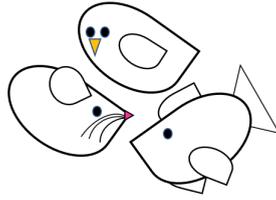


ANIMAL CONCERN



LEGISLATE TO LIBERATE

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Established in 1988 as Animal Concern (Scotland) Limited we changed our name to Animal Concern in 1992 as several of our campaigns were international.

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

Dear [REDACTED],

Many thanks for your prompt reply and for taking a real interest in this issue.

As you know there was a lot of consultation before the Hunting with Dogs (Scotland) Bill was drafted yet it still contains the very real possibility that a Government Licence will be created to allow the number of dogs used to flush out foxes to be increased above the suggested two hound limit.

When the current laws against fox hunting were being drafted I supported a switch to Trail Hunting as I knew people who would go out and ride to hounds once the blood thirsty element was eliminated. I said publicly in articles for the press that Trail Hunting could avoid dangerous situations such as out of control or "rioting" hounds causing accidents on roads and railway lines, running through fields of livestock and crops, invading gardens and killing pet cats and dogs – events which were not that infrequent.

Trail Hunting can also avoid taking riders over dangerous ground and avoid high fences, cattle grids, cliffs, quarries and the like.

Trail Hunting was permitted under the new laws, but it was recently proved in a criminal court in England that top hunt officials encouraged hunters to use this loophole to continue killing foxes illegally. If we leave another loophole, a Government Licence allowing more than two dogs to be used, I am convinced fox hunters will exploit that loophole too. They have had their chance to continue riding to hounds and they have blown it big time.

I was brought up in the countryside and could walk ten miles or more from my back garden without crossing a metalled road. I could tie my own fishing flies before I was 8 years old and, I believe, still hold the record for the biggest brown trout caught in a local lochan. It was at that lochan I watched as the local fox hunt put up an otter and encouraged their pack to follow, catch and rip it apart as they screamed at me, a child on my own, to get out of their way.

Many years later I was whipped by a Master of Hounds as I tried to tell him that a young girl, out to be blooded with other members of her Pony Club, was in danger of falling off her pony as her tack was not properly secured.

On another occasion a farmer in Stirlingshire shouted to the police to “Get those f’ing idiots off my land!”. The police moved in to remove me and others who were spraying anti-mate along the field margin to disguise the scent of a fox the hunt was following. The farmer shouted again, “Not those f’ing idiots, the ones on the horses who are chasing their dogs through my pregnant ewes.”

I note from your reply that you would be “...happy to meet with the Scottish Countryside Alliance to discuss further, and I will ask my team to reach out to them to arrange a meeting as soon as possible.”

The Countryside Alliance (CA) was established to combat early attempts to ban fox hunts. They do not speak for me or for most country people. You might as well first seek advice from the works of Hans Christian Andersen and the Brothers Grimm. My tongue is not far in my cheek when I suggest this.

During the passage of the original anti-hunt Bill at Westminster CA supporters spread a story around the House of Lords about how anti-bloodsports protesters had attacked three anglers near Callander and thrown them off a bridge into the River Teith where the elderly gentlemen nearly drowned. This story gained credence in the Lords and may well have influenced voting on the Bill both there and in the Commons.

A somewhat cynical journalist at, if I remember correctly, what was then the Sunday Herald, wondered why he had not heard about what would have been a major story in Scotland. A bunch of protestors grabbing three men and hefting them over a bridge into a river? The journalist contacted Central Police, the local angling club and River Board and, of course, made enquiries at local pubs. Turns out this was one very fishy story which no-one could corroborate.

If you do have a meeting with the CA I suggest you pop a wee drum of salt in your pocket first. You might want a very large pinch of that salt if the CA want you to swallow the myth that mounted fox hunting controls fox numbers. It does not. It's simply a recreational activity which disrupts the countryside and can result in the cruel death of a fox. In some areas hunts have created artificial fox dens and have even brought in foxes from other areas to make sure they had foxes to chase and kill.

There is one amendment to the Bill which I would like you to consider putting forward. The idea of the Bill is to allow those who seek to control foxes to use two dogs to flush foxes out of cover towards waiting guns. Those dogs should not be chasing foxes for any distance. I would like to see a provision in the Bill making it compulsory for any dogs used for this purpose to be muzzled to prevent them being used to bait or attack foxes or other wildlife they might come across.

Yours sincerely,

John F. Robins,
For Animal Concern