



# ANIMAL CONCERN

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1<sup>st</sup> November 2005

To all MSPs on the Cross-Party Group on Animal Welfare.

Dear MSP,

For over 18 months we have been in correspondence with SEERAD over the legality of the method of issue of the various licenses required to take or kill “pest” species of birds.

The SEGEN10 General License allows people to kill 13 species of bird, including several species whose numbers are in decline. Under sections 16(1) (d) and (i) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 this license should only be issued after the relevant Minister has consulted with SNH and once the Minister is satisfied that “there is no other satisfactory solution.” Indeed it states this on the License.

Under a Freedom of Information search we discovered no-one from Ross Finnie’s office has ever consulted with SNH prior to issuing a SEGEN10 General License. As members of the public can simply download a signed and authorised license from the SEERAD website, no checks are carried out to ensure that “there is no other satisfactory solution” and there is no check to ensure cullers know how to kill birds humanely.

If you go to <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Environment/Wildlife-Habitats/16330/4827> , and click on the link second from the bottom of the page you too can download a SEGEN License and nip out with your airgun and shoot a few sparrows.

No records are kept and there is no requirement for those who download licenses to report back on the species or number of birds killed.

We are convinced these licenses are being issued illegally but SEERAD do not agree with me. They reckon that if they consult with SNH (our Freedom of Information search did not even indicate this was happening) before putting the Licenses on the website that is OK. This is utter nonsense as, unless someone at SNH has mystical powers, they cannot determine whether or not there is an alternative to killing birds unless they know the individual circumstances which have led the applicant to seek a License.

The current situation encourages unqualified and untrained people to kill birds and gives people an excuse to own and use airguns.

We would be grateful if, either within the cross-party group or as an individual MSP, you could look into this issue with a view to forcing SEERAD to issue these Licenses properly and stop them handing them out like blank taxi receipts.

Yours sincerely,

John F. Robins,

For Animal Concern