

E-MAIL FROM: John F. Robins, Secretary, Animal Concern Advice Line (ACAL), c/o Animal Concern, Post Office Box 5178, Dumbarton G82 5YJ. Tel 01389-841111. Mobile: 07721-605521. Animal Concern Advice Line (ACAL) is a recognised Scottish charity: No. SC030982. Animal Concern Advice Line was established in 2001 to take on the charitable work of Animal Concern which was founded as the Scottish Anti-Vivisection Society in 1876.

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Hi All,

First my apologies to those waiting for replies to e-mails. Despite my spam filters I currently receive as many as 200 e-mails a day of which circa 100 require some sort of action which could take a few seconds or an hour or two depending on how much research is required before replying.

I am on the e-mailing lists of most organisations but many of you forward me your copies of e-mails from other groups. I get six or seven copies of some newsletters! Unless I ask you to forward a specific publication please don't send me them.

I've had to put two or three projects which are not time sensitive on hold for the moment and again my apologies to those of you who have collected photographs and other evidence for these campaigns. I will be dealing with these but I have to clear the decks a bit first. Things are not helped by the fact that I am Secretary to three limited companies and two charities all of which generate various amounts of administrative work which is more than time sensitive – I could get hit with a heavy fine if I do not meet fast approaching deadlines!

Early last year Dr. Richard Shelton, former head of the Government's Freshwater Fisheries Laboratory at Pitlochry, stated that he and his colleagues had known since 1989 that salmon and sea trout populations on the west coast of Scotland are being adversely effected by sealice from salmon farms. This is something which myself and many other people have always thought to have been the case but it was always denied by the Scottish Government. In April 2014 I made an FOI request to try and find out how much the Government knew about the problem while they were denying the problem existed. The Government sent me some documents but most of the material was so heavily redacted – I've never seen so much black ink on page after page – as to be useless.

I went through the lengthy appeal process and in August this year won the Freedom of Information battle to get the Scottish Government to release a lot more information. At the end of September I received a huge number of documents which I still have not had time to go through. I hope to get onto this before the end of the month and I'll let you know if the Scottish Government has been economical with the truth.

While on the issue of salmon farms there is something I'd like our American supporters and those of you who are supporters of international groups to do. Three years ago I asked the American Government to ban imports of salmon from Scotland under their Marine Mammal Protection Act. Basically this means that American salmon farmers cannot shoot seals and the American Government has the power to ban the import of salmon from countries where seals are shot by salmon farmers. It costs a great deal of money to put predator exclusion nets around salmon farms and only a few pounds to buy bullets to shoot seals. Only 13% of Scottish salmon farms have predator exclusion nets so the rest have a very unfair financial advantage over those that take the trouble to save seals rather than shoot them.

The United States Government department National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) are having a consultation on a new Proposed Rule: Fish and Fish Product Import Provisions of the Marine Mammal Protection Act. You can add your comment via this link:

<http://www.regulations.gov/#!submitComment;D=NOAA-NMFS-2010-0098-0035>

Anyone can comment but it is especially important that our supporters in the States make a comment and encourage other US citizens to do the same. If you are a supporter of another relevant organisation, especially US based or international groups, please ask them to make a submission.

Something very simple and to the point would do. Personalise it of course but here's an idea;

In Scotland Atlantic Salmon farmers and netmen who catch wild Atlantic Salmon are given Government licences to shoot both gray and harbour seals. This shooting cannot be called a last resort because the Scottish Government does not insist that salmon farms deploy predator exclusion nets. In fact only around 13% of farms in Scotland use predator exclusion nets. Scotland has globally important populations of both harbour and gray seals.

The main reason salmon farmers in Scotland prefer to shoot seals instead of installing predator exclusion nets is because to buy, install and maintain the nets costs tens of thousands of dollars per farm while bullets cost about twenty dollars a box.

Until such time as all Scottish marine Atlantic Salmon farms must by law use predator exclusion nets I ask the United States Government to ban the import of both farmed and wild Atlantic Salmon from Scotland. Such a ban will not only encourage the protection of seals in Scottish waters, it will protect American Atlantic Salmon farmers who, by installing and maintaining predator exclusion nets, are put at a distinct financial disadvantage while Scottish producers avoid those significant costs.

Another reason for writing is that I would like you, especially our Scottish supporters, to write a short e-mail to the Scottish Government on the hunting issue. If you are in Scotland please copy your e-mail to your MSPs whose e-mail addresses you can get here:

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/help/32438.aspx>

Here is a draft e-mail for you to personalise and send to the Environment Minister at the following e-mail address: scottish.ministers@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

Dr. Aileen McLeod MSP,
Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform,
St Andrew's House,
Regent Road,
Edinburgh EH1 3DG

Dear Minister,

I write concerning the all but useless Protection of Wild Mammals (Scotland) Act 2002 which was supposed to make fox hunting illegal in Scotland.

Prior to the passing of this Act police forces throughout Scotland were kept very busy on Saturdays during the hunting season. Sadly the police thought it was their job to protect the hunters and deny anti-hunt campaigners their legal right of protest. Some forces made a point of sending out several patrol cars, a couple of van loads of officers and even plain clothed officers to mingle with

demonstrators. Protestors were often arrested, taken to police stations and, once the hunt was over, released without charge.

One of the main problems with the Protection of Wild Mammals (Scotland) Act 2002 has been a total unwillingness by the police to police hunts. Thinking hunting had been banned the anti-hunt protestors stopped their demonstrations and forces that would use more than a dozen officers to police a Saturday hunt and arrest protestors couldn't be bothered to send a Bobby on a bike to check if the hunts were obeying the new law and only using their hounds to flush foxes out from cover to be killed by waiting guns.

Without saboteurs or police to keep an eye on them the hunts have never had it so good. When the police have been asked to police hunts the standard response has been that they will investigate if hard evidence of breaches of the Protection of Wild Mammals (Scotland) Act 2002 are brought to their attention. It has even been suggested that monitoring hunts would be a good way of training and exercising police horses but the mounted branch have not taken up that idea.

The failure of the Protection of Wild Mammals (Scotland) Act is perhaps best illustrated by the fact that since 2002 the number of active hunts in Scotland has risen from 10 to 11.

I understand that The League Against Cruel Sports has recently obtained video evidence which shows hunts flaunting the 2002 Act. I also understand that your Government has made a commitment to look at this issue again and revise the Act or introduce new legislation which will truly end the use of dogs to kill wild mammals.

It is doubtful if there is a need to "control" fox numbers. Even if there was, hunting with hounds simply cannot achieve that. It should be noted that a healthy ewe can see off a fox and foxes are far more likely to scavenge on afterbirth and stillborn or sickly lambs than healthy lambs. Far more sheep and lambs die of exposure or from being hit by cars than fall prey to predators.

Farmers who believe they have a problem with foxes most often kill them by lamping; shooting them at night using high powered lamps to illuminate their targets. The people who are most concerned with fox "control" or "management" are gamekeepers who treat anything which might eat pheasant (a non-native species) or grouse eggs and chicks as vermin. On July 3rd this year, when you attended the Young Gamekeeper of the Year Award at the Scottish Game Fair, you may have noticed that the recipient of the award said that "Vermin control is a big part of the job."

Gamekeepers kill foxes by shooting and the use of indiscriminate and cruel snares. They do not get on horses and chase them with a couple of dozen dogs.

Some farmers enjoy fox hunting and participate in it, tenant farmers often have no choice but to allow the hunt to cross their land but many farmers, fed up of the damage to crops and harassment of stock by hounds and hunters, ban hunts from entering their land. Hunting foxes with packs of hounds has never been a method of fox control or management: it has always been a bloodsport, a cruel and pointless pastime.

What we need in Scotland is a law which truly makes it illegal to deliberately use dogs to kill mammals. Several ways of achieving this are possible.

You could allow hunts to follow a scent laid by human volunteers. A drag hunt can lay a course which avoids dangerous obstacles (roads, railways, high fences) and steers clear of crops, livestock and private land. That way riders and their horses could enjoy a day out without killing. However given

that hunts have been ignoring the 2002 Act what guarantee would we have that a drag hunt would not hunt any foxes disturbed by their activity?

You could restrict to two or three the number of hounds allowed for the flushing out of foxes and fix a minimum of say five or six on the number of guns which must be deployed to kill any fox flushed out.

I would also suggest that it be made mandatory for all hounds, whether they be used to flush out foxes to waiting guns or for drag hunting, to wear a suitable muzzle while being worked.

I would be grateful if you could tell me how and when your Government is going to take forward plans to revisit legislation banning hunting with hounds.

Yours sincerely,

PS Can you also tell me when we are going to see the promised ban on the use of wild animals in circuses in Scotland?

Onekind have a petition you might want to sign:

<http://action.onekind.org/ea-action/action?ea.client.id=75&ea.campaign.id=42872>

Sadly this week I have used a lot of my time doing something I shouldn't have to. Criticising organisations which should be on our side. Read more on these links.

<http://www.sundaypost.com/scandal-of-animal-charity-fat-cat-scottish-sPCA-chief-s-230-000-pay-deal-as-animals-suffer-1.904425>

<http://metro.co.uk/2015/10/11/rspca-upsets-people-by-saying-seal-shooting-is-okay-5433578/>

<http://www.itv.com/news/2015-10-09/rspca-attacked-for-its-policy-on-seal-shooting/>

I'm going to be drowning in admin for the next week or two and will only be able to respond to very urgent matters.

No doubt I've forgotten lots of things but that's it for now.

Cheers,

John @ ACAL

PS One of the things I forgot was that Global Alliance Against Industrial Aquaculture (GAAIA) are arranging some demos based on the brilliant success they had using FOI to force the Scottish Government to publish the number of seals shot by area and most importantly by who was responsible for the shootings. They need volunteers for these events.

There's one in the Oban area on 28th October. Edinburgh on 30th October. London on 9th December and RSPCA HQ in Horsham, West Sussex on 10th December. More info from: <http://www.gaaia.org/>