

Animals Count: Make Them Matter

Together we can build a kinder Scotland – the best
place in the world for an animal to call home



#ANIMALSCOUNT #MAKEITMATTER

Foreword



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Scotland's animals — pets, wildlife and farmed — are integral to our families, environment, food systems, and communities. When people face pressure, animals suffer too. Today, rising costs, housing insecurity, and mental health challenges are making it harder for many to care for animals and the impact is felt across society.

That's why the public are demanding change. The 2025 Animal Kindness Index shows that animal welfare is now the third most important issue for people in Scotland. This gives Parliament a clear mandate to act.

The Scottish SPCA is Scotland's only national all animal welfare charity with legal powers to investigate and prosecute abuse. We work year-round to rescue, protect, and care for animals — while supporting their human carers.

BY
JULY
2025

- Calls to give up pets had risen by almost 20%.
- Over 44,000 pet meals had been provided to struggling owners through our Pet Aid initiative.
- 17,000+ rescue jobs had been completed.
- More than 7,400 investigations had been conducted.

But rescue alone isn't enough. True protection means tackling abuse at its root and recognising that animal welfare is deeply connected to public health, housing, justice, and education. This includes recognising the well-established and evidenced link between people who harm animals and those who go on to harm people. Abuse of animals is both a warning sign and often co-occurs with domestic abuse, child abuse and other forms of harm.

Tackling abuse isn't just about protecting animals, it's about preventing harm to people and building safer communities. That's why investing in prevention is essential. It reduces suffering, keeps pets in loving homes, improves farm animal welfare, safeguards wildlife, and eases pressure on public services - and the Scottish SPCA delivers just that.

Our mission is clear: to make Scotland the best place in the world for an animal to call home. A place where every animal not only survives but thrives. This vision demands stronger laws, effective enforcement and political will. It calls for a nation proud to work together.

Our manifesto calls for urgent, evidence-based reforms in the next Parliament to ensure animals are protected, respected, and no longer treated as an afterthought. **When animals count, Scotland leads.**

Mark Bishop
Chief Executive

Create a National Animal Offenders Register



1

What we're asking for

The creation of a National Animal Offenders Register that's connected to current intelligence systems so enforcement agencies can monitor bans, track repeat offenders, and identify links early between animal abuse and other crimes.

Why now

Without the ability to track and monitor animal disqualification orders, repeat offending continues. Implementing a notification system would allow for easier detection of individuals convicted of animal abuse, particularly those who have been banned, and flag their involvement in other criminal activities. This is especially important given that animal abuse is often an early indicator of wider patterns of offending.

Actions required

Create a notification system (a register) within existing intelligence systems that all relevant agencies can access. It will be essential that adequate training is provided to guarantee consistency in data entry and analysis and ensuring strong privacy safeguards with regular review periods to assess impact.

Embed Animal Welfare into the Scottish Curriculum



What we're asking for

Animal welfare to be formally embedded within Scotland's education curriculum as part of the national education reform programme.

Why now

Incorporating animal welfare education fosters empathy, ethical awareness, and a strong sense of social responsibility in young people.

It directly supports national priorities, including:

- Responsible citizenship
- Mental health and wellbeing
- Sustainability and environmental stewardship
- Violence prevention and early intervention

Research from the Scottish SPCA and the University of Edinburgh shows clear benefits of animal welfare education, including:

- Greater understanding of animal needs and sentience
- Improved emotional intelligence and recognition of both human and animal emotions
- Increased cognitive and behavioural empathy towards animals
- Proven reductions in the risk of animal harm among high-risk children through early educational interventions

These findings highlight the power of preventative education in promoting prosocial behaviour and reducing harm.

Animal welfare education is a proven, evidence-based driver of social change. Embedding it in Scotland's curriculum will bring long-term benefits to individuals, communities, animals, and the environment.

How to deliver

Animal welfare education should be co-designed as part of Scotland's new national education framework, in partnership with Education Scotland, teachers, and young people. Support must be provided for teacher training, quality resources and curriculum integration across subjects. Animal welfare education should be recognised as a strategic tool for advancing wellbeing, child protection, and sustainability.

2

Review the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006



3

What we're asking for

A review of the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006 to make sure it deals with today's issues and encourages people to care for animals beyond just their basic needs.

Why now

After 20 years since its introduction, we are calling for a review to modernise this legislation to embed the Five Domains Model of Animal Welfare and better tackle the growing trends and evolution of abuse such as online trade in animals and sharing of animal abuse footage.

Actions required

Collaborate with veterinary professionals, animal welfare organisations, enforcement bodies, and online platforms to develop and implement relevant legislative reforms. Ensure that legal guidance and sentencing frameworks are appropriately updated. A public education campaign will be crucial to support awareness and encourage compliance.

Introduce a 'Permitted List' of Animals that can be Legally Kept as Pets



What we're asking for

Introduction of a permitted list of animals that can legally be kept as pets. The only animals listed will be those who can have their full needs met in a home environment.

Why now

Many exotic animals are kept as pets in Scotland — often in environments that fail to meet their complex needs. Poor housing, lack of social interaction, inadequate diets, and limited ability to express natural behaviours result in widespread suffering.

Easy access to these animals, inconsistent care advice, and a shortage of specialist vets often lead to abandonment, repeated rehoming, and pressure on rescue centres. Some species can also pose risks to public health and safety.

A Permitted List would:

- Prevent animal suffering
- Educate owners
- Reduce pressure on rescues
- Improve public safety
- Provide a clear, enforceable system

This is a practical step towards protecting animals and promoting responsible pet ownership in Scotland.

Actions required

Establish a taskforce of relevant stakeholders to tackle ease of acquisition, welfare risks, missing or inaccurate information and support of the creation of a permitted list. Identify and implement demand reduction strategies.

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Our Priorities

Our Ongoing Priorities for Animal Welfare in Scotland

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ONGOING ADVOCACY CAMPAIGNS



WE'RE ALREADY IMPROVING THE LIVES OF ALL ANIMALS IN SCOTLAND.

BY WORKING ON A WIDE RANGE OF CAMPAIGNS, WE ENSURE THAT ANIMAL WELFARE REMAINS AT THE HEART OF SCOTLAND'S FUTURE.

Farm Animal Welfare

We will continue to push for improved standards in the treatment of farmed animals by seeking updates to existing guidance on pain relief, environmental enrichment, humane transport, and slaughter practices, ensuring animals are treated with the dignity and care they deserve.

Greyhound Racing

We will persist in calling for a full ban on greyhound racing in Scotland, and work to support the safe rehoming of dogs discarded by the industry.

Training Devices

We will continue to campaign for a ban on the use and sale of electric shock collars and other harmful training devices, providing clear advice to dog owners and supporting enforcement against those who use or promote them.

Dog Theft

We support the creation of a specific offence for dog theft, improved police data collection, and better systems for tracking dogs through microchipping, vet registration, and sales platforms.

Pet-Friendly Housing

In light of the continued passage of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2025, we will advocate for stronger legal protections for tenants with pets, and work to increase the availability of pet-friendly housing across the country.

Fireworks

We will campaign for a full ban on the public sale and use of fireworks, calling for stronger legislation to protect animals and vulnerable individuals from distress, injury and harm.

Wildlife Crime and Management

We are working closely with partners to tackle wildlife crime and promote ethical wildlife management in Scotland, ensuring legal protections are enforced and nature is treated with respect.

End Breed Specific Legislation (BSL) across the UK

As members of the Dog Control Coalition, we will continue to call for breed neutral, effective and sustainable dog control legislation to be introduced in the UK recognising that robust enforcement is required. We will encourage responsible dog ownership and behaviour around dogs to ensure public safety. We will continue to advocate to safeguard the welfare of dogs affected by Breed Specific Legislation until such a time repeal is achieved as well as for those considered dangerously out of control.

These are just some of the key issues we are actively working on and remain deeply committed to. Our mission is to ensure that animal welfare remains at the heart of policymaking in Scotland — now and into the future.

Welfare

Putting Animal Welfare at the Heart of Scotland's Future



As we see increasing levels of animal abuse online and growing public concern for pets, farm animals and wildlife, the call to embed animal welfare in our laws, education system, and communities is louder than ever.

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THE 2025 ANIMAL KINDNESS INDEX REVEALS A POWERFUL SHIFT IN PUBLIC OPINION IN SCOTLAND:

Each year, a UK-wide investigation into public attitudes toward animals is published – the Animal Kindness Index, produced in partnership by the RSPCA, Scottish SPCA, and Ulster SPCA.

1/3

Animal welfare is now ranked as the third most important issue for people in Scotland.

57%

of Scots say it is a top priority, nearly doubling from 32% in 2024.

87%

of people now identify as animal lovers – a significant rise from 68% last year.

34%

are worried about the future of wildlife in Scotland.



With 91% of people across the UK recognising the value of animal welfare education, the case for action is overwhelming. These figures send a clear message: the public cares deeply about animal welfare and expects action.

Change

A Manifesto for Change



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FOR ALL ANIMALS

This manifesto is for everyone who cares about animals and wants to build stronger, healthier communities. We believe meaningful change happens when the public, politicians, and partners work together for all animals.



Pets

Pets offer companionship, emotional support, and contribute significantly to mental health and wellbeing. Recognising their value means making their care and protection a priority.



Wild Animals

Wildlife supports Scotland's rich biodiversity and plays a vital role in maintaining the health of our planet. Protecting wild animals means preserving the ecosystems that sustain us all.



Farm Animals

Farm animals provide us with food and livelihoods. It's essential that their lives are valued by ensuring high welfare standards that respect their wellbeing and dignity.



Action

Animals Count in Scotland - Act Now



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WE NEED YOUR HELP NOW

Let's ensure that all animals — whether pets, wild or farmed — truly count for something in Scotland's future.



For candidates and political parties

We invite you to meet with us, hear the evidence behind our proposals, and explore how you can **place animal welfare at the centre of your commitments**.

We have outlined practical, achievable steps that will:

- Reduce animal abuse
- Strengthen enforcement
- Make Scotland safer and fairer for animals and people alike

Please reach out to Gilly Mendes Ferreira and Nicola Strachan at public.affairs@scottishspca.org to arrange a meeting.



For the public:

We urge you to **learn more, share your support, and add your voice** to the call for change.

Every conversation matters. Every show of support helps us make the case that **animal welfare is not a luxury - it is essential to Scotland's wellbeing**.

Please scan the QR code or visit scottishspca.org/what-we-do/our-manifesto to show your support.



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Rescue. Protect. Lead.