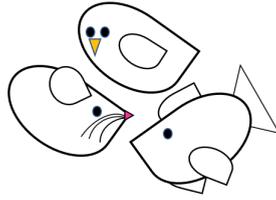


ANIMAL CONCERN



LEGISLATE TO LIBERATE

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Established in 1988 as Animal Concern (Scotland) Ltd.

It incorporates the Scottish Anti-Vivisection Society which was founded in 1876

To Lorna Slater MSP, Minister for Green Skills, Circular Economy and Biodiversity.
& Patrick Harvie MSP, Minister for Zero Carbon Buildings, Active Travel and Tenants' Rights.
The Scottish Government,
St Andrew's House,
Regent Road,
Edinburgh EH1 3DG

Dear Ms. Slater and Mr. Harvie,

First of all I'd like to congratulate you both on making history by securing positions within the Scottish Government. When I stood for election in Glasgow as a candidate for the Ecology Party it was hard to imagine there ever again being a Scottish Government, far less one containing members of a party dedicated to environmental issues.

It is one of Scotland's major environmental and animal welfare issues which prompts me to write. On September 1st Animal Concern employed Don Staniford as our Campaigns Manager. One of the agreements in his coming to work with us is that his excellent Scottish Salmon Watch initiative will continue as an Animal Concern campaign.

Within days of joining us Don uncovered what is one of the worse cases of animal cruelty and neglect I have seen in my 41 years with Animal Concern. Links below will take you to video, stills and Don's report on conditions at a Scottish Salmon Company fish farm on the West Coast.

I ask that when you view the video do not let the harrowing close-up shots of salmon being eaten alive by parasites distract you from what is in the background. There are two other things to look out for. Try counting the number of fish with white patches indicating they too are being eaten alive by sea lice. The salmon suffering a slow and painful death are not a tiny fraction of the number of fish in the sea cages. In some shots the majority of the fish are affected.

Look too at the state of the cage nets. Many seem to be heavily fouled by weed which restricts the flow of vital oxygenated water through the cages. This will adversely affect the health of the fish and may make them more prone to disease and parasite infestation.

Another thing Don discovered on his investigation is new to me. Steelhead Trout are being intensively farmed in Scottish waters. As you know millions of Atlantic Salmon have escaped from fish farms around our coast over the last few years. There is great concern over how these escapees will interact with native wild Atlantic Salmon. How much greater then the risk from escaped Steelhead Trout which are not even indigenous to our waters. They are more closely related to Rainbow Trout (also not native to Scotland) than to our native Seatrout which are a migratory species of our iconic brown trout. If Steelheads get into our river systems they could perhaps wipe out our native brown trout and seatrout.

Salmon farming is inherently cruel, extremely polluting, environmentally damaging and, as we have forced the industry to admit, unsustainable. Despite this the Government you are now part of are encouraging the industry to expand! Total and utter madness.

I was heavily involved in having the sentience of fish recognised in the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006. Indeed Ross Finnie could not have launched that Act by declaring an end to giving goldfish as prizes had I not corrected the person drafting the legislation who was convinced giving goldfish as prizes was already illegal in Scotland. In fact it had only been restricted in certain areas where we had persuaded local authorities to insert a “no goldfish as prizes” clause into site leasing agreements with travelling fun fairs.

Sadly, despite there having been many obvious breaches of the 2006 Act by salmon farmers, not one fish farmer has faced prosecution. I have almost given up reporting cases of fish farm neglect and cruelty to “the proper authorities” as not one of them seems interested in taking any action.

I now ask you both, as members of the Scottish Government, to call for the fish farms shown on the links below to be investigated with a view to prosecution under the Animal Health & Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006. Could also find out who, if anyone, within the Scottish Government takes responsibility for overseeing fish farming in Scotland?

Ms. Slater, as your remit includes the Circular Economy and Biodiversity, I ask you to dissuade the Scottish Government from continuing to support and promote salmon farming as it is most definitely not a sustainable industry. Indeed it is responsible for helping deplete wild fish stocks as it takes perhaps three to five kilos of wild fish to make the food pellets needed to produce just one kilo of farmed salmon. I ask you to also find out who is responsible for permitting the factory farming of Steelhead trout in Scottish waters as, should this alien species join the millions of salmon which routinely escape from salmon farms, it would create a major biodiversity risk by threatening the very existence of our native brown trout and sea trout.

I look forward to your reply in due course.

Sincerely,

John F. Robins,
For Animal Concern.

<https://donstaniford.typepad.com/my-blog/2021/09/videos-of-welfare-abuse-at-the-scottish-salmon-company-in-loch-carron-west-strome-salmon-farm.html>

<https://donstaniford.typepad.com/my-blog/2021/09/breaking-news-horror-videos-reveal-welfare-abuse-inside-scottish-salmon-trout-cages.html>

<https://donstaniford.typepad.com/my-blog/2021/09/welfare-complaint-vs-the-scottish-salmon-company-in-loch-carron-west-strome-salmon-farm.html>