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Animal Concern is a pressure group registered as a non-profit making Limited Company  
(Co. No. SC109126) established in 1988 as Animal Concern (Scotland) Ltd.  
It incorporates the Scottish Anti-Vivisection Society which was founded in 1876.

To supporters of Animal Concern, Animal Concern Advice Line and Save Our Seals Fund.

Dear Supporter,

First of all I'd like to be probably the last person to wish you a happy new year and all the very best for 2017.

I would also like to thank all who have paid their annual Animal Concern subscription and/or made a donation in the last few weeks. As usual I will not bank those cheques until later this month when most of the renewals should be in. Your continued support is greatly appreciated – the more members Animal Concern has the louder our voice for the animals.

On January 1st a new law came into force in Scotland requiring owners of airguns to obtain a licence (actually called an Air Weapon Certificate) from the Scottish Government. I know many of you lobbied hard on this over the years – it is something I have been campaigning on since I was with Friends of the Earth in the 1970s when singer Frankie Vaughn backed our campaign to have air weapons banned.

Although we did not achieve a total ban we have helped in a small way to get this new licensing scheme in place. The main driving force to achieve this was the campaign mounted after two year old Andrew Morton was shot and killed in Glasgow in 2005 by a drug addict armed with an air rifle.

Andrew and a few other people might be alive today if politicians had listened to us back in the 1970s, 80s and 90s.

It is estimated there are around 500,000 airguns in Scotland. About 19,000 have been handed in for destruction and about 11,000 people have applied for an Air Weapon Certificate. That leaves a gap of around 470,000 unaccounted for weapons! If you live in Scotland and you see anyone carrying or using an airgun (even in their own garden) please phone the police on 999 and tell them. Ask for an incident number and call back on 101 a few days later, quote the incident number and ask what the outcome was.

If you live outside of Scotland why not lobby your Government to follow the lead of the Scottish Government and legislate to control or ban air weapons?

Another victory to inform you of. I know many of you wrote to East Ayrshire Council to object to the application for a Dog Breeding License by a woman who intended housing forty breeding bitches in a converted stable block. As I said to you in an earlier e-mail there was little chance of our stopping the license being granted as the woman was trying to start a business which is perfectly legal throughout the UK. That very lucrative business is commonly known as puppy farming. Indeed in my submission to the Council I did not object to the application as such but to the fact that legislation covering the breeding of dogs is simply not fit for purpose.

Last Friday East Ayrshire Council Licensing Panel met in private to discuss the application. There was no-one more surprised than I when the Council announced;

“Today, Friday 6 January 2017, the East Ayrshire Licensing Panel met to consider an application for a dog breeding, or rearing establishment licence in respect of premises at New Intax Farm, Newmilns.”

“The Panel has decided to refuse the application and will not be making further comment, mindful that the matter may now be subject to an appeal to the Sheriff.”

This is a major milestone in the fight against puppy farming. I'm sure the applicant will appeal to the Sheriff Court and the decision taken there will be crucial. If the refusal to issue a licence is upheld it will set an important precedent outlawing puppy farms in Scotland. If the refusal is overturned it will add weight to our long standing call for a change in the laws covering the commercial breeding of dogs.

That's about it for the moment though I will be getting back to you later this week about a campaign which has failed leaving me very angry indeed.

Meanwhile I'm off to get rid of my main Christmas present – I've had a nasty toothache since December 24th!

Cheers 4 now,

John

PS Sorry if you are waiting for a reply to a letter or e-mail. Unless extremely urgent it is taking me about 10 to 14 days to respond.