

Animal Welfare Update!

From Mike Hancock, MP - Autumn 2001



Mike Hancock campaigning against hunting at the New Forest hunt.

The Hunting Bill - The Saga Continues

Portsmouth South MP, Mike Hancock has called on the Government to ensure that enough parliamentary time is now given to an anti-hunting bill. The Queen's speech which sets out the Government's programme for the next Parliament said that "The Government will enable a free vote to take place on the future of hunting with dogs." And Tony Blair during the General Election said "It is important since the present Bill has fallen that we bring it back."

Mike Hancock said "It is clear that the vast majority of MPs in the last Parliament wanted a total ban of hunting with foxes and the situation cannot have changed much in the new Parliament. It was a tragedy that there was not enough time in the last Parliament for the bill to go through. Now there must be sufficient time for a bill to be able to go through all its stages."

And he added "It is clear that the vast majority of MPs want hunting with dogs to be banned. There should be no more shenanigans and the will of MPs shouldn't be denied this time by parliamentary manoeuvres."

What has happened so far:

Michael Foster introduced a Private Member's bill to ban hunting - which failed due to lack of Parliamentary time. The Government then introduced a bill with 3 options. The voting at the first stage was:

Keep The Current Situation

Yes - 155 No - 399

The "Middle Way" (hunting to stay but be licensed)

Yes - 182 No - 382

A Total Ban

Yes - 387 No - 174

So there was an overwhelming majority for a total ban but the bill ran out of time.



I hope you find this update on animal welfare issues informative. I would welcome any comments or

feedback. Please write to my constituency office at 1A, Albert Road, Portsmouth PO5 2SE, phone 023 9286 1055 or email portsmouthldp@cix.co.uk
- Mike Hancock, MP

News in Brief

Campaigning for Animal Welfare

Mike Hancock has been active recently in supporting Early Day Motions (effectively parliamentary petitions that only MPs can sign) on Animal Welfare issues. These include:

Ban dog or cat fur products

This EDM calls for a ban on the import and export of dog and cat fur and products made from them.

The USA has recently banned the importing of importing of dog and cat fur products so that more may be imported into the UK and EU without consumers being aware.

Bear Baiting in Pakistan

This EDM condemns bear baiting in the Punjab and Sindh regions of Pakistan. While it was declared illegal there in 1998, it is still a problem.

There are only an estimated 300 bears left in the wild there. Mike wants our government to work with the Pakistani authorities to co-operate with the World Society for the Protection of Animals and confiscate beats and place them in the WSPA's purpose-built sanctuary.

Animal Welfare in Parliament

Updating laws to protect animals



Mike Hancock has supported the call by the leading animal welfare charity, the RSPCA for the Protection of Animals Act to be updated.

This is the most widely used piece of legislation for prosecuting animal cruelty offences.

Now Mike wants to see the creation of an offence “likely to cause unnecessary suffering.” This would allow inspectors to intervene to help domestic pets and others kept in unacceptable conditions.

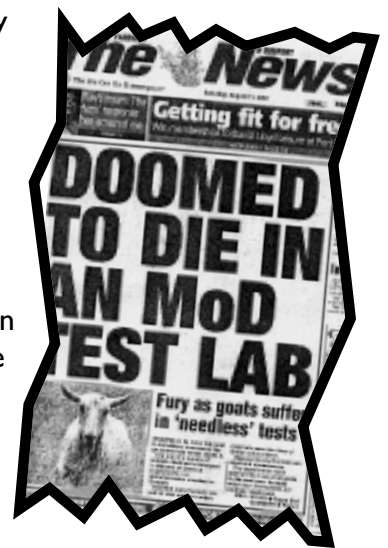
He wants a definition of suffering to include impairment of an animal’s “natural physical, social or emotional development.

This would protect animals from being tethered without access to shelter, food or water.

At the moment police have to get permission from the owner to enter premises if they suspect cruelty to animals. Mike wants them to be able to get a warrant to enter a premises if the reasonably believe that animals are being treated cruelly. And he wants them to have the power to confiscate animals that are suffering.

“Ban Experiments on Goats”

Mike Hancock is demanding that the Ministry of Defence (MoD) stop carrying out “needless” experiments on goats. His questioning in Parliament revealed that the MoD has killed 55 goats since April last year. Two goats died during the tests, three more were put down suffering from the bends and 50 were killed when experiments on them had finished under Home Office guidelines on animal testing. But Mr Hancock says that the experiments are unnecessary. The French - experts in diving have stopped animal tests. He said “The French realise there is little to be gained from these tests and have stopped them.” Penny Hawkins, the RSPCA’s senior scientific advisor said “Any animal in an unnatural situation will suffer serious stress. A goat is used to open spaces, running around in a herd with other goats. Putting it in a confined space will be very stressful.”



● How the News reported on the unnecessary experiments on goats highlighted by Mike.

Sale of St Bernards to dog meat farms

Mike Hancock has backed a parliamentary motion condemning the exporting of St Bernard dogs from Europe to China as breeding stock for dog meat farms. The demand for St Bernards is growing due to their size and rapid growth rate. Mike wants the Government to work with the Word Society for the Protection of Animals to ensure dogs in the dog meat trade suffer no cruelty and St Bernards are not sold for meat

Badger Baiting

Mike Hancock has supported calls for a clampdown on badger baiting. He wants to see badger baiting become a recordable offence and for it easier to bring a prosecution against badger baiters.

Cosmetics testing

Mike Hancock is backing an RSPCA-backed plan to ban the sale of new cosmetic products tested on animal across Europe. Euro-MPs recently rejected a European Commission plan as inadequate.

Better conditions for Pigs

Mike Hancock has welcomed news that the European Parliament has endorsed proposals by European Agriculture Ministers to improve the conditions of pigs on farms. Once adopted by member states, the new laws will make it illegal to put pregnant sows in restrictive individual stalls. At other times, sows will have to be kept in larger pens with more room to move and it will be unlawful to tether them.

Mike said “The UK and some other EU countries already have relatively high standards of protection for pigs and have been phasing out the use of restrictive individual stalls for a number of years. As a result, farmers in these countries have been placed at a competitive disadvantage in comparison to those in other EU countries where standards are lower. These new rules will ensure that higher standards of living for pigs are observed throughout the EU and at the same time will help to alleviate any competitive disadvantage experienced by local farmers.”