW, which comprised of a steering group and several smaller working groups formed from this group.
 - Explained that the group was trying to drive forward an approach to wildlife crime and included representatives from all areas – from enforcers to people involved in illegal trade – all trying to make sure that things are done properly.
 - Suggested to members that the group was working effectively because of its inclusive nature.

Concluded that he represented the police, as enforcers, but that they worked with and needed the help of experts to operate effectively.

Sgt Guildford explained that wildlife crime was never going to be a priority for the police, but they could still do a lot more to deal with the problem. He added that although things were getting better, there was a way to go, and the key to it all was a senior officer, like Richard Brunstrom in Wales, taking an interest and driving the agenda.

Questions and Comments from Members:

- Lorraine Barrett AM thanked Sgt Guildford for all his hard work, before referring to comments on cetaceans by stating that the Environment, Planning and Countryside Committee had received an enlightening presentation from the Environment Agency showing the enormous amount of traffic operating in the seas around Britain. She stated that this was certainly an issue for members to discuss further in the future with reference to the Marine Bill.
- Matt Collis questioned the use of private solicitors by the CCW in relation to Sites of Special Scientific Interest and asked if this was an unique circumstance. Sgt Guildford responded that the CCW are the only persons who can prosecute breaches on SSSIs, adding that the Crown Prosecution Service will not take on cases relating to such issues. He further clarified that the RSPCA also sometimes use private solicitors but it is a very expensive process. He affirmed that the CCW will only take cases as a last resort as they have to justify the expense.
- Roy Peckham stated that all members of the group were welfare aware and asked for information on what they could all do to help. Sgt Guildford urged members that they should report all information, trying to make the person in the control room aware that they need to notify the wildlife officer. He suggested that they gather as much information as possible, e.g. number plates and descriptions, which will allow officers to follow up the report. He also stressed that it was important to ask for an incident number as this creates an audit trail and ensures that the information has to be dealt with.
- Mike Sharratt referred to earlier comments that wildlife crime was a low priority with the police, but stated that, from his experience with badger diggers, people involved with wildlife crime are usually involved with all kinds of other crimes. He suggested that senior officers need to take this on board. Sgt Guildford agreed, and confirmed that he does try to “sell” this point. He also concurred that wildlife crime does act as a spin off to catch criminals wanted for other offences. Sgt Guildford referred to a recent report by *NatureWatch* which highlighted these connections.
- Sarah Marsh explained that she lived in West Wales in an area being over developed by house builders, who were showing little regard for conservation issues in the area. She questioned if enforcers worked with community groups to try and deal with the problems that were arising. Sgt Guildford explained that if issues arising were species orientated, then they should look to get their local wildlife officer involved. He also suggested they always look at Town Council Orders, and try to look at all the issues involved, explaining that if nests or protected trees were cut down it was very difficult to prove intention after the damage has been done. Nevertheless, if they got there first and informed the developers that they were not to do something, like cut a nest down, it was comparatively straight forward to get a prosecution. He added that some offences, like disturbing bat roosts, were absolute. In these cases it does not matter if the offence was intentional or not, but much of the time, it is necessary to prove intent.
- Claire Lawson referred to the Assembly’s Found Dead Badger Survey, asking if any information had been received by him from this exercise that was relevant to his work. Sgt Guildford replied that he had requested information on any suspicious or illegal evidence found through the survey. Around five reports were received, and these all related to incidents of snaring. Sgt Guildford praised the Government official he liaised with who was very co-operative.
- Claire Lawson offered her thanks on behalf of members to Sgt Guildford.

Session 2: Exotic Pet Welfare

Peter Heathcote, Herpetologist, The Exotic Animal Welfare Trust:

- Stressed to members that he was a Herpetologist and not a vet, and explained that he witnessed many curious ideas and practices about the welfare of exotic animals in through his role.
- Began by looking at owners of tortoises, explaining that people often don't even know what species of tortoise they are keeping, and are unaware that any tortoise kept in Britain is not native to the country.
- Explained that many misconceptions exist about tortoises and offered the example that some believe that their animal "needs a friend" or mate, when, in fact, tortoises kept in groups will fight, and if they do not fight, it is likely that they are sick.
- Added that tortoises also have a soft palate, and need a vacuum to suck water, noting that he has seen owners who think that their animal does not like or need water.
- Pointed out to members that fines for importing tortoises are very small and that this is a big problem, as there is little deterrent to stop importation.

Examples of Exotic Animals and their Needs and Dangers

- Explained that there are many ways to determine if exotic animals are fit and well, but also, the same criteria does not apply to all species of an animal.
- Highlighted that exotics are a specialist field, and therefore the expertise of persons like himself, who are not necessarily vets, is required.
- Pointed out that many animals, like reptiles, are opportunistic, and will, for example, eat dog and cat food if offered to them. Nevertheless, this food could kill them.
- Emphasised the importance of UV light for reptiles in order to survive, adding that the quality of this light is also important and that there are many poor quality lights on the market. Reptiles not receiving suitable UV light will develop Metabolic Bone Disease. Noted that the exotic animal world is highly politicized, mentioning that, as a result of an article written by himself being printed in a magazine, the publication was threatened with the withdrawal of all its advertisers.
- Looked at the welfare of iguanas, describing them as "not very intelligent" animals who would "eat anything that looks like a flower". Added that they like cool air, and have over seventy teeth, therefore able to cause nasty injuries.
- Stressed that keeping exotics *can* be very simple.
- Noted that a large number of snakes are kept as pets in the UK, which need to be treated carefully as they are potentially very dangerous. Offered examples of problems that can occur when snakes are kept as pets – if a snake is on a radiator and catches fire, it will not know for a long time it is burning as the nerve endings are dead having evolved and adapted to conditions in the wild.
- Explained that a large number of alligators and crocodiles are also kept in this country, adding that the two creatures are very different – alligators are generally friendly creatures who will only attack if you "splash around" in the water with them; this is seen as a direct challenge to adult male alligators.
- Compared mild natured alligators with Nile crocodiles, informing members that he has in the past seen these bad tempered creatures, who will kill, kept in a pet shop.
- Informed members that any animals recovered by his organisation were microchipped.
- Mentioned diseases that humans can contract from exotic animals, explaining that it was possible to contract salmonella from reptile faeces. Added that good hygiene will prevent the contraction of most diseases.
- Returned to a discussion of the UV spectrum, explaining that reptiles need exposure to different parts of the UV spectrum that is not visible to humans. Without this exposure, the animal will become stressed and badly behaved. Pointed out that you can measure how much UVB animals take in, and this can be used as evidence in court cases to prosecute against breaches of animal welfare regulations.

Questions and Comments of Members

- Lorraine Barrett AM asked for information on how many exotic animal experts there were in the UK.
- Mr Heathcote explained that there are only a small number of experts in the UK, a problem compounded by the threat to the physical safety of experts that regularly occurs in this politicized area.
- Mike Sharratt suggested it was difficult to understand why people would want to keep such dangerous animal, and asked if there were ways to stop them from being kept as pets.

- Mr Heathcote replied that it was very difficult to stop the ownership of exotic animals, and particularly the more dangerous species as the reptile fraternity are a very dangerous group of people who are known to initiate personal attacks against any person trying to change reptile licensing. He also explained that some people are sensible and keep the animals well, but a large group existed who focus on keeping the most dangerous animals, which was worrying, especially when no safety protocols are in place.
- Claire Lawson referred to the micro chipping of alligators by the Exotic Animal Welfare Trust, asking if this was a requirement, and also asked for information on the scope of experience and the kinds of animals dealt with.
- Mr Heathcote explained that micro chipping alligators was not a requirement but was something undertaken in order to trace what happens to each animal. He clarified that he deals with any and every part of the exotic animal spectrum.
- Roy Peckham agreed with comments made by Mr Heathcote that keepers of all animals can have a very poor knowledge of how animals should be kept and asked what could be done to take forward animals welfare by sharing ideas, experiences, and information
- Peter Heathcote noted that this was very difficult as it is necessary to be careful who you trust. He urged that information should be passed to the police, but warned that many members of welfare groups had links and passed on information to inappropriate hands, which could place informants in dangerous situations. He added that in the past he had received many threats and had been a victim of a number of attacks.
- Sgt Guildford agreed that some members, for example within PAW, had links to illegal activities and therefore there was an enforcement group within PAW that was restricted in its membership. He confirmed that he was very aware that information can go astray and there is a need to be very careful and filter information through the rights channels. Sgt Guildford explained to members that a five by five grading system was in place when it came to dealing with and appropriately using information – the highest grading is for information from a known and reliable source, where the information provided is accurate. This information then has a prescribed route of persons to whom it can be filtered. Sgt Guildford mentioned that National Wildlife Crime Unit, adding that it is essential to submit information properly through the right channels, and that a unit like this was the only way to deal with issues effectively.
- Lorraine Barrett AM offered her thanks to Mr Heathcote, saying that all members were grateful for persons like himself who work very hard and often put their lives and safety at risk.

Session3: Seal Clubbing/Hunting in Canada

Matt Collis, Parliamentary Officer, International Fund for Animal Welfare:

- Informed the members that the International Fund for Animal Welfare had been established in 1969 to campaign for an end to the seal hunt in Canada, but the organisation now had a much broader interest and influence across the world.
- Explained that the organisation now work on wildlife trade and marine campaigns, as well as being involved in animal rescue programmes, like oil spill clean ups. The organisation also involve themselves in community led welfare issues in developing countries.
- Noted that their ethos was to promote solutions that benefit humans and animals.

Canada's Seal Hunt

During his presentation, Mr Collis noted that:

- Canada's seal hunt is the largest mammal hunt in the world.
- Most of the victims of the hunt are seals under three months old.
- In terms of welfare, scientific evidence and veterinary reports support their point of view that the hunt is unacceptably cruel and 'fails to comply with basic animal welfare regulations'.
- 79% of hunters fail to check that the seal is dead before skinning the animal
- An Independent Vet Working Group has made eleven recommendations to make the hunt more humane.
- The key factor is the competitive nature of the hunt which leads to hunters taking shortcuts, and therefore IFAW believes, because of the quota the hunters have to fulfil and the speed with which they need to operate, that the hunt can never be humane.
- A major problem in term of welfare is the practice called "struck and lost", where the seals are wounded but sink or try to escape before the hunters get to them. The seals at this young age are unable to swim and therefore drown trying to escape. 26,000 seals die as a result of being "struck

and lost". This is a large number of animals, though not a large percentage of the overall number of animals killed during the hunt.

- The findings of Dr Mary Richardson say that animals in slaughterhouses, research laboratories and animals shelters would not die in such cruelty, which nullifies the excuse used by some in justifying the hunt that animals in other circumstances suffer in the same way and are not criticised on the same scale.
- The reason for the seal hunt is fashion, therefore it is unnecessary.
- One million seals have been killed in the last three years, and the risk of damage to the real population is alarmingly high. A report published in 2006 has revealed that the seal population could be depleted by 70 per cent in the next fifteen years. Due to the young age at which the seals are hunted, the damage to the seal population will not be apparent for as much as a decade.
- The situation is comparable to the cod fish collapse, and will, in the long term, cause problems for the sealers themselves as well as animals.
- The Department for Fisheries and the Ocean in Canada try to justify the hunt by saying that seals cause cod mortality, but harp seals only account for one per cent of large cod mortality. In addition, seals are a vital part of the marine ecosystem, and in the food web, marine mammals have an overall positive impact.
- The International Fund for Animal Welfare does not oppose the Inuit seal hunt and subsistence hunting. This hunt is ten per cent the size of the commercial hunt, and the animals are used for a way of life and are not left to suffer on the ice.
- In terms of the economics of the hunt, which has been used as a defence for the hunt, sealing is only worth \$16 million CAD. When compared with the \$400 million CAD for tourism, \$600 million CAD for fishing, and \$700 million CAD for mining, it is a tiny proportion of the economy of the region, and accounts for less than a half of a per cent of the GDP of the region.
- No one person is entirely reliant on the seal hunt. 15,000 seal licenses have been granted, therefore, on average, each sealer only makes five hundred pounds from the hunt.
- The Canadian Government gave \$20 million CAD initially in subsidies to make the hunt commercially viable. Although they do not directly subsidise the hunt any longer, they do subsidise equipment, like ice breakers, needed for the hunt. They also invest in researching for new markets for the product of the seal hunt and also pay to send experts to countries around the world to try and reverse international opposition to the seal hunt.
- The International Fund for Animal Welfare would like to see the Canadian Government act as it did following the cod collapse, and buy out the seal license holders. Given the small amounts of money involved, it is difficult to see why the seal hunt is worth doing, especially given the damage caused by it to Canada's international reputation, which could in the future impact on its economy.
- The reason that the hunt continues is largely due to the politics of the region – it is not about commercial factors. The Canadian Government felt the need to push sealing for the region following the seal collapse, especially as the region is a marginal constituency. Politicians in Canada are unwilling to criticise the sealing, as it could impact on their political positions.
- In terms of public opinion, the Canadian Government is refusing to listen to international opinion. Seventy nine per cent of people in the UK think that sealing should be banned, while seventy three per cent think that seal products should be banned in the UK.
- Two thirds of Canadians who expressed an opinion were opposed to the hunt.
- The International Fund for Animal Welfare is campaigning for a ban on seal products, which has a big market in Europe. This would send a powerful message to the Canadian Government, especially if the UK were to get involved.
- Some countries have already imposed temporary bans or have started the process to enforce a ban – these include Italy, the Netherlands, and Belgium.
- The European Union has looked at this issue previously and imposed a white coat ban, which includes seals hunted within 12 days of being born. The sealers have found a way to circumvent this obstacle and the ban now needs to be extended.
- There is increasing opposition to the seal hunt in Canada, and politicians and journalists who have been to witness the situation have called for a ban, with Ian Cawsey MP saying that it "needs to be ended, not understood".
- The 2006 hunt has raised particular issues
 - The Canadian Government imposed a 335,000 quota, which is the second highest ever quota;
 - There was a very mild winter, which affected ice conditions and forced seals to give birth at sea or on land, which creates a higher natural mortality rate. This was not taken into account by the Government;

- The Government said that the size of the seal population has increased. In fact, the population has merely recovered to its natural level. It is important to note that seals are self regulating animals and do not need to be culled.
- Increased opposition to the hunt resulted in the Canadian Government promising to increase the monitoring of the hunt – only twelve officials were there. Given that 100,000 seals were hunted over 100km area, twelve officers are not sufficient to monitor the situation effectively.
- The issue of sealing has received increase media coverage due to high profile visits by the likes of the McCartneys.
- Increased action is also being seen, with several countries implementing bans
- To summarize, the ban is unacceptably cruel, is impossible to monitor, and is not managed properly. There is growing global awareness and increasing opposition to the situation, which is costing Canada money.

Comments and Questions of Members

- Lorraine Barrett AM expressed her incredulity that the Canadian Government was allowing something so horrific to happen when it actually costs them money.
- Matt Collis agreed that it was difficult to see what was driving their continued support of the hunt, and that it all came down to the politics of the region.
- Sarah Marsh referred to the 15,000 licenses and asked if this was a realistic and accurate figure.
- Matt Collis replied that it is an official, accurate figure, but all holders of a license probably do not participate in the hunt. Mr Collis explained that the licenses are very cheap, and that some people seem to have purchased a licence as they think that the Canadian Government will buy them out, and therefore will make money from holding a licence.
- Alain Thomas noted that it was clear that the hunt was cruel and made no economic sense, but suggested that if the will existed to look for new markets, a ban would merely be symbolic.
- Mr Collis explained that the importance of a UK ban on products would be more symbolic than anything else. He added that the IFAW office in Canada was working to raise awareness in the country, but the situation is difficult, offering the example that a Green Party nationally opposed the seal hunt, but in the region where the hunt takes place, their candidates threatened to withdraw from the party.
- Mike Sharratt asked what the views of the Inuits were on the commercial hunt. Matt Collis responded that he was not in a position to speak on their behalf, but that they might be concerned that one ban may lead to another and eventually impact on their way of life. He emphasised that the IFAW were not opposed to the Inuit hunt, adding that it may be worth pursuing their views on the commercial hunt.
- Lorraine Barrett AM asked for clarification of what seal products were available.
- Mr Collis clarified that it was largely skin and fur, but that they were now trying to use seal produce to make oil as well as pushing it as a health product.
- Lorraine Barrett AM noted that the UK Government historically had strong links with Canada, and any action would be hugely symbolic. Ms Barrett added that the opposition was not yet as vociferous as it could be.
- Matt Collis agreed that opposition in the 1980s had been very high but at present, the problem had gone away from people's radar.
- Lorraine Barrett AM suggested that many people probably think that the hunt has stopped and added that celebrities were needed to help raise the public's awareness. She also asked what people in Wales could do to help.
- Mr Collis confirmed that the hunt was back with a vengeance. He suggested that in terms of Welsh specific action, one of the best things to do was to persuade the Welsh Members of the European Parliament to sign a written statement supporting a ban, adding that if half of all MEPs sign the statement, it automatically becomes a resolution.
- Lorraine Barrett AM confirmed that the APGAW group would write to the Welsh MEPs to ask them to sign the written statement, and that they would also write to the chairs of APGAW in Scotland and England asking for them also to take action.
- Matt Collis thanked the group, saying that it would be great if the UK were to lead an EU ban and that a joint letter from all groups would be very valuable.
- Claire Lawson mentioned the Respect for Animals Group and the physical threats they had received in their attempts to monitor the hunt in Canada, and asked if the IFAW had experienced similar problems. Matt Collis confirmed that this was the case, and that the same problems had been experienced by their representatives. Lorraine Barrett AM raised the difficulties in obtaining spectator permits to observe the hunt. Matt Collis questioned what they had to hide. He explained that when

representatives had been granted permits to observe the hunt, they had experienced large boats ramming them on unstable ice, putting the monitors in danger. The monitors were also not allowed within ten metres of the sealers, and that the sealers acted in ways to intimidate monitors and force them to move backwards away from their hostile advances.

- Sarah Marsh asked if signing online petitions was useful.
- Mr Collis explained that it was something that helped to demonstrate public support to politicians which would urge them to act. He also suggested writing to Members of Parliament to express their opposition to the seal hunt.
- Lorraine Barrett AM pointed out that this was an excellent issue for all politicians to campaign, and would engender much public support. Ms Barrett offered her thanks to Mr Collis for his presentation, saying that it had given members plenty of food for thought.

Session 4: Open Session on the Animal Welfare Bill and Future Topics

- Lorraine Barrett AM opened the session, saying that it had been a thought provoking day for the group, explaining that the aim of the final session was to discuss topics for the group to consider in the future, along with the forthcoming Animal Welfare Bill.
- Ms Barrett AM suggested that they should continue their work on greyhounds and Bovine TB, and asked for an update on the current situation regarding developments in the animal welfare of greyhounds, especially in the current climate following the high profile media coverage of the greyhound killing fields in recent weeks.

Greyhound Racing

- Alain Thomas explained that in Wales, draft regulations had been written for welfare in greyhound racing. These will be discussed over the summer, and Mr Thomas stated that Greyhound Rescue Wales was happy with this development.
- Lorraine Barrett AM clarified that greyhounds was one of the first issues that the All Party Group on Animal Welfare undertook. As a result of this initiative, a report was produced and a greyhound forum was established in Wales. Ms Barrett added that they had successfully arranged a round table discussion with the three greyhound tracks in Wales.
- Ms Barrett AM celebrated the fact that things have moved forwards significantly, and that this hard work and engagement with the racing organisers had helped to emphasise the fact that greyhounds need not be killed when they stop racing.
- It was explained that there is no National Greyhound Racing Council in Wales, and that all the tracks were independent, and that Alain Thomas represented Wales on the UK Greyhound Forum.
- Claire Lawson emphasised that the draft regulations that had been formulated were not in any way a legislative document, but were a 'wishlist' from the greyhound forum in Wales. She summarised what they would like to see implemented in Wales. Mrs Lawson informed members that they would be meeting with the Environment, Planning and Countryside Minister to discuss these regulations.
- Lorraine Barrett AM reminded members that the clerk for the Environment, Planning and Countryside Committee, as well as Ministerial officers and the Chief Veterinary Officer, were regular attendees to APGAW meetings. She explained that these officials looked to members for expertise and advice on what should be developing in Wales in terms of animal welfare. She stressed it was very positive that APGAW is able to work with the Government and the Environment, Planning and Countryside Committee, and that it aided them in taking issues forward.
- Ms Barrett AM mentioned, when the Animal Welfare Bill is enacted, there will be an obligation for all greyhound tracks to have a vet at every race, adding that this was a positive development.
- Alain Thomas explained to members that the obligation to have a vet at every track should lead to an improvement in the management of tracks, and ensure that they operate properly. Mr Thomas referred to the media attention that had occurred in England following the exposé of the practice of burning animal carcasses. He suggested that the open and honest process that had been seen in Wales in terms of engagement with race tracks would now probably be mirrored in England. Mr Thomas explained that, before this negative media attention, the National Greyhound Racing Council had been pushing for them to be able to self-regulate the industry, but that revelations will now place the Minister under more pressure to realise that self-regulation is not an option.
- Alain Thomas concluded that the example set in Wales needs to be seen as a model for England, and that they should and could in Wales push for improved conditions for racing greyhounds.
- Claire Lawson informed members that APGAW in England looked likely to be holding an event in London, and that the Minister had shown great interest in the event. She agreed that they in Wales

had set a good example, and a survey which was to be undertaken very soon was crucial to further developments.

- Lorraine Barrett AM confirmed that the Minister for Environment, Planning and Countryside would be issuing the survey, which was very positive as it would likely improve response rates.
- Claire Lawson praised the Assembly as a whole for helping, with Lorraine Barrett AM explaining that animal welfare was an issue that united all parties. Mrs Lawson suggested that the obligation to have a vet at all races should result in everything else falling into place.
- Ben Kind informed members that Lord Lipsey, of the NGRC has been very defensive with regard to the issue of regulation, and has suggested that tracks who are not members of the NGRC will not survive after the Animal Welfare Bill was enacted, and therefore that the NGRC should be able to self regulate. Mr Kind emphasised that many independent tracks did very well, and that they could indeed continue to thrive.
- Mr Kind agreed that the example had been set in Wales for England to follow, and that independent outfits could disappear “underground” if the right regulations are not implemented. He stressed again that the NGRC was still pushing for self-regulation, and, given the secretive nature of the greyhound industry, this would not be the best option to take.
- Claire Lawson stressed that they would be opposing self-regulation, adding that Wales was always going to act as a catalyst for the greyhound issue. She urged that they would expect to see the requirement to have a vet present as part of any regulations.
- Ben Kind suggested that the presence of a vet at race tracks might not be a requirement in England, especially if self-regulation is introduced. This would mean that independents would not have to ensure the presence of a vet at races.
- Claire Lawson closed the topic saying that Lorraine Barrett AM was going to place a statement of opinion before the Assembly, and asked any party representatives present to urge their members to subscribe to this statement.

Bovine TB and Badgers

- Mike Sharratt opened the discussion saying that the culling of badgers as a result of bovine TB was still a controversial topic, but that there was a general opinion in Wales that there would be no cull in the foreseeable future.
- Mr Sharratt explained that a public consultation had been undertaken in England and that forty thousand responses had been received, adding that there was an overall opposition to a cull.
- Mr Sharratt went on to inform members that a drop in incidences of bovine TB had been seen in Northern Ireland and England recently, and that this situation needed to be closely monitored, especially as there were suggestions that use of a different vaccine from the Netherlands might be responsible for the drop. He added that figures from the badger survey in Wales, which would be released in September, would also need to be considered carefully.
- Ifan Lloyd reminded members that pre-movement testing had been introduced this year, and that at this stage it would be difficult to ascertain the reason for any drop in cases, therefore it should be given a chance to implement properly to see if it was having an effect. If the drop continued and proved to be significant, a number of reactors should be being picked up, and stressed his hope that this was a genuine drop in cases.
- Mike Sharratt agreed with the suggestion that the movement of cattle was a key factor.
- Huw Thomas noted that the drop in incidences of bTB could be a result of a multitude of factors, explaining that Defra was looking at the drop in cases in certain areas, but were not sure as yet what was causing the reduction in cases, and that the different Dutch antidote being used might be the reason.
- Claire Lawson suggested that pre-movement testing should be given a chance.
- Huw Thomas agreed, saying that the variables had to be controlled to see what was making a difference. He acknowledged that it would be interesting to compare the figures for the incidences in bTB in England and Wales.
- Claire Lawson concurred that they should look back at these figures in the Autumn to see what impact pre-movement testing has had.
- Ifan Lloyd held that, although a drop had been seen in some areas, he did not see that the Dutch tubercoline was likely to be the influential factor, as this had been used in his region, and the incidences of bTB this winter had actually increased.
- Lorraine Barrett AM closed the discussion, saying that it was a case of “watching this space”.

Animal Welfare Bill

- Claire Lawson informed members that the Animal Welfare Bill would now roll over to the next Parliamentary session and the hope now was that it would be signed before November. This would mean that Defra would miss its October implementation date, and that this therefore would now be moved to April.
- Mrs Lawson explained that protocol in Wales was different, which meant that it could be implemented at anytime once the Bill has been signed. Nevertheless, she told the committee that they expected the law to be implemented in Wales in April as well, around the same time as it would occur in England.
- Lorraine Barrett AM confirmed to the members that the Government and Assembly would be officially separated in May, and a fast track system for making laws would be implemented.
- Matt Collis asked what regulations would likely come from the Assembly.
- Claire Lawson said that there were no published priorities in Wales. Mrs Lawson held that some “tweaks” have been mentioned by Ministerial officials that would be relevant in Wales, but that nothing officially had been decided, as yet.

Animal Welfare Network

- Claire Lawson announced that the Animal Welfare Network would launch at its inaugural conference on Wednesday, 6th September at Crickhowell.
- Mrs Lawson urged that with the new set of laws that were on the way for the animal welfare community in Wales, it was a time to stop infighting, and bring everyone together to show what could be done and how information and expertise could be shared. A website will also be launched.
- In terms of the structure of the conference, Mrs Lawson explained that the Welsh Assembly Government would be responsible for the afternoon session, looking at the Animal Welfare Bill as well as the Animal Health and Welfare strategy. Mike Radford’s attendance, a reader of law specialising in animal welfare, was also confirmed, with Mrs Lawson adding that he had very interesting ideas to share with the network.
- It was explained that, due to cost and numbers, at present, only one person per organisation could attend.
- Lorraine Barrett AM offered her thanks to all members for their attendance and input, and mentioned that she was looking forward to seeing what the network could and would achieve.

Rahel Jones
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