

E-MAIL FROM: John F. Robins, Secretary and Campaigns Consultant, Animal Concern, Post Office Box 5178, Dumbarton G82 5YJ. Tel. 01389-841-639, Mobile: 07721-605521. E-MAIL: animals@jfrobin.force9.co.uk Website: <http://www.animalconcern.org/> 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 supporters of Animal Concern, Animal Concern Advice Line (ACAL) and Save Our Seals Fund (SOSF),

Hi,

At the end of this rather lengthy e-mail you will find links to some important on-line petitions I hope you will sign and draw to the attention of any friends and family who may be sympathetic. If you get fed-up reading what I have to say just jump to the e-mails and deal with those.

It has been a while since I wrote to you quite simply because I've not had anything positive to tell you.

After the First Minister appointed Roseanna Cunningham MSP as Scotland's first dedicated Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change & Land Reform I wrote to Ms Cunningham.

Responsibility for animal welfare is included in her portfolio so I asked the Cabinet Secretary if she could give me updates on several outstanding issues I had raised with various previous Ministers.

Among the questions raised I asked when we might expect the long overdue promised ban on using "wild" animals in circuses in Scotland.

I again asked that a close season be introduced to stop the shooting of lactating beavers and the death by starvation of orphaned kits. A decision on the long-term future of beaver in Scotland was due at the end of last year but has been postponed to the end of this year. Farmers and keepers are making the most of the fact that beaver currently have no legal protection in Scotland and are trying their best, seemingly with the silent approval of the Scottish Government, to wipe out the beavers before they are given any legal protection. Since scientific evidence revealed that lactating beavers were being shot I have repeatedly asked that interim protection be given to cover the time it is taking the Government to reach a long-term decision.

I reiterated my request that the Government ask the Scottish Gamekeepers Association if any of their members have been convicted of wildlife crimes before they continue to use the SGA as an adviser on preventing wildlife crimes.

Once again I requested that action be taken to stop Government advisory boards on animal issues being heavily weighted in favour of those who exploit animals.

I repeated my request for a consultation into the General License system which allows people to kill an unlimited number of over 20 species of native birds simply by reading and complying with a licence which is published on the internet.

I requested that before permission is given to kill protected ravens farmers be asked to send carcasses of dead lambs to the Scottish Agriculture College for autopsy to determine if they had been killed by ravens or, as many suspect, died due to poor farming practises and then eaten by ravens.

I also asked the Cabinet Secretary if she could take a decision on whether or not to make the Ythan Estuary a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) for seals as, since the consultation on this closed last year, a major problem has arisen with visitors wandering through the seal colony and disturbing the animals leading to pups being separated from their mothers.

My e-mail to the Minister was sent on June 13th. On 7th July Ian Walker, a civil servant at Marine Scotland, sent me a reply.

He had "nothing to add" to his previous correspondence on seals.

On beavers he could "only repeat what was said in reply to my e-mail of 7th July to the First Minister".

He told me that the best way to ban wild animals from circuses "is currently under investigation."

He said it was "entirely appropriate" to issue site specific licenses to control ravens in areas where ravens are "a particular problem.". He ignored my call for lamb carcasses to be examined before blaming ravens for killing them.

On the General Licence system he reminded me the annual consultation on this would be announced soon – this has absolutely nothing to do with the review of the whole system of granting such licences which I have called for.

Mr. Walker failed to respond to my concerns over the SGA and the bias in Government advisory bodies.

Having once again checked my birth certificate for references to fruit freighters and the River Clyde I wrote again to Roseanna Cunningham and asked if I could have some proper answers to my questions.

On 1st August John Gray of the Wildlife Management Team of the Natural Resources Division at the Directorate for Environment and Forestry in the Scottish Government replied. It shows you the influence organisations like the Scottish Gamekeepers Association have on

the Scottish Government when the Government has a Wildlife Management Team. In his reply Mr. Gray told me;

“In your letter you raised a concern over the bias in stakeholder groups which advise the Scottish Government. Part of the strategy to tackle wildlife crime in Scotland is via the Partnership for Action Against Wildlife Crime in Scotland (PAW Scotland). This Government led group of stakeholders rightly includes conservation NGOs, land management organisations and law enforcement bodies. We believe that tackling wildlife crime requires input from all of the relevant stakeholders in this area and PAW Scotland is the right forum for that. Changing attitudes and driving change requires involvement across the board and excluding certain partners will not help to bring about the change that is required.”

This sounds good but means little as my original question was about the bodies advising Government on changes to wildlife related legislation, not on the make-up of PAWS which is there to help implement those laws, not create them. Incidentally PAWS includes 7 organisations which protect wildlife and 11 which participate in or encourage killing wildlife.

On the SGA Mr. Gray said; “Turning to your point about members of the Scottish Gamekeepers Association (SGA) having been convicted of wildlife crime, I can confirm that we are aware that there have been members expelled from the SGA in the past. The expulsion of members from a membership based representative body is not a matter for the Scottish Government, but for that organisation.”. Again I must disagree. The Government should not be heavily reliant on advice on wildlife crime from an organisation whose members have committed wildlife crimes.

On beavers Mr. Gray once again gave the official line; “The potential formal reintroduction of beavers raises complex issues around their management and legal protection. Scottish Ministers are considering these issues carefully before making a decision on the future of beavers in Scotland later this year.” Yet again my request for protection of beavers during the lengthy decision making process on long-term reintroduction has been totally ignored.

On shooting ravens Mr. Gray said; “Evidence of serious damage occurring, or likely to occur, must be provided before consideration will be given to granting a licence.” Once again my request for autopsies on lambs supposedly killed by ravens has been ignored. Lamb autopsies would provide real evidence as to whether or not ravens kill lambs.

Tomorrow morning, between circa 1am and 4am, we can expect (clouds permitting) to see one of the best Perseids meteor showers for hundreds of years. Thirty years ago this week my kids and I spread a groundsheet in a field and layback and watched the meteors streaking across the night sky over the Trossachs. In the morning when we rolled up the groundsheet we discovered we had spread it on top of the deposits from a herd of young male cattle. Sorry for digressing but it's strange how those e-mails from the Scottish Government reminded me of that.

I am going to give it one more try and when I regain the will to live I shall write once again to Roseanna Cunningham and put my questions to her for a third time. At the moment I'm not

even sure she receives my e-mails. Perhaps they are intercepted by non-elected civil servants who like to run the country their way and don't want democratically elected nuisances interfering? No, that couldn't happen – could it?

Talking about tomorrow – it's the Inglorious 12th of August when a lot of Hooray Henrys and a few Hooray Henriettas are allowed out for the day to play with their Purdeys and their Churchills. For the best part of a year members of that good old Government advisory body the Scottish Gamekeepers Association have been managing moors to ensure there are as many grouse as possible to stop some of the tonnes of lead shot polluting the environment. Managing moors means massacring just about anything that might include grouse or grouse eggs and chicks in their diet. These guys and gals even kill mountain hares by the hundreds because they think that will reduce the number of ticks which prey on the young grouse. You don't need to be Brain of Britain to realise that if you kill off the mountain hares the ticks are going to have to look for new hosts and the grouse will do nicely thank you.

To mark the Inglorious 12th please, if you have not already done so, sign these petitions and circulate them to any sympathetic contacts. Also look out for articles in the press and send in letters to the Editor explaining why the 12th of August is far from glorious.

Scottish Government: State regulated licensing system for gamebird hunting in Scotland
<https://www.parliament.scot/GettingInvolved/Petitions/PE01615>

UK Government: Ban driven grouse shooting
<https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/125003>

<https://you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/no-moor-management-for-grouse-shooting-on-two-national-trust-estates-in-derbyshire>

I had some other petitions I was going to pass on to you but a day or two after I signed them I received begging letters and phone calls from commercial fundraising companies looking for standing orders. These piss me off and I'm not going to encourage them. I'm also getting p'd off receiving hints and tips from fundraising "professionals" telling me how to exaggerate our campaign "successes" and use lots of clever tactics to squeeze as much money as possible out of our supporters. If I wanted to con people I'd have become a political spin doctor, a civil servant or a politician.

If you can afford to support our work with a donation or standing order it is much appreciated but I don't want anyone to give any more than they can comfortably afford. What I would ask is for non-members to consider joining Animal Concern (subs from £2 to £10 a year – see the website) so that when asked I can say I'm working on behalf of X number of people (only circa 200 just now).

As well as signing the petitions could you please send a brief e-mail to:

Roseanna Cunningham MSP,
Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change & Land Reform,

The Scottish Government,
St. Andrew's House,
Regent Road,
Edinburgh,
EH1 3D scottish.ministers@gov.scot

Please ask her to:

- 1: Ban the use of electric shock dog collars in Scotland.
- 2: Move forward the reviews on hunting with hounds, wild animals in circuses and designating the Ythan Estuary as a SAC for seals.
- 3: Immediately introduce a close season for shooting beaver and seals to stop baby animals being orphaned and starving to death.

If the Minister is also your Constituency MSP write to her as a constituent.

If you go to the News section of our website (links at top of this e-mail) you will see that we are objecting to the granting of a license to kill ten buzzards in England.

One morsel of good news. An academic paper has confirmed that lactating seals are being killed leaving pups to starve to death and that licensed seal shooters are not meeting the requirement to have shot seals autopsied at the Scottish Agricultural College. They have backed our call for a close season on killing seals.

We have been campaigning on this for years. Perhaps Government will listen to the academics and finally give seals close season protection? At the moment seals in Scotland, despite what you might read elsewhere, have scant legal protection and suffer cruel, painful deaths sanctioned by the Scottish Government.

A small number of people have contacted me regarding a possible demo in Scotland to mark the first day of action against long distance transport of animals. We are backing this Compassion in World Farming initiative on August 29th but not with a physical demonstration in Scotland as previous turnouts for and media coverage of demos simply did not justify the time and money involved in organising them. Instead I intend organising a mass e-mail lobby of politicians and perhaps retailers to highlight the cruelty involved in what is largely an unnecessary part of modern livestock farming.

This is something you can all get involved in no matter where in the world you live. I'll write to you again in the next two weeks with full details. In the meantime if you have not already done so you might want to make yourself an e-mail list of your MSPs (or equivalent), MP and MEPs. If you do want to go to a demo and don't mind indulging in a bit of long distance live transport yourself there will be a demo in London. Go to <https://www.ciwf.org.uk/> for more info and another petition.

Talking about MEPs: Following the Brexit vote I wrote to the Westminster and Holyrood fishery Ministers urging them to use the 30 months available before we leave the EU to strengthen our Fishery Protection fleet of ships and aircraft. I reckon we will end up with another "Cod War" with unregulated fishing reducing even further dwindling fish stocks. The replies from Westminster and Holyrood were derisive. We might as well commandeer the pedalos on Hoganfield Loch and the punts on the Isis and create a fishery protection fleet superior to the real one.

Another bit of bad news is that the number of animals used in scientific procedures has increased. More and more animals are being used in genetic modification experiments in Scotland. Ironic that the Scottish Government has banned the growing of genetically modified crops in Scotland but has no control whatsoever over the breeding of genetically modified animals which potentially creates a very serious risk to humans and undisputedly causes a great deal of suffering to many of the animals involved.

I think that's about it for now. Sorry this e-mail is so long. If I've missed anything (I probably have) I'll get back to you.

Cheers 4 now,

John