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

Dear Supporter,

As you may know we have been campaigning for many years to have all animal rescue, rehab and rehoming organisations licensed and monitored to ensure they all meet high minimum standards of animal welfare and public safety. Regretfully this will mean that the good guys will have to deal with the red tape just as the bad guys will.

The Scottish Sun on Sunday has today launched a "Sort Our Shelters" campaign with a petition calling on the Scottish Government to license animal rescue centres. Animal Concern Advice Line is backing the Sun campaign and I urge you all to please sign the Scottish Sun petition and to circulate this e-mail to encourage others to do the same. You will find the petition via this link:

<https://www.thescottishsun.co.uk/news/434427/join-our-battle-to-end-pet-refuge-cruelty-so-dogs-like-ozzie-dont-die-in-vain/>

So why are we calling for this? Over the years I have dealt with many cases of animal "rescuers" who were doing animals no favours at all. Nearly 30 years ago journalist John Nairn and I spent a couple of days camped on the roof of a block of high rise flats in Clydebank photographing people thought to be stealing cats to sell to vivisection laboratories. What we found were two eccentric elderly brothers who were "rescuing" what they thought were feral cats and keeping them in sheds on a piece of wasteland enclosed by high fences. The old blokes couldn't afford veterinary fees and the rescued cats were riddled with parasites, illness and untreated injuries.

I've personally visited similar set-ups from the north of Scotland to the Norfolk coast. Each time the report was that cats were being taken for vivisection when they were actually being kept by hoarders.

One problem with exposing such operations is that on several occasions other organisations have moved in and put down the animals instead of spending the money needed to treat them and rescue them from their "rescuers". Licensing all rescue groups would make them more accountable for their actions.

I also dealt with two cases involving greyhound "rescuers". One in West Dunbartonshire and one in Fife. In both cases it was alleged that people were offering to find good homes for some of the very many unwanted greyhounds which prove to be unsuited to greyhound

racing. The Fife “rescuer” was selling his rescued greyhounds to a vivisection laboratory in Switzerland and the good home the West Dunbartonshire dogs were going to was a laboratory on the top floor of a building at Glasgow Western infirmary where they also died in painful experiments.

We have had successful campaigns against the big animal rescue groups. After being approached by disgusted trainee Inspectors we exposed and stopped the Scottish SPCA practise of making trainees at Bothwell Bridge kill healthy animals with captive bolt pistols. We successfully campaigned against the use of electrocution cabinets to destroy stray dogs at Dundee Council Brown Street stray dog kennels and what was then Glasgow Dog and Cat Home.

We condemned the SSPCA for killing healthy dogs at their Milton Animal Welfare Centre to make room for stray dogs brought in under a financial contract with the local Council. I am sure it was our work on this which persuaded the SSPCA to introduce a no-kill policy and set aside a budget to use commercial kennels when their own facilities are full.

Sadly the big organisations still make mistakes. Only a few weeks ago the SSPCA wrongly identified a snake as venomous and then, instead of rehoming it appropriately, killed it by freezing it to death, a method they admit was not suitable.

The Scottish SPCA used to be all for licensing of animal rescuers and rehomers but we have not heard a great deal from them on the subject since we insisted that licensing should not be administered by either the SSPCA or local authorities (which have a legal duty to deal with stray dogs) but by a new department or agency answerable to Government.

Today one of the biggest problems is that highlighted in the Sun. People without a clue about what they are doing trying to rehome dogs and making a cruel and dangerous dog’s dinner out of it. Over the last twenty years, thanks to the macho man mentality, thousands of dogs have been bred, trained and deliberately mistreated to enhance their power and aggression. To identify, retrain and appropriately rehome these animals takes skill, time and money. It cannot be left to well-meaning but ignorant amateurs or, worse still, to people out to make money out of the situation.

Since before the passing of the useless Dangerous Dogs Act in 1991 I have been calling for comprehensive legislation to cover all aspects of dog welfare including breeding, sale and rehoming. This would stop puppy farming and create high minimum standards of animal welfare and public safety through licensing and inspection.

To achieve this MSPs and MPs must act in a new way. Instead of yet again trying to produce a quick fix without upsetting anyone they must take the time needed to produce effective legislation even if it does not gain the approval of the pet trade and all the animal rescue organisations. If they do not animals will continue to suffer and people will be killed by dogs rehomed irresponsibly.

I hope you will back this initiative.

Cheers 4 now,

John

PS I nearly forgot to tell you about the failed Save Our Seals Fund campaign I mentioned in my last e-mail. I'm not taking it sitting down (well actually I am; I cannot type standing up) and you can find out more about it by going to <http://www.animalconcern.org/news.htm> and clicking on the news item link for January 11th - let me know if you have any problems accessing this link.