

The UK Centre for Animal Law (A-LAW):

Coalition of charities welcomes stiffer punishments for animal cruelty

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For immediate release

A coalition of leading animal welfare charities that have been pushing parliament to increase the punishment for cruelty cases, have enthusiastically welcomed the Animal Welfare (Sentencing) Act passing into law subject to royal assent.

The coalition - consisting of Battersea Dogs and Cats Home, Blue Cross, Cats Protection, Compassion in World Farming, Dogs Trust, Humane Society International, the International Fund for Animal Welfare, UK Centre for Animal Law, and World Horse Welfare - was brought together by The League Against Cruel Sports and RSPCA in June 2019.

They have been campaigning together to see maximum sentences for the most heinous crimes against animals increased from six months to five years, in line with sentencing policy across Europe and internationally.

In a joint statement, the coalition said: "It's nearly two years since we first went to Downing Street to call on Theresa May's government to bring this bill back to parliament, and more than five years since it was first proposed by Anna Turley, the then Labour MP for Redcar.

"Our coalition, representing the interests of millions of animal lovers across the UK, was determined to bring about this momentous change in law that will act as a deterrent. We finally have a punishment that fits the crime. It is a huge and long-awaited win for animals and the public alike.

"We heartily thank Chris Loder MP and Lord Randall of Uxbridge for their excellent work in getting this bill into law, as well as the Government and politicians on all sides of both Houses of Parliament who have signalled their commitment to animals in this bill."

Andy Knott, chief executive of the League Against Cruel Sports, said: "Animals need us to speak up for them, and our close collaboration lent them a voice that was both compelling and deafening. We now have a meaningful deterrence to protect animals from wilful abuse or cruel sports such as dog-fighting."

Peter Laurie, chief executive of Battersea Dogs and Cats Home, said: "After many years of campaigning, I'm delighted that the Government has listened to our coalition and finally increased maximum sentences from six months to five years for the worst animal cruelty offences. As a nation of animal lovers, the previous punishment was wholly inadequate."

Chris Sherwood, chief executive of the RSPCA said: "Our officers are faced with cases of the most unimaginable cruelty; from organised criminals making money from the suffering of animals, to pets starved, shot, stabbed, beaten to death and drowned. At least now, in those most shocking of cases, courts will be able to hand out sentences that truly reflect the severity of the crimes."

Lord Randall of Uxbridge, former Special Advisor on the Environment to then Prime Minister Theresa May MP, met with the coalition in June 2019, and has spearheaded the bill's passage through the House of Lords.

He said: "It is a much-needed measure that will now ensure that those who harm an animal by, for example, causing unnecessary suffering, mutilation or poisoning, face the full force of the law.

"I commend all of the charities involved for the weight and purpose that they brought to this campaign, to secure one of the most significant changes to animal welfare legislation since the Animal Welfare Act of 2006."

Ends

Notes to Editors

The 11 organisations at the meeting in 10 Downing Street on 24 June 2019 were represented by:

- Claire Horton, chief executive, Battersea Dogs & Cats Home
- Steve Goody, deputy CEO & COO, Blue Cross
- James Yeates, chief executive, Cats Protection
- Dr Nick Palmer, head of UK, Compassion in World Farming
- Paula Boyden, veterinary and campaigns director, Dogs Trust
- Claire Bass, executive director, Humane Society International UK
- David Cowdrey, head of policy and campaigns, International Fund for Animal Welfare
- Andrew Knott MBE, chief executive, League Against Cruel Sports
- Chris Sherwood, chief executive, RSPCA
- Paula Sparks, chair, UK Centre for Animal Law
- Roly Owers, chief executive, World Horse Welfare

For more information or interview requests please contact the League Against Cruel Sports press office on 01483 524250 (24hrs) or email pressoffice@league.org.uk.

To contact the individual charities involved, their contact details are:

- press@battersea.org.uk
- press@bluecross.org.uk
- media.office@cats.org.uk
- Media.team@ciwf.org
- pressoffice@dogstrust.org.uk
- Iroode@hsi.org
- info-uk@ifaw.org
- press@rspca.org.uk
- info@alaw.org.uk
- sudelve@worldhorsewelfare.org

If you have any questions or wish to contact a member of the A-LAW team for comment, please email info@alaw.org.uk.

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- A-LAW's mission is for a world where animal interests are fully protected by law.
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