

Pet Origins

Giving our companions a
better start in life:
the case for reform of UK
pet vending legislation



OneKind



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Published by OneKind. October 2014

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The views expressed in this publication are those of OneKind charity.

OneKind is grateful to the Pettifor Trust for supporting field work for this report.

INTRODUCTION

OneKind, formerly known as Advocates for Animals, is a UK animal protection charity based in Edinburgh and working to end animal suffering through campaigns, research and education.

OneKind supports the keeping of appropriate domesticated species of animals as pets, provided there is benefit for the animals, as well as the humans, in the relationship. OneKind believes that citizens and legislators have an obligation to provide the best possible welfare standards for animals whenever they are bred, reared, traded or kept.

This briefing draws on original fieldwork and information published by many organisations with firsthand experience of pet vending issues to describe an industry that has become simply too large and too unregulated, with severe consequences for animal welfare as well as for consumers. In particular, there are two areas where OneKind believes that legislation to reform the Pet Animals Act 1951 is urgently required to safeguard and improve the welfare of animals:

1 There is a need to provide improved protection for all animals being traded or privately kept as pets, whatever their species. While many commercial and private breeders care well for their animals and aim to ensure that they are sold to appropriate homes, others do not. Examples of these problems can be seen in puppy farms, the explosion of online sales, the intensive rearing of hamsters, guinea pigs and other small “furries”, the sale of rabbits in pet shops, backroom breeding and sale of kittens, and in the provision of poor care advice – or none at all – to purchasers.

An important element of this reform will be for all UK administrations to work together to regulate the internet trade in animals within the UK, including classified advertising websites, retailers’ sites and specialist breed or hobby forums.

2 A positive-list-based system should be introduced to address the trading and private keeping of exotic, non-domesticated or “wild” pets, for reasons of animal welfare, public health and protection of biodiversity. OneKind calls on all UK administrations to use this approach to ensure that animals in private keeping are confined to those whose physical and behavioural needs can demonstrably be met in such a setting.

The legislation should facilitate a reduction in the numbers and types of non-domesticated birds, mammals, fish and reptiles in private keeping. Derogations may be made for licensed private specialist keepers where there are good reasons for such exceptions, for relevant institutions, and for animals that are already in private keeping at the time of introducing the legislation.

Both of these areas can be addressed as part of a broader, and much needed, review of the Pet Animals Act 1951, ensuring that legislation covers all commercial breeding of animals including “backroom” and “garden shed” breeders and pet wholesalers who import and breed animals for supply to retailers.

In addition to legislative change, OneKind believes that central government, local authorities, animal welfare organisations and others must work together to educate the public about the sentience of the individual animals involved in the pet trade, and share responsibility for their care and protection.



THE UK PET TRADE

In 2014, the Pet Food Manufacturers' Association (PFMA) estimated that 13 million (46 %) UK households had pets and that the total pet population was around 65 million.

Fish in tanks and ponds accounted for between 40 to 45 million of these animals, and there were 9 million dogs, 8 million cats, 1 million rabbits, 1 million domestic fowl, 1 million caged birds, half a million guinea pigs, around 400,000 hamsters and around 400,000 lizards, which entered the "top 10" for the first time. Other popular pets were horses and ponies (400,000), snakes (400,000), pigeons (300,000), tortoises and turtles (300,000), frogs and toads (100,000), newts/salamanders (100,000), gerbils, rats, mice and insects (100,000 of each)¹.

Commercially, the UK pet trade focuses on the pet food, pet accessories and pet insurance industries, and the market has shown great resilience over the last five years, growing to a value of £6.7 billion in 2013². The PFMA put sales of manufactured pet food at 1,488,000 tonnes at a total value of £2.6bn in 2013³.

Pet shops

According to the Pet Industry Federation (PIF)⁴, there are some 3,500 pet shops in the UK and approximately 600 specialist aquatic centres, employing over 15,000 people. In Scotland, where

OneKind is based, there are around 226 pet shops⁵. Independent retailers are usually privately owned and managed, but there are also large pet superstores, pet shop chains and garden centres with pet sections.

Despite the name, over half the pet shops in the UK no longer sell live pets. According to the *Triennial State of the Sector Retail Survey 2011*⁶ published by the Pet Care Trade Association (PCTA – now PIF), the incidence of pet retailers selling animals declined to 45 % during the period of the report. This downward trend continued from previous surveys, with 73 % of shops selling pets in 2005 and 63 % in 2008. The latest fall was particularly marked, with the number of pet retailers not selling pets doubling in six years. Over 60 % of the retailers responding to the survey reported that the greatest competition to their business was the internet, and the ability of web-based companies to sell pet products at lower cost.

Pets At Home Group plc, the UK's largest retailer of pet food, accessories, pet-related products and services (the total store portfolio is now 377, with 32 stores in Scotland), is a good indicator of the change of emphasis to pet food, equipment, accessories and services rather than live pet sales. The Group

1. Pet Food Manufacturers' Association (PFMA) Pet Population 2014 <http://www.pfma.org.uk/pet-population-2014> Each year, the Pet Food Manufacturers' Association (PFMA) commissions a Pet Population report based on face-to-face interviews with a sample of adults over 16 that is nationally representative of households in the UK. For the 2014 report, pet population interviews were carried out over two years, with total sample of 6,000.
2. Key Note 2014 *Pet Market Update*, cited in *Pet Business World* August 2014
3. Pet Food Manufacturers' Association (PFMA) Annual Report 2013-14 [http://www.pfma.org.uk/_assets/docs/Annual % 20Report % 202014 % 20 Website % 20Format % 20- % 20for % 20printing % 20A4.pdf](http://www.pfma.org.uk/_assets/docs/Annual%20Report%202014%20Website%20Format%20-%20for%20printing%20A4.pdf)
4. <http://www.petcare.org.uk>
5. According to Thomson Local guide <http://www.thomsonlocal.com/listing/search?Phrase=Pet+Shops&Location=Scotland>
6. Report cited in *Pet Product Marketing* online magazine 12 February 2012 <http://www.petproductmarketing.co.uk/content.php?sid=572> accessed 16 July 2014

Rabbit sold to inappropriate home



In 2012, Blossom, a giant rabbit, was sold by a large pet supermarket in Central Scotland to a gentleman who was registered blind and used a wheelchair. Basic care sheets were provided but no account appeared to be taken of the difficulty that the new owner would have in caring for an animal with complex needs including exercise, veterinary checks, appropriate diet and regular grooming. For two years, Blossom lived in a puppy crate without enough room even to hop. She weighed 6kg and would have normally hopped up to around 4.5 feet but her cage was only three feet long. Eventually her owner required to move into sheltered housing where pets were not allowed, and this prompted a call to a local animal rescue who collected her immediately and

began her rehabilitation. Due to her long confinement, Blossom developed mobility problems including hock burns, overgrown teeth and abscesses and was likely to require specialist care for the rest of her life.

Source: Rabbits Require Rights. Picture © Heather Petrie

announced in July 2014 that its revenues for 2013/14 had grown by 11.2% to £665.4 million. Food sales had increased by 9.8% to £327.1 million; accessories by 7.3% to £288 million; and services and “other” (including live pet sales) by 57.4% to £50.3 million. With this last figure including joint venture fees, “Groom Room” revenue and insurance, it appears that revenue from live pet sales forms a relatively small proportion of the company’s overall income.

Even if fewer pet shops are selling live animals, they can still be places where animal welfare is chronically unsatisfactory. In 2003, OneKind (then known as Advocates for Animals) carried out a major investigation into Scottish pet shops and published *Caged to Sell: A study of animal related problems found in Scottish pet shops*. Some serious problems were identified, including: inadequate space allowances; a high incidence of stereotypical or abnormal behaviour such as circling, wheeling, pacing, digging and head-bobbing; inappropriate human-animal interactions (such as children shouting at and teasing lizards, provoking a distress reaction in the reptiles); and potential zoonosis transmission, such as the emptying of litter from a vivarium into an open container in a public place.

The advice given to people buying animals was gathered and analysed and, while some was appropriate, much of it was vague and did not reflect “best practice”. In other cases the advice was seriously flawed, for example, advising that a parrot could be fed with meat on the bone, pizza, pasta and “everything we eat”.

OneKind/Advocates for Animals called at the time for new legislation to replace the Pet Animals Act 1951 and to cover those areas left untouched by the law, such as the suitability or otherwise of species for private keeping, the need for adequate and accurate care advice, and an end to the practice of keeping animals as long-term residents in pet shops.

New legislation to protect animals under human control was brought in for Scotland, England and Wales in 2006⁷ and for Northern Ireland in 2011⁸ with the potential for secondary legislation⁹ to modernise the law on pet vending. Eight years on from those first commitments, this has not yet materialised although the Scottish Government is understood to be preparing for a review of pet vending legislation.

The industry has changed considerably in the last ten years, with a further dramatic shift to online vending, greater expansion of pet supermarket chains replacing small independent shops, and an explosion in the number of “exotic” species, particularly reptiles, being sold.

Further field work was carried out in pet shops by OneKind in 2013 and 2014, which found: numerous dead and dying fish in supermarket tanks, sometimes being consumed by other fish; reptiles burned by heatlamps; snakes in small containers unable to fully extend themselves; a retailer boasting of being able to supply an endangered species; a customer walking into a pet shop and selling a snake; fish supplied in crates containing over 2,000 animals; and animals still being captured in the wild for the pet trade.

7. Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006; Animal Welfare Act 2006

8. Welfare of Animals Act (Northern Ireland) 2011

9. *Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Bill: Explanatory Notes*, Scottish Executive October 2005 [http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/S2_Bills/Animal%20Health%20and%20Welfare%20\(Scotland\)%20Bill/b47s2-introd-en.pdf](http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/S2_Bills/Animal%20Health%20and%20Welfare%20(Scotland)%20Bill/b47s2-introd-en.pdf)

Fire at Glasgow pet store kills hundreds of animals

In August 2009, hundreds of exotic animals were killed when a massive fire ripped through a specialist pet store. The fire, which erupted at a Glasgow wholesale trader supplying pet shops with tropical fish, lizards, snakes, insects, rabbits, mice, hamsters and birds, destroyed the single-storey building on an industrial estate in Kinning Park, Glasgow.

The husband and wife owners of the store had been running the business for over 30 years and the value of the animals was estimated at over £50,000. Only five small terrapins survived¹⁰.

Source: Daily Record

Retail premises are not the only places where animals are stored and traded in large numbers: there are numerous wholesale dealers supplying pet shops with an enormous variety of species. There is little public awareness of these establishments but they include large centres supplying the industry with tropical fish, and rearing establishments producing rabbits, guinea pigs, hamsters and gerbils for pet shops.

Internet advertising and sales

Recent years have seen a massive upsurge in the internet trading of pets, with retailers advertising online, breeders communicating through specialist websites and forums, and private advertisers using classified sites to sell their animals. Between 100,000 and 120,000 pet advertisements appear on UK

websites each day¹¹. It is impossible for the would-be purchaser to tell whether the “reluctant sale of a family pet” is a genuine case, or whether “boys and girls for sale, ready soon” are the products of small-scale domestic breeding or of the puppy farm or other intensive breeding. The legislation that governs pet vending, the Pet Animals Act 1951, dates from before the inventor of the internet was even born and only covers retail premises. OneKind believes that the need for modern, fit-for-purpose legislation to recognise the needs of all animals sold in the UK, whether direct from breeders, through pet shops or over the internet is now very urgent.

OneKind is a member of the Pet Advertising Advisory Group (PAAG) which aims to improve standards on classified sites and has recruited a number of large sites that agree to abide by PAAG Minimum Standards. PAAG has monitored over 40,000 advertisements to ensure compliance with the Standards, but with no statutory underpinning this remains dependent on the websites’ cooperation, and of course it only affects those that have joined the scheme.

Examples of online pet advertisements highlighted by PAAG in 2013 included a puppy offered in a ‘swap for a mobile phone’ and a ‘fighting dog with big teeth’. Other animals for sale included an Arctic fox, a very rare Zonkey (Zebra x Donkey), a six-week old Staffie puppy (a puppy should not be separated from its mother until it is at least eight weeks old), a male skunk, four Marmoset monkeys, a pitbull puppy (an illegal breed in the UK) and a cat in need of urgent veterinary treatment due to a badly damaged eye. A lady’s watch was offered in exchange for a tortoise, and a Golden Retriever was wanted to swap with a Chihuahua .

10. <http://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/fire-at-glasgow-pet-store-kills-1035209>

11. www.paag.org.uk

12. PAAG, 4 September 2013 <http://paag.org.uk/news>



PROBLEMS IN DOMESTICATED PET BREEDING AND TRADE

Overbreeding

Pedigree breeding of dogs and cats can lead to the exaggeration of hereditary traits, to the detriment of the individual. Overbred dogs, for example, may be notionally attractive but suffer from eye problems, inherited heart and respiratory conditions, skin conditions, hip and elbow dysplasia, bone tumours and hereditary deafness¹³. Cats bred for “folded” ears can develop skeletal abnormalities as a result of the genetic manipulation, while the short-legged “Munchkins” are appealing to some collectors but at risk of birth problems so that some kittens may not even be born alive.

Puppy farms

Members of the public buying young animals seldom realise that they may be supporting the intensive breeding of pets. Puppies are still “farmed” within the UK – Wales is thought to have a disproportionately large incidence of these businesses but they exist in England, Scotland and Northern Ireland as well – and there is a significant increase in farmed puppies imported from Eastern Europe.

Conditions on UK and Irish puppy farms are repeatedly exposed in the media, with connections being made both to internet trading and pet shop sales. There are even large “puppy supermarkets” in cities such as Manchester and Leeds, allegedly patronised by celebrities in search of pedigree puppies.

Puppy farmed dogs may seldom, or never, see a vet, even when undergoing a difficult birth. Painful

infections of ears and eyes are common, as are decayed teeth, mange, hernias, coccidiosis, lice and fleas. Conditions are usually filthy, overheated in summer and extremely cold in winter, and barren, leading to stress, stereotypical behaviours and immense physical and mental suffering. Breeding bitches and stud dogs may spend years in these conditions, while the puppies removed at a young age carry diseases that all too often prove fatal within a very short time. Kennel Club research from 2013 indicated that as many as one in three people surveyed might have unknowingly bought from a puppy farm after sourcing their puppy online, on social media, in pet shops or through free newspaper advertisements – outlets often used by puppy farmers. One in five puppies bought online or in a pet shop needed long-term veterinary care or died before six months old¹⁴.

The Puppy Farming Study Group¹⁵ defines puppy farmers as intensive volume breeders who have little regard or consideration for the basic needs and care for the dogs concerned. Puppy farmers will:

- Separate puppies from their mothers too early.
- Ignore guidelines about the maximum frequency of litters.
- Sell puppies at ‘neutral’ locations instead of from their own homes.
- Keep the puppies in poor conditions in order to save money.
- Fail to socialise the puppies.

13. Advocates for Animals/OneKind 2006 *The Price of a Pedigree: Dog breed standards and breed-related illness* <http://www.onekind.org/uploads/publications/price-of-a-pedigree.pdf>

14. Research conducted August 2013 by Atomik, on behalf of the Kennel Club, based on 2,026 responses. <http://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/our-resources/kennel-club-campaigns/puppy-farming/puppy-awareness-week/#sthash.82zNohRv.dpuf>

15. http://www.pupaid.org/images/stories/documents/puppy_farming_briefing.pdf

Jail for man who ran illegal puppy farm



In August 2011, Scottish SPCA Inspectors searching a farm on the outskirts of Airth, Falkirk, found 57 dogs and puppies living in horrendous conditions. There was faeces and urine everywhere, the dogs had inadequate bedding and there was no fresh water available. Many dogs had lice and were suffering from skin conditions for which the owner had failed to seek veterinary attention.

An adult female Rottweiler, later named Lizzie, was found with a horrific head injury consistent with a dog fight. Both her ears were missing, leaving a large open wound which had been left untreated. It had become infected and was infested with maggots.

All 57 dogs and puppies were removed and most were later rehomed. The Inspector in charge of the case commented:

“These dogs were kept purely for profit and were forced to live in horrendous conditions. This was one of the most harrowing cases we’ve ever dealt with and everyone involved was deeply affected by Lizzie’s shocking injuries.”

Lizzie underwent lengthy treatment and rehabilitation while in the care of the Scottish SPCA but she died of an unrelated illness, in September 2012. In court, the 67-year-old owner pled guilty to operating an unlicensed pet shop, failing to protect the welfare of his dogs and causing them unnecessary suffering by failing to provide veterinary treatment, offences under the Pet Animals Act (1951) and the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006. He was jailed for eight months, banned from having any contact with animals for ten years, and banned for five years from owning a pet shop.

Source: Scottish SPCA¹⁶

- Fail to follow recommended breed specific health schemes.
 - Fail to ensure their pups are immunised and wormed.
 - Sell their breeding stock to pet shops.
 - A frequent ‘hallmark’ of puppy farmers is to offer a variety of breeds for sale.
 - Some puppy farmers breed so-called “designer” cross-breed dogs such as “labradoodles” and “puggles”, without regard for the potential health and welfare impact on these dogs.
 - Puppy farmers will often claim their puppies are registered with the Kennel Club to raise the price they can demand for their puppies. In actual fact these breeders often operate “under the radar” and ensure they cannot be traced by failing to register their dogs.
- Local authorities are responsible for licensing those who breed four or more litters a year and have a responsibility to monitor premises in their areas. Unfortunately however, many puppy farmers cover up the extent of their activity or simply act outwith the law.
- Small scale home breeding especially of dogs and cats for profit, and puppy dealers “fostering” their stock out to private homes are two more growing phenomena.

16. http://www.scottishspca.org/news/1257_jail-for-man-who-ran-illegal-puppy-farm

Conviction for illegal sale of puppies

An Ayrshire woman was convicted in July 2014 of illegally selling puppies in a public place, contrary to the Pet Animals Act 1951, and ordered to pay a £520 compensation order to the people who bought the puppies.

According to the Scottish SPCA Inspector in charge of the case, the owner had illegally sold two eight-week-old Bichon Frise cross Chihuahua pups, one at Monkton and the other in Girvan, in September 2013. One puppy was sold at a service station while another transaction took place in a car park.

Both puppies subsequently died from parvovirus.

Source: Scottish SPCA¹⁷

Imported puppies

Problems with imported puppies are also now endemic. In January 2012, the rules for importing dogs to the UK were harmonised with the rest of Europe¹⁸. Dogs entering the UK for non commercial purposes, such as a return from holiday or residence abroad, no longer require to spend time in quarantine provided they are coming in under, and comply with, the Pet Travel Scheme (PETS). PETS requires the animal to be microchipped, vaccinated against rabies and clearly identified on its pet passport. The rules are not intended to be used for the mass commercial trade in dogs and puppies and a maximum number of five dogs per person has been set as the limit for dogs coming in under PETS. The minimum age for travel is 15 weeks.

Any dog being imported for commercial sale has to be declared to the relevant authorities, come from a recognised breeding place and undergo the same vaccination and identification rules as dogs imported under PETS.

Prior to the changes, a DEFRA agency study had suggested there would be a 60-fold increase in the risk of rabies, rising from a risk of rabies being imported to the UK every 13,000 years to once every 211 years¹⁹.

The non commercial trade in dogs has increased by over 88 % into Great Britain from other countries since quarantine rules were changed in 2012 and the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) suggests that the risk assessment did not foresee the change in trade routes and could not have predicted the increases up to eleven-fold in dogs from countries such as Romania, Lithuania and Hungary, which still have rabies endemic in the country.

Regarding soaring dog imports, the RSPCA reported that:

“After a slight reduction in 2009, probably related to the economic crash, the gentle recovery in numbers of dogs imported between 2010 and 2011 was completely altered in 2012 when the rules changed. Numbers of dogs imported from countries other than the UK increased by 82 % on the previous year. A further 3 % rise occurred in 2013. However this change, whilst applying broadly to all EU Member States sending dogs to Great Britain, was most apparent in imports from certain central and eastern European countries. In 2012 imports of dogs from Hungary increased on the previous year by 450 % , from Romania by 1150 % and from Lithuania by 507 % , whereas imports from other countries such as Czech Republic, France and Germany only rose by 44 % , 52 % and 87 % respectively.”²⁰

As all trade under PETS is supposed to be for non-commercial purposes and covers people’s personal pets, these figures indicate massive evasion of the rules, from certain countries. Problems identified by the European Federation of Veterinarians²¹ include dogs not being properly vaccinated, a number of different dogs travelling under the same microchip number, generic paperwork being produced if the dog is stopped and passports being signed by the veterinarian without the dog being seen. This has also been documented by the RSPCA in the UK although there is no systematic or centralised collation of illegal dog imports into the UK.

In December 2013, the UK government continued to assert that the risk of an animal entering the UK with rabies would be “very low”.²²

17. http://www.scottishspca.org/news/1782_conviction-for-illegal-sale-of-puppies

18. The Non-Commercial Movement of Pet Animals Order 2011 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2011/2883/contents/made> In addition, EC Regulation No. 998/2003 <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2003:146:0001:0009:EN:PDF> sets out the animal health requirements for the movement of pet animals (dogs, cats and ferrets) travelling within the European Community, and into the Community from non-EU countries. It also refers to importation requirements applying to rodents, domestic rabbits, birds (except certain poultry), ornamental tropical fish, invertebrates (except bees and crustaceans), amphibians and reptiles.

19. AHVLA 2010 *A quantitative risk assessment on the change in likelihood of rabies introduction into the United Kingdom as a consequence of adopting the existing harmonised Community rules for the non-commercial movement of pet animals*. Cited in RSPCA 2014, below

20. RSPCA 2014 *Pushing at an open door – how the present UK controls on rabies are failing* <http://www.rspca.org.uk/ImageLocator/LocateAsset?asset=document&assetId=1232734650750&mode=prd>

21. Federation of Veterinarians in Europe 2010 *Puppy trade and animal welfare*, cited in RSPCA 2014, above.

22. HC Deb 09 December 2013 cc34, cited in RSPCA 2014, above.

Cats

Despite being a growing commercial trade, cat breeding in the UK is unregulated. Unlike commercial dog breeding, cat breeding and trade tend to be carried out from multiple locations, including domestic premises. Online pet advertising encourages “hobby breeders” to breed and sell from the family cat(s) and there is evidence of irresponsible breeding, misleading advertising and the successive breeding of individual queens and the sale of sick cats and kittens.

According to Cats Protection (CP), a major feline welfare charity, there are also significant concerns about pedigree cats bred for sale, for stud services, for showing or a combination of these purposes. Selective breeding of cats can cause welfare problems, particularly if increasingly exaggerated features are being created.

UK member organisations such as the Governing Council of the Cat Fancy (GCCF)²³, the feline equivalent of the Kennel Club, have guidelines and policies on responsible breeding and make welfare a priority. The GCCF will not register breeds that are deliberately propagating unhealthy traits, such as the Scottish Fold Cat where the defect in the cartilage that makes the ears fold, also leads to severe arthritis of the limb and tail joints. Organisations such as International Cat Care²⁴ also offer a range of cat welfare advice and are planning to issue guidance on welfare standards for cat breeding.

CP has expressed the following welfare concerns about the sale of kittens in pet shops:

- The kittens are often not seen with their mother and usually there is no history of where the kitten came from, whether the mother was vaccinated etc.
- The kittens are not always provided with adequate space, appropriate environment/pen design, temperature, light and dark cycle, resources, veterinary care and enrichment.
- They are likely to be within their socialisation period but are usually not getting adequate socialisation as they are not in a home environment and often no attempts are made to use a good socialisation programme.
- Disease control is often not optimal and often litters of kittens are mixed, resulting in infections such as the cat flu viruses feline herpes virus and feline calici virus or feline parvovirus.
- The kittens may be handled by a lot of different people in an uncontrolled way which can be stressful.
- It makes kittens seem like objects rather than sentient beings.

Litters from private residences

Typical online advertisement refers to this being the fourth litter from the same cat:

SORRY THESE ARE NOW ALL SOLD BUT I DO HAVE ANOTHER LITTER OF BLACK/WHITE KITTENS WHICH ARE A LITTLE YOUNGER AVAILABLE PLEASE CONTACT ME IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO SEE THEM

Our gorgeous tabby mum has had a litter of 7 kittens. They are all stunning and are all extremely special kittens. They are a girl, females, 3 ginger boys, 1 female tabby and 1 boy black and white. This is my cats fourth litter and she is a brilliant mum and has really looked after them. They are now eating chicken, drinking weaning milk and learning to use the litter tray. The kittens have been brought up in our family home with lots of children and other pets. They have been handled daily from very early on and are used to the noises of a busy family home. All our previous litters have gone on to make lovely family pets.



Source: Cats Protection EU report²⁶

- It could lead to impulse buying, and advice for new owners could vary considerably.

Many cat breeders, for example those that have registered pedigree breeding stock, have high standards of care and breed responsibly, avoiding producing offspring with poor conformation and using tests for inherited disease where they are available. The regulation of commercial breeding would provide for good practice to apply across the board for the benefit of all cats.

The Welfare of Cats Bill²⁵ introduced in the House of Lords in 2014 as a Private Member’s Bill set out a proposed licensing scheme and licensing conditions to safeguard cat welfare, such as limiting litters bred from an individual queen to three in a lifetime.

CP also considers that current border controls and registration of cats that have entered the UK legally are inadequate and increase the risk of rabies or other exotic diseases entering the UK. The illegal importation of cats and kittens differs in scale from illegal dog importation and dog dealing. However, cats and kittens can carry rabies and other exotic diseases in the same way as dogs and Regulation (EC) 998/2003 governing the health requirements applicable to the non-commercial movement of pet animals has effectively lowered the standards that previously existed in the UK. In doing so, this has increased the risk of rabies and other exotic diseases being introduced into the UK. Tick and tapeworm treatment is no longer a requirement of entry to the UK for cats.

23. <http://www.gccfcats.org/>; <http://www.breederscheme.gccfcats.org/>

24. <http://www.icatcare.org:8080/>

25. <http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2014-15/welfareofcats.html>

26. Study on the welfare of cats and dogs involved in commercial practices: Supplementary evidence report from Cats Protection, 2014



PROBLEMS WITH BREEDING AND TRADE IN NON-DOMESTICATED PETS

“Exotic species”

The demand for increasingly exotic species has led to more and more non-domesticated animals being bred and traded on the pet market. These include reptiles and amphibians, birds, mammals and ornamental fish.

Many exotic species are simply unsuited for domestic keeping and suffer as a consequence, not to mention the hazards of capture or intensive rearing, and transportation.

A snake that suffers burns from lying too close to the heat lamp or an iguana that grows to two metres long and becomes a source of fear in the household, rather than a companion, derives no benefit from being kept as a pet.

The British Veterinary Association (BVA) and the British Veterinary Zoological Society (BVZS) have expressed concern about the welfare of the increasing number of exotic animals kept as pets, and the trade in amphibians and reptiles taken from the wild. The BVA and BVZS say that the main issues connected with the trading and keeping of exotic pets are:

- The welfare of the animals in captivity and during transportation.
- The impact on native species if they escape, including disease spread and predation.
- Endangering species due to the unsustainable harvest of wild animals.
- Husbandry and welfare issues.
- The need for more education and information for vets and the public.

Similar concerns were identified at a European conference on the exotic pet trade in October 2012²⁷ where evidence was adduced that:

- Many exotic animals are wild-caught, including 90 % of marine ornamental fish.
- In 2010, the UK imported more than 36,500 CITES reptiles, of which 42 % were wild-caught or ranched.
- Harmful capture methods meant that the animals' environment was disturbed, non-target species were injured/killed, and the captured animals were stressed and injured, leading to a high mortality rate during capture and transport.
- 40-60 % of birds imported to the EU died.
- The greatest loss of wild-caught fish occurred between capture and transportation.
- Large numbers of wild-collected amphibians and reptiles were unable to be exported due to injury and death along the trade chain.

The Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE) believes that some species are completely unsuitable for keeping by the general public and has agreed to support the drafting of “suitability lists”. OneKind also supports this approach. While the major concerns centre on reptiles, amphibians and fish, OneKind believes that the trade in non-domesticated mammals and birds, from chipmunks and pygmy hedgehogs to parakeets, wallabies and raccoons, also carries major welfare and biodiversity risks.

27. International Conference on the Movement of Exotic Animals October 2012 organised by the Federation of European Veterinarians (FVE) and the Cyprus Presidency of the EU. Presentation by Staci MacLennan Eurogroup for Animals <http://www.fve.org/news/presentations/Conference%20on%20exotic%20animals/ppts/Staci%20McLennan.pdf>

Abandoned and neglected exotics

In June 2013, a female bosc monitor lizard was found in the disabled toilet of an Asda supermarket in Edinburgh. She was making her way out of a white sack when a member of the public noticed her. In a previous case in September 2011, the Scottish SPCA had rescued a bearded dragon left in a white sack in the toilets of a Morrison supermarket, not far from where the bosc monitor had been left. It was thought possible that the abandonments were linked.



Only a month later, a severely ill bearded dragon was found on an industrial estate in Falkirk, along with another who had already died. The surviving bearded dragon was very thin and dehydrated and maggot infestations to the carcase of the dead animal indicated that it had been there for at least a week.

Source: Scottish SPCA²⁸

Dumped Bearded Dragons

A Hampshire couple dumped five pet bearded dragons in bin bags, thinking they were dead. The animals had been left in a garage for several months after their owners lost interest in them and then, thinking they were dead, abandoned them in a hedge. Three of the animals survived and were re-homed. The RSPCA Inspector in charge of the case commented:

“This was one of the worst cases I have come across. These animals deserve the same care as any mammal of any other protected animal, and under the Animal Welfare Act they have equal protection.”

Three of the animals survived and were re-homed.

Bearded dragons are native to Australia but have become one of the most commonly kept reptiles in the UK. The owners had purchased the animals in the belief that they were “easy” to keep.

Source: Daily Echo²⁹

Abandoned Geckos

Fourteen geckos were found abandoned in plastic boxes among communal dustbins in Penarth in March 2014. They were in good condition, although there was no food or water in the boxes, and were transferred to a local wildlife centre.

Source: RSPCA³⁰

These abandonments represent only the tip of the iceberg: reports of stray, abandoned or escaped non-indigenous species such as snakes, lizards, budgies and parrots, terrapins and turtles, hamsters, guinea pigs, pet rabbits, wallabies, raccoons and raccoon dogs are extremely common.

28. http://www.scottishspca.org/news/1380_lizard-found-in-loo

29. http://www.dailyecho.co.uk/news/8351914.dragon_lizards_were_left_to_die_in_bin_bags

30. <http://news.rspca.org.uk/2014/03/06/geckos-dumped-among-communal-bins-in-vale-of-glamorgan>

Reptiles and amphibians

The number of reptiles and amphibians kept as pets in UK households is not known and estimates vary widely. Reptile-keeping as a popular hobby started in the mid 1970s, when the trade was almost exclusively in wild-caught animals and saw the development of captive breeding in the 1980s with a “real explosion in popularity” in the 1990s³¹. Based on survey data, the PFMA Pet Population 2014 report³² indicates that a total of around 1.3 million reptiles and amphibians were kept in the UK in 2014, an increase of around 100,000 over the previous year.

According to the European Union Association of Reptile Keepers (EUARK), however, 8 million reptiles are kept as pets in 1.1 million UK households, and over 1,000 stores sell reptiles in the UK. EUARK estimates that 250,000 reptiles and amphibians are bred in the UK each year and that this number increases annually. EUARK also states that, in 2012, the value of the reptile sector of the UK pet industry was £200 million³³.

EUARK and the UK Reptile and Exotic Pet Trade Association (REPTA) base their population estimates on analysis of sales of reptile food. According to REPTA, each week in the UK, 25 million crickets, 10 million locusts and 2 tons of mealworms are sold as live reptile food, as well as an estimated 2 million frozen mice per week.

According to the RSPCA³⁴, more than 1.6 million live reptiles were imported into the EU in 2011 and an estimated 350,000 into the UK in 2010. Despite the difficulty of establishing an accurate figure for the numbers of live reptiles and amphibians in private keeping, it is clear that the population is enormous and growing. While many private keepers pursue their hobby with enthusiasm and expertise, there are obvious welfare risks when animals with very specialist needs are kept by untrained individuals, without any regulation or oversight of conditions. Peregrine Live Foods, a major UK supplier of exotic animals and foods, states in its marketing brochure:

“We also adhere to a strict policy of responsible trading, so we won’t list species which we consider unsuitable for the average keeper, such as the Green Iguana, African Rock Python, Burmese Python, Green Anaconda or large Monitors.”³⁵

It is known that wild-caught reptiles die en route from the wild to a life in captivity, but there is heated debate over the extent of the trade and its effects on animal welfare, with industry bodies regularly describing critics of the trade as animal rights groups and dismissing all claims of significant problems. The impact of the trade on wild populations and biodiversity is also an area of dispute between conservationists and hobbyists. The Peregrine brochure states:

“We are different from many wholesalers in that our livestock list comprises mostly of captive-bred animals, sourced both here in the UK and from abroad.”³⁵

The issue of wild-caught reptiles being mis-declared as captive-bred to enable their export from Asia into the European Union was examined in a 2009 report by TRAFFIC, the wildlife trade monitoring agency, for the European Commission³⁶. TRAFFIC investigated the trade from Indonesia in wild-caught animals of five species: the Frillneck Lizard (*Chlamydosaurus prasinus*), Emerald Monitor (*Varanus prasinus*), Timor Monitor (*Varanus timorensis*), Burmese Python (*Python molurus bivittatus*) and Spiny Turtle (*Heosmys spinosa*). Based on evidence gathered, TRAFFIC concluded that for four of the five species, all the specimens exported as captive-bred were, in fact, wild-caught, while breeding records for the fifth (Burmese Pythons) were so inaccurate that they could not be relied on. The lizards and snakes are all found for sale in the UK (although most advertisements stress that the animals are captive-bred), while the spiny turtle is rare.

The issue of how to tell the origins of reptiles in trade was the subject of a joint UK Border Agency (UKBA – now UK Border Force)–TRAFFIC Europe workshop for enforcement officers across the EU in 2010. The Border Force is responsible for frontline detection and seizure duties on the illegal trade in endangered animals and plants covered by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). UKBA spokesman Tim Luffman stated:

“False captive-breeding claims are increasingly being used to smuggle wildlife into Europe, particularly reptiles, so there is an urgent need to train European enforcement officials in this area.”³⁷

While it is often said that captive-breeding is now the main source of reptiles for the UK market, these animals are descended from wild-caught stock and

31. Chris Newman, Chairman of REPTA and Federation of British Herpetologists (FBH) to Associate Parliamentary Group on Animal Welfare (APGAW), February 2014

32. Pet Food Manufacturers’ Association (PFMA) Pet Population 2014 <http://www.pfma.org.uk/pet-population>

33. European Union Association of Reptile Keepers (EUARK) September 2012 *Reptiles and Amphibians as Companion Animals: The Facts*

34. Cited in BVA Parliamentary Briefing *Importation of wild reptiles and amphibians into the EU* 29 October 2013

35. <https://shop.peregrine-livefoods.co.uk/res/pdfs/brochure.pdf>

36. http://www.traffic.org/species-reports/traffic_species_reptiles26.pdf

37. <http://www.traffic.org/home/2010/2/25/how-to-tell-wild-caught-from-captive-bred-reptiles.html>

FARMED ANIMALS

there is a vocal lobby among hobbyists for retaining the ability to acquire wild-caught animals.

The BVA and BVZS recommend³⁸ that:

- The EU should take a lead by banning the import of wild-caught reptiles and amphibians intended to be sold as pets.
- Preventing any illegal trade through robust enforcement of current legislation, including animal welfare legislation.
- Meeting the legitimate demand for the species as private pets by using captive-bred stock available within the EU.
- Introducing a caveat to allow certain wild-caught species to be taken into captivity by some zoos or other authenticated specialist private breeders for the purposes of conservation – when justified.
- Governing veterinary bodies requiring the effective teaching of exotic animal medicine and welfare in all EU veterinary universities.
- Encouraging the UK pet industry to provide effective and consistent welfare and husbandry advice at the point of sale.

(OneKind is opposed to the keeping of wild animals in captivity and therefore does not endorse the recommendation for allowing wild-caught species to be held even by specialist keepers. Nonetheless OneKind respects the expertise of the veterinary organisations and acknowledges that these are pragmatic measures which would considerably mitigate concerns about animal welfare in the reptile and amphibian trade today.)

Case history

A wildlife trader who also ran a reptile rescue in Bracknell, Berkshire, was convicted in February 2014 of selling Spur-thighed and Hermann's tortoises, both protected species. He had admitted the prohibited sale of protected species in February 2013 as well as the unlawful use of protected species for commercial gain on two previous occasions. Both types of tortoise are protected by the Control of Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) regulations.

Source: Thames Valley Police³⁹

38. BVA Parliamentary Briefing *Importation of wild reptiles and amphibians into the EU* 29 October 2013

39. <http://www.thamesvalley.police.uk/newsevents/newsevents-pressreleases/newsevents-pressreleases-item.htm?id=275228>

40. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/smuggled-iguanas-returned-home-by-border-force>

Critically endangered iguanas seized at Heathrow Airport

Twelve critically endangered iguanas were seized from smugglers on 3 February 2014 by Border Force officers at London's Heathrow Airport. The reptiles were discovered in the baggage of Romanian nationals Angla-Alina Bita, and Vitoria-Oliva Bucsa by staff carrying out customs checks.

The iguanas were each wrapped in an individual sock and had been stuffed into suitcases. Twelve survived their journey but one died in transit.

They were identified as San Salvador rock iguanas, a species so rare that only a few hundred are known to be in existence, controlled under the CITES convention. The convention covers more than 35,000 species of animals and plants, whether they are traded as live specimens or as derivatives. The women were later sentenced to 12 months in prison for smuggling, after an investigation by the UK's National Crime Agency (NCA).

Following the seizure, officers from Border Force's specialist CITES team worked with the Bahamas High Commission in London to arrange their return to their native islands. On Wednesday 9 July the iguanas were taken from the City of London Corporation's Animal Reception Centre at Heathrow to board a British Airways flight to Nassau, accompanied by two Border Force officers, for their journey. They were then transported to a government research station on the island of San Salvador to be monitored by experts, with the eventual aim of returning them to the wild.

Source: UK government website, Border Force and Home Office section, accessed 12 July 2014⁴⁰

Pictures ©Border Force



Backroom breeding in Hertfordshire

S and G met on a reptile forum website and went into business breeding and selling animals both as pets and as reptile food. In May 2014, S was keeping mice, rats and giant continental rabbits, G was keeping finches, parrotlets and lizards and another friend looked after guinea pigs, gerbils, hamsters and white rabbits (food rabbits) for them. Between the three of them, they accommodated mice, rats, hamsters, gerbils, guinea pigs, rabbits, snakes, lizards, toads, arachnids, tortoises and exotic birds in garden sheds and both S and G planned to extend these to take more animals.



In one shed, mice and rats were kept in racks of small plastic boxes approximately 35cm by 18cm with wire mesh tops, similar to the rodent cages used in laboratories. There were 272 female mice and 138 males as breeding stock, plus 700 young and an unknown number of pinkies. Fancy mice would be sold as pets and white mice would be killed for reptile food. There were 14 breeding rats and the intention was to acquire more, as these were very popular for reptile food.

Each container typically contained around ten mice crowded close together. Due to thick litter in some boxes there was little headroom for the mice. All boxes were supplied with rodent pellets and a water

bottle, although some bottles needed filling. Rodents were killed using CO2 gas by G (a gas engineer) or sometimes S using a plastic box as a chamber. Newborns (pinkies) would be killed by placing in a cold place or in the freezer.

In one of the larger boxes containing older mice (“teens”) there were eight dead mice which S said was quite common as the mice would fight for access to food. He tried to mitigate this by placing food on the floor of the container but had not done so in this case.

Some white mice would be sold live to customers who would breed them for reptile food or feed them live to their reptiles. S and G hoped to build a market for guinea pigs as reptile food, as these were currently mainly imported.

Hutches in the neighbour’s garden contained giant continental rabbits bred as pets, to be sold for around £60 each. White rabbits bred for reptile food were temporarily being kept at another friend’s house, due to lack of space. Further sheds were to be erected to accommodate the rabbits, as well as hamsters, gerbils and guinea pigs.

Around ten snakes were kept in plastic containers in a laundry room. Snakes were bred for sale but mainly used for a travelling party business using royal pythons, corn snakes, carpet snakes, chameleons, tarantulas and dart frogs. A large male bull python was described as a fussy eater and so was live fed on mice, two at a time.



Exotic birds (Australian, Star and Indigo finches, parrotlets and canaries) and reptiles (Chinese water dragons, bearded dragons, Yemen chameleons, gecko lizards, tarantulas, bird eating spiders and dart frogs) were kept at G’s house. The bearded dragons had lost the ends of their tails due to biting.

Animals were advertised for sale on internet classified advertising sites such as Preloved, although G preferred to sell on reptile forums rather than classified advertising sites, as purchasers on the latter did not “have a clue” about the animals. Morph royal pythons could sell for over £3,000 on a reptile site. He was interested in moving into breeding and keeping poisonous snakes.

Welfare concerns identified by the OneKind field officer included: overcrowding, lack of water, fighting, untrained personnel carrying out killing, using cold to kill pinkies, live feeding of rodents to snakes. As the premises were unlicensed, there was no inspection of care, conditions or husbandry. A report was passed to the RSPCA about this case.

Source: OneKind field officer Pictures ©OneKind

Man convicted of neglecting over 200 rats

A Falkirk man kept 170 rats in a two storey rabbit hutch approximately two feet by four feet in size. Scottish SPCA Inspectors investigating after some of the rats escaped and were found by neighbours discovered the hutch swarming with rats, many piled up on top of each other due to the lack of space.

The conditions were described as woefully inadequate and completely inhumane. Of the 170 rats, 140 were females and many of them were pregnant. A further 50 mothers and their young were also found in smaller boxes, bringing the total number to 220. Young rats were seen being eaten by their mothers and other rats, due to stress.

While 220 rats were removed, the figure soon multiplied as many gave birth in Scottish SPCA care.

It was believed that the rats were bred for sale as snake food. In June 2014, the owner pled guilty to failing to provide a suitable environment for 220 rats and was banned from keeping animals for three years.

Source: Scottish SPCA⁴¹



Animals bred to feed reptiles

OneKind has identified an extension of the reptile-keeping hobby into the breeding by some keepers of small rodents (such as hamsters, guinea pigs, rabbits, degus, gerbils and multi-mammate mice) for feeding their own snakes and other reptiles, and for selling over the internet to other keepers. Some are sold as pets and some as food. OneKind has significant concerns about the humane killing of these animals by inexperienced operators, and again, there is little or no monitoring. We are also aware that in some cases the animals are fed live to snakes, which is illegal.

As shown in the case study on page 15, estimating the extent of this trade is well-nigh impossible as so much of it is carried out privately and over the internet. There is no licensing requirement and OneKind believes that the income derived may not always be fully declared to HMRC.

Mammals

Like reptiles, mammals have become the subject of the popular drive to acquire ever more unusual species for keeping in private homes. Fennec foxes, sugar gliders, raccoon dogs, ground squirrels, wallabies, miniature pigs, and many other non-domesticated species can all be found for sale in UK pet shops or over the internet. These species are not domesticated

in the same way as dogs and cats and cannot live as “members” of the household. Their needs are very specialised and, regrettably, often misunderstood.

Non-human primates such as marmosets, tamarin and capuchin monkeys kept as pets are a particularly acute cause for concern and have been the subject of a recent inquiry by the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (EFRA) Committee of the UK Parliament, which reported agreement among veterinary associations, animal welfare organisations, Government and even the pet industry that the keeping of primates in private homes is not appropriate. Regrettably, the Committee decided that information on primate numbers was required before moving to recommend a ban, calling instead for DEFRA to commission independent research to establish the extent of the problem. In the meantime, said the Committee:

“[...] the Government must ensure that standards for primates kept in private match those required in zoos. The quality of care that these animals enjoy should be the same whether they happen to be kept in a circus, a pet shop, a private home or a zoo.

“If these suggested changes prove insufficient and the evidence for doing so proves compelling, then a ban on the trade and keeping of privately kept primates should remain an option for the future.”⁴²

41. http://www.scottishspca.org/news/1756_man-convicted-of-neglecting-over-200-rats

42. House of Commons Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee May 2014 *Primates as Pets: Eleventh Report of Session 2013–14* <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmselect/cmenvfru/984/984.pdf>

Marmoset sold in a beauty shop

In 2011, an advertisement appeared in a beauty accessory shop in Kilmarnock, Ayrshire, for a female marmoset, five years old and “ready for breeding”. The price was £1,000. The owner told the local newspaper that she had six monkeys at home, in a big cage in the living room, and that anyone buying this one would need a second monkey if they wanted to breed from her. The owner also said that she would ensure that the marmoset went to a good home. No statutory protection was available for this animal to prevent it being traded for breeding. In England, the Code of Practice for the Welfare of Privately Kept Non-Human Primates⁴⁴ provides guidance on breeding, to protect the health and welfare of both mother and offspring, but no such Code has been introduced in Scotland.

Source: OneKind supporter; Kilmarnock Standard November 2011

Also in 2014, the Born Free Foundation (BFF) commissioned an investigation into the sale of primates in licensed pet shops in England⁴³, focusing on the role, suitability and application of the code of Practice for the Welfare of Privately Kept Non-Human Primates, and the sales made to private individuals. The report acknowledged that most sales of primates were likely to be made online nowadays.

The BFF researchers found six shops that had primates available or could source them. Marmosets were the most commonly offered species although several shops also suggested sourcing tamarins. Three shops advised that research was necessary, or cautioned against acquiring a primate as a pet.

The investigation revealed what BFF described as a “startling” degree of poor practice, including pet shops willing to sell a single primate without at least verifying that the primate would be housed with conspecifics. Staff at one pet shop did not appear to know that a marmoset was a monkey. Pet shops were inconsistent in their advice regarding where and how to keep primates, for example recommending that they could be housed in a parrot cage or a spare bedroom or garage. There were also concerns for the welfare of some of the primates being kept in pet shops.

Despite their superficial resemblance to more domesticated species, and to humans, the needs of exotic mammals are often not understood by their keepers – social animals are found living in solitary confinement, arboreal animals in cages, and animals with an innate need to dig are deprived of the environment to practise this natural behaviour. All of this can cause welfare problems including stress, accompanied by stereotypical and destructive activity which in turn leads to re-homing – either to another private owner or to a sanctuary – abandonment, or the premature death of the animal.

In the late 1990s, there was a craze for chipmunks following a series of animated feature films. Chipmunks remain a popular pet, regardless of the fact that the animals need considerable space, protection from hazards in the home (such as drowning in a lavatory bowl, the sound of the television and poisoning by common house plants including daffodils). A television advertising campaign featuring puppets of meerkats caused a similar phenomenon in 2010, which continues to this day. Pet shops were condemned for selling the animals⁴⁵ but, again, the internet provided a ready market.

The latest fashion is for African pygmy hedgehogs⁴⁶. Created through the hybridisation of two North African species, these hedgehogs have been selectively bred for their small size and are usually fed on cat food and kept in an indoor rabbit cage. Pygmy hedgehogs sell for up to £250 each and grow to just five inches long. The animals are popular subjects for home breeding in Scotland and elsewhere in the UK, as well as in Eastern Europe where many breeders advertise on UK forums.

Pygmy hedgehogs are exotic animals and their care needs are more specific than some realise. In addition, the animals can harbour salmonella, ringworm and in the United States have been diagnosed with several vector-borne diseases, foot and mouth disease, and internal parasites which may affect other animals or humans. Because they pose a potential threat to native wildlife and livestock through the introduction and spread of diseases (e.g., foot and mouth disease), owning African pygmy hedgehogs is illegal or requires a special permit in several parts of the United States and Canada⁴⁷. It is not known whether escaped or abandoned African pygmy hedgehogs could potentially become established anywhere in the UK.

43. *Pet Shop Primates: An Investigation into the Sale of Non-Human Primates by Licensed Pet Shops in England* Born Free Foundation 2014 http://www.bornfree.org.uk/fileadmin/user_upload/files/zoo_check/reports/Pet-Shop-Primates.pdf

44. https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/183319/primate-cop.pdf

45. http://www.lancashiretelegraph.co.uk/news/8706248.Meerkats_and_monkeys_on_sale_in_Blackburn_pet_store/

46. Pet Product Marketing magazine January 2010 <http://www.petproductmarketing.co.uk/content.php?sid=103> accessed 16 July 2014

47. EcoHealth website

Breeding chinchillas in small barren cages

OneKind visited long-established chinchilla breeders in Scotland, whose animals had won numerous UK championships.

There were around 150 chinchillas at the property in May 2014, the oldest being between ten and 14 years old and used for breeding. Over 100 chinchillas were bred in 2013. The best animals were kept for showing and the rest were sold. Animals were advertised in the local pet shop and sold to the public, to other breeders and occasionally to pet shops including a major pet supermarket chain.

The owners had run a chinchilla rescue service but found they were inundated with unwanted animals often requiring expensive veterinary treatment for dental problems, which are common.

The chinchillas were kept in two garden sheds, each with around 54 small cages approximately 50cms by 50cms square and 50cms high. Cages had wire floors to allow waste to fall through onto newspaper beneath. The only solid surface on the cage floors was a piece of wood which most chinchillas preferred to the wire mesh. Pregnant females had small pieces of carpet in their cages.

The owner explained that bedding was not provided as the chinchillas could urinate on this and then eat it, causing an upset stomach. There was no environmental enrichment of any type.

Animal welfare concerns included the keeping of animals in small cages for a lifespan up to fourteen years, without enrichment or bedding. Chinchillas were standing on wire floors apart from a small piece of wood, despite the species being vulnerable to painful ulcerative pododermatitis (bumblefoot). A report was made to the Scottish SPCA.

Source: OneKind field officer

Pictures ©OneKind



Many people do not realise that their rabbit, chinchilla, gerbil or guinea pig is also, strictly speaking an “exotic pet”. Their dietary, social and behavioural needs are complex and specialised but they are the subject of intensive breeding programmes and often spend their lives languishing in barren cages.

Birds

Prior to the ban on the commercial import of wild-caught birds for the pet trade, which came into force in 2005 in response to the threat of avian influenza, the EU was the world’s largest importer of wild-caught live birds. The ban, which was made permanent in 2007

despite the opposition of the UK pet industry⁴⁸ was introduced primarily to protect human health rather than animal welfare or biodiversity, and has prevented the importation of up to 2 million birds per year. Following the ban, there has been a significant increase in the trade in wild-caught and captive-bred reptiles⁴⁹.

There remains, however, a significant illegal trade and many traders arrested in Malaysia and other Far Eastern states are carrying stock intended for Europe. The damage caused to wild bird populations by the pet trade cannot be overstated. Parrots, for example, now rank among the most threatened of all the bird families, with the African Grey in almost terminal

48. Letter from PCTA Chief Executive to UK Prime Minister December 2006

49. ENDCAP report *Wild Pets in the European Union* 2012

http://www.bornfree.org.uk/fileadmin/user_upload/files/zoo_check/reports/Endcap_Wild_Pets_EU_Report_0812_ROUGH_v10.pdf

Dead fish in pet supermarkets

Between 9 and 16 July 2014, the OneKind field officer visited 13 pet stores in central Scotland. In 11 of these stores, no significant welfare concerns were observed although most had one or more dead fish on view. Where Siamese fighting fish were kept, these were in very small tanks; and fish tanks on the top level of displays had no gravel and very little enrichment furniture, unlike the tanks on the lower levels. Other concerns included a hamster constantly scratching at the glass of its display cage; and a Spiny monitor lizard constantly pacing or “glass weaving”.

Specific concerns were noted and raised with staff at the time in two stores:

Store #1

A member of staff was seen taking over five minutes to try and catch a fish for a customer. The fish was chased around the tank by the member of staff with a net.

One Siamese fighting fish was seen dead in a tank.

A dying Angelfish was seen being attacked by a number of other fish. The fish were biting at the Angelfish’s tail, body and eyes. A member of staff was notified but said that as the fish was alive she would have to leave the fish in the tank, even though it was slowly being eaten by the other fish. She explained that it was store policy to leave any dying fish in the tank and only to remove them once they had died. The field officer asked if the fish could be put into an isolation tank away from other fish but the member of staff said that they did not have isolation tanks.

Eventually the dead Siamese fighting fish was removed from its tank and replaced by the Angelfish. The staff member explained that the fish would be treated with a chemical called ‘stress coat’ and said that it was probably suffering from stress and that it had arrived in the shop two days earlier.

Store #2

In the fish section, four fish appeared to be very sick and were upside down in the tank or finding it difficult to swim: they kept falling to the bottom of the tank or floating to the top. Six dead fish were also seen. Some had lost their pigment and others looked as though they had been partially eaten by other fish in the tanks. The number of dead and very sick or dying fish was brought to the attention of staff.

Source: OneKind field officer

decline due to wild capture for the pet trade. The International Union for Nature Conservation (IUCN) currently lists 100 of the world’s 330 species as At Risk and of these, 60 species are directly threatened by the illegal bird trade.

The trade in all parrot species is governed by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). Despite this, and additional measures including a ban on the import of wild birds introduced by the EU and USA, high financial imperatives continue to drive illegal trade in these attractive, charismatic birds.

An article in *BBC Wildlife magazine*⁵⁰ recounted the relentless trapping of Lear’s macaws in the remote state of Bahia in north-east Brazil in the late 1970s, driven by the phenomenal prices commanded by the

birds, selling for over \$10,000 each, which led almost to the extinction of the species:

“The favoured method was to lower nets down over cliff faces. As the macaws attempted to leave, they’d become entangled, be hoisted upwards and embark on journeys to collectors on the other side of the world.”

Fish

A significant difference between the keeping of dogs, cats and other mammals as pets and the keeping of fish (and to some extent reptiles) is that fish are often kept in far larger numbers than other pets. While many people derive great interest and enjoyment from keeping fish, as “ornamental” animals they are in many respects elements in a collection, rather than individuals kept for companionship. And the numbers

50. Juniper, T. *Lear’s Macaws* BBC Wildlife, June 2014

involved are enormous. According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Office⁵¹, as many as 1.5 billion live ornamental fish are exported each year from over 100 countries, with the EU representing a major market for this trade. Between 2006 and 2011, 245 million fish were imported to the UK, giving an average of over 40 million fish per year.

The BVA and BVZS recently issued a statement calling for further research into the welfare implications of in situ farming and wild-caught fish, and to investigate the welfare problems associated with imported fish after they have arrived in the UK. Anecdotal evidence gathered by OneKind indicates that mortality, disease and poor welfare of fish in the UK pet trade are significant problems.

Individual hobbyists or aquarists collect or breed fish in their hundreds and trade them internationally. A large scale aquarist in Scotland was recently described as having 260 tanks in a large warehouse, with plans to extend the stock to 400 – more than any licensed retailer would be likely to stock. Shipments were sent out from Glasgow to hobbyists around the world, packed in breathing bags wrapped with glass mineral wool in a polystyrene foam box. New varieties of fish were also collected from the wild on trips to countries such as Bolivia⁵².

Another major ornamental fish stockist in Scotland has three warehouses on a half-acre site in Glasgow, providing fish wholesale to licensed independent pet shops, national pet retail and garden centre chains from Aberdeen to Cornwall. The facility holds more than 800 aquatic tanks and pools, and the fish range includes rare and unusual varieties imported from worldwide sources.

OneKind field work conducted in Scotland in early 2013 produced evidence of the enormous import trade in wild-caught fish with marine fish from countries such as Sri Lanka, Vietnam, Australia, America, Holland, and Germany being flown to Manchester airport before road transport to pet shops around Britain.

Pet shop owners reported high mortality as routine, for example 80 guppies had arrived dead at one shop in Glasgow. Stress and welfare issues could be exacerbated by poor handling with the OneKind officer observing fish being tipped into cold water, and one fish dropped on the floor at a major pet supermarket. Dead fish were seen floating in tanks at several shops.

Invasive species

UK wildlife legislation already restricts the private keeping, sale or release of certain invasive species (with variations across the administrations), and an EU regulation on the prevention and management of the introduction and spread of invasive alien species will come into force on 1 January 2015. Species listed under the EU regulation may not be transported, kept, bred, grown, cultivated or released into the environment and member states must prevent their unintentional introduction or spread. The list will contain only species alien to the EU as a whole, but member states may establish lists relevant to their own territories.

The European IAS gateway DAISIE⁵³ already holds inventories of the invasive species that threaten European terrestrial, fresh water and marine environments. According to DAISIE:

“Biological invasions by non-native or ‘alien’ species are one of the greatest threats to the ecological and economic well-being of the planet. Alien species can act as vectors for new diseases, alter ecosystem processes, change biodiversity, disrupt cultural landscapes, reduce the value of land and water for human activities and cause other socio-economic consequences for man.”

Of these, around 80 alien terrestrial vertebrate species are known to have become established in Europe as a direct consequence of the trade in wild pets. And yet, despite the continued upsurge in the keeping of potentially invasive non-native species as pets, major areas of the activity (such as reptile keeping) remain largely unregulated. The potential link between exotic pets and invasive alien species is often glossed over but abandoned and escaped non-natives can, and do, become naturalised and compete with native species, often leading to controversial control measures.

In 2013, a cull of American raccoons and Argentinian green parrots was announced in Madrid, where both species have colonised parks and gardens in the city after being introduced as pets. Raccoons were still sold in Spanish pet shops as recently as 2011 despite being able to carry rabies and parasites that can affect humans⁵⁴. Raccoons are advertised for sale on UK websites and one was reported to have escaped from its owner in Glasgow’s King’s Park in August 2014⁵⁵.

51. Cited in ENDCAP, 2012 *Wild Pets in the European Union*
http://www.bornfree.org.uk/fileadmin/user_upload/files/zoo_check/reports/Endcap_Wild_Pets_EU_Report_0812_ROUGH_v10.pdf

52. <http://cefisshessentials.com/Alex-Carlaw>

53. <http://www.europe-aliens.org/default.do>

54. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jul/22/madrid-raccoon-parrot-plague>

55. Scottish SPCA Chief Superintendent Flynn, pers comm

PROBLEMS WITH BREEDING AND TRADE IN NON-DOMESTICATED PETS

In the Netherlands, a small population of Pallas squirrels (*Callosciurus erythraeus*) has survived after escaping from an animal trader. The squirrels, which originate from China, pose a threat to the indigenous red squirrel populations and the country has now banned the import of Pallas squirrels.

84 % of invasive amphibians and reptiles in Florida, which now ranks as having the largest number of established non-indigenous herpetofaunal species in the entire world, are attributed to the pet trade⁵⁶. The DAISIE “100 of the Worst” list includes species that are known to be kept as pets in the UK such as the raccoon (*Procyon lotor*), parakeet (*Psittacula krameri*) and common slider turtle (*Trachemys scripta*).

The ENDCAP report *Wild Pets in the European Union* cites independent and government-sponsored research regarding the cost of invasive species:

“The establishment of invasive alien species (IAS), many of which originate from the wild pet trade, can result in devastating economic costs to agriculture and natural resource industries. Once invasive alien species become established, control or eradication programmes are difficult, expensive and often incite public opposition.

“The invasion of the protected habitat of the Ebro Delta in Cataluña, Spain, by the apple snail (*Pomacea insularum*) is one such example. Introduced through the drains from a wholesaler of wild pets, the snail has caused millions of Euros worth of damage to rice crops. The cost to the Regional Governments for the removal of the animals is estimated at approximately 6 million Euros.”

The import of apple snails is now banned in the UK, although possession remains legal and specimens are readily available on internet advertising sites. Advertisements sometimes state that the animals are surplus to the owner’s requirements and this must raise concern about the risk of abandonment if a purchaser cannot be found.

ENDCAP continues:

“The damage from IAS in the European Union has been estimated at an annual cost of approximately 12.5 billion Euros, although this figure may represent only 10 % of the real cost.”

The Scottish Executive stated in 2002⁵⁷ that:

“... While it remains difficult to predict fully the effects that introduced species may have on native flora and fauna, it is accepted internationally that a cautious approach should be adopted. Rio Article 15 and other subsequent international agreements recognise formally the need for a precautionary approach in relation to species introductions. As demonstrated by the North American signal crayfish, non-native species can have far-reaching and undesirable ecological consequences and can lead to the displacement and/or collapse of other species through direct competition for food; through effects on the environment; or through disease. We believe action is needed if our native flora and fauna are not to be put at risk from potentially damaging introductions, especially in the light of growing evidence of climate change and the added uncertainty this carries regarding the potential for new species to become established.”

The European Union Association of Reptile Keepers (EUARK), however, disagrees with the potential for naturalisation of reptiles in the UK/Europe:

“Despite centuries of reptile keeping across Europe there is little evidence that invasive species could cause a significant risk. Although some individual cases deserve scrutiny and management, EUARK advises that large-scale blanket legislation and bans are unnecessary, counterproductive and likely in breach of European human rights laws.”⁵⁸

No evidence is offered by EUARK to refute concerns about potential reptile invasions, nor to support its speculation about human rights law⁵⁹. The group dismisses concerns among animal welfare groups about the possibility of tropical frogs or lizards becoming naturalised in the UK, due to the cold climate.

The Federation of British Herpetologists (FBH), which is a founding member of EUARK, cites a dissertation on reptile keeping:

“Reptiles may find themselves in the wild for a number of reasons, for example; being released by their owners due to their size, or unwillingness to continue to care for them, or some may simply escape. All these animals have the potential to establish themselves within the environment. In the UK a problem already exists with red eared sliders (terrapins) in the Southern ponds and rivers. These animals run the

56. Krysko et al *Verified non-indigenous amphibians and reptiles in Florida from 1863 through 2010: Outlining the invasion process and identifying invasion pathways and stages* *Zootaxa* 3028: 1–64 (2011)

57. Scottish Executive, 2002 Consultation paper *Conservation of native freshwater fish stocks: The prohibition of keeping or release of live fish (specified species)* (Scotland) Order 2003 <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2002/12/15899>

58. European Union Association of Reptile Keepers (EUARK) September 2012 *Reptiles and Amphibians as Companion Animals: The Facts*

59. *X v Iceland*: in 1976 the European Court of Human Rights found that an applicant’s right to private life did not include the right to keep a dog. The case might be decided differently today but while the Court agreed that the relationship between man and dog was from “time immemorial”, it is unlikely that collecting reptiles would be seen in the same way.

PROBLEMS WITH BREEDING AND TRADE IN NON-DOMESTICATED PETS

risk of unbalancing the natural ecosystems and may pose a threat directly to humans. It is possible to encounter boa and python species in the UK as well, however due to the cold winters they will usually not survive (Jessop, 2012). This applies to the majority of common reptiles kept as pets in the UK as the climate is too cold for many of them to survive even in the summer months. It is usually only our native reptiles which survive here.”⁶⁰

In July 2014, REPTA and FPH circulated details of the exotic (reptile) service they provided for police forces dealing with reports of reptiles, and advised that 99 % of the reptiles collected over the last four years had been escaped pets⁶¹.

Where fish are concerned, the industry and hobbyists acknowledge that there are risks. A blog on the *Practical Fishkeeping* website in June 2013⁶² highlighted the highly invasive nature of some fish and the damage that had been wreaked in different parts of the world due to the introduction of non-native species. The author also discussed the risk of disease spread:

“For the worst part, though, goldfish are throbbing disease grenades, waiting to cause a catastrophe on a national scale. As a vector for illness, there are all sorts of things that could obliterate native stocks. SVC⁶³, for example, and maybe even KHV⁶⁴. Remember, diseases mutate, which is why the popular press starts hooting like a Howler monkey every time Avian or Swine flu pops up in the world.

“It’s a no brainer. Stop putting goldfish into local ponds and rivers. It’s illegal, you’ll get fined until your life savings implode if you get caught, and one day you might be the one introducing ‘case zero’ into a stream and wiping out English life as we know it. Think ‘28 Days Later’ in a pond. Not so tempting now, huh?”

In England, the Prohibition of Keeping and Release of Live Fish (Specified Species) (England) Order 2014⁶⁵ came into force in February 2014, replacing previous Orders restricting the keeping of non native freshwater fish. General licences were put in place to allow the ornamental fish industry to operate with a wide range of freshwater species. DEFRA explained that only exempted or licensed freshwater species would be available to the ornamental fish industry⁶⁶:

“Non-native fish species pose a significant threat to native species through predation and competition. They have potential impacts on biodiversity of habitats, ecosystems and commercial and recreational fishery waters. A recent report estimated the current cost of all invasive non-native species to the British economy at approximately £1.7 billion per year.”

In Scotland, the Conservation of Native Freshwater Fish Stocks: The Prohibition of Keeping or Release of Live Fish (Specified Species) (Scotland) Order 2003 requires a licence for keeping selected genera or species rather than all non-native fish although the licensing scheme can be extended to include other species.

Public health and safety

Owners of conventional pets such as dogs and cats generally have a sufficient understanding of their pets’ behaviour to be able to identify symptoms of disease, and are reasonably well-informed about risks such as toxocara canis or toxoplasmosis. A wider spectrum of diseases, parasites and injuries can be acquired from non-domesticated species by humans and other animals.

Raccoons, for example, are a vector for rabies and the raccoon roundworm, which can spread to humans and other animals.

The Health Protection Agency has issued repeated warnings to reptile owners about not kissing their reptiles or eating or smoking while feeding or cleaning them, as the animals can host salmonella in their digestive tract without showing any symptoms and excrete it in their faeces. Salmonella in reptiles is thought to be connected to the stress of captivity. Humans can also be affected by reptile lung parasites through the ingestion of eggs after contact with the faeces or saliva of infected snakes.

Venomous snakes, pythons and crocodylians pose obvious dangers to humans and other animals and some require a licence under the Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976 before they can legally be kept. Some constrictors including the large Burmese python are not on the DWA list and the Federation of British Herpetologists opposes calls for its inclusion. A pet cat was eaten by a python in 2012, having strayed into the garden where the 13-foot snake was basking. There are thought to be over 100,000 large constrictors in the UK⁶⁷.

60. Clark, B., *A Report Looking at the Reptile Keeping Hobby, Those Who Want it Banned and Why?* undergraduate dissertation <http://www.fbh.org.uk/researchreport.pdf>

61. Email from Partnership Against Wildlife Crime (PAW) Secretariat to PAW NGO partners, 31 July 2014

62. Hill, Nathan 20 June 2013 *10 of the world’s most invasive fish* <http://www.practicalfishkeeping.co.uk/content.php?sid=5777>

63. Spring Viraemia of Carp

64. Koi Herpesvirus

65. New non-native controls – ILFA 2014 Order <http://www.defra.gov.uk/aahm/2014/02/13/non-native-update>

66. Explanatory Memorandum to the Prohibition of keeping or release of live fish (specified species) (England) Order, paragraph 7.1 http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2014/143/pdfs/ukxiem_20140143_en.pdf

67. http://www.fbh.org.uk/facts/in_support_of_keeping_large_boids.html



ADDRESSING PROBLEMS IN THE PET TRADE THROUGH POLICY AND LEGISLATION

Pet shops and internet sales – secondary legislation under the animal welfare Acts

Legislation passed in Scotland⁶⁸, England and Wales⁶⁹ in 2006, and in Northern Ireland in 2011⁷⁰ allows all UK governments to reform current pet vending laws by way of secondary legislation. OneKind believes that reform in this area is urgently required.

The Pet Animals Act 1951 provides that all pet shops must be licensed by their local council and makes it an offence to sell pets in the streets or other public places, and to sell to children under 16 (in Scotland) The keeping of a pet shop is defined as carrying a business of selling animals as pets on any type of premises, including a private house.

Effective regulation and inspection of pet traders by local authorities can be difficult. Council inspectors may not be familiar with the needs of all the myriad species that are sold in pet shops including cats, dogs, hamsters, guinea pigs, rabbits, lizards, snakes, geckos, fish, parrots, budgies, spiders and many more. When it comes to the internet, even if animal health officers were resourced to monitor internet advertisements, current legislation provides little power to enforce standards and the variety of species is even more bewildering.

Model standards for pet shops are promoted by the pet industry and environmental health officials to ensure that the needs of all species are consistently monitored across authorities. In principle, until the law is properly reviewed, OneKind agrees with this approach – in the context of a strictly limited range of

animals – but the standards must be evidence-based and focused on the welfare of the individual, rather than the commercial interest or convenience of the trader.

Non-domesticated pets – positive lists

As shown by the examples in this briefing, the consequences of keeping exotic species as pets or specimens in a private collection can include severe animal welfare problems, damage to biodiversity, and unnecessary risks to human and animal health.

Much animal suffering and neglect could be avoided if prospective owners were better informed and obliged to consider factors such as:

- The animal's expected life span. Tortoises and parrots, for example, are well able to outlive their owners.
- The animal's expected adult size. A small iguana, for example, will grow to two metres and a Burmese python to five or more.
- The animal's social needs. Social animals such as meerkats, chinchillas or non-human primates normally live in large colonies and can suffer throughout their lives by being kept in ones or twos, while almost all reptiles are solitary in the wild and can experience unnecessary stress from having to share their environment with others.
- The cost of care and veterinary treatment. Exotic species require specialist equipment and diet, and it can be challenging to find a veterinary surgeon with experience of treating unusual species.

68. Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006, section 26

69. Animal Welfare Act 2006 section 12

70. Welfare of Animals Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 section 11

- Their responsibility, as owners, for providing appropriate temperature, humidity, lighting, and stimulating social and physical environments. For example, in the wild, gerbils dig burrows but in captivity this natural behaviour is denied, often leading to stereotypical scrabbling in the corner of the cage due to frustration.

Failure to understand and meet the animal's needs can result in injury, sickness, suffering or death of the sentient individual in their care.

Within the EU, the regulation of pet sales is a matter for Member States and the approach to exotic species varies widely. The UK relies primarily on the Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976, which provides a “negative” list of species that may not be kept without a licence issued by the local authority. The list covers certain species of reptiles, wild cats, wild dogs, primates, wild boar and marsupials, as well as many hybrids or cross-breeds of these types.

One problem with negative lists – exemplified in the failed breed-specific approach of the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 – is that owners looking for unusual animals can always find a new variant or type which is similar to a proscribed type, but not on the list. Negative lists need to be continually updated as new species come on the market, and inevitably lag behind new trends in pet keeping, fashion and shifts in the trade.

OneKind believes that the “positive list” system, identifying the animals that are suitable for private keeping as pets, and prohibiting or stringently licensing the keeping of all other types, is much to be preferred. Not only can this approach stem the demand for increasingly unusual and unsuitable pets, it also helps to prevent the escape or abandonment of potentially invasive alien species⁷¹.

The positive list approach:

- Offers a concise list of animals that may be kept, based on an independent assessment of their suitability.
- Provides clarity for owners and enforcement agencies.
- Reduces bureaucracy including administrative costs and the burden of arbitrating disputes.

To date, two EU member states have taken significant steps towards creating a positive list regime. In Belgium, a positive list for mammals was introduced by Royal Decree in 2001. The regulation was challenged by the pet industry and in June 2008 the European Court of Justice ruled that the positive list for

mammals was not in violation of EU free trade rules as long as it was based on objective, non-discriminatory criteria, and there was a procedure for requesting the inclusion of additional species.

The Belgian positive list for mammals covers the following criteria:

- Animal welfare: animals must be easy to keep with respect to their essential physiological, ethological and ecological needs.
- Environment: No species should be listed for which there are clear indications that, if an animal escapes, it would be able to survive in nature and consequently represent an ecological risk.
- Human health: The animals should not be aggressive or dangerous by nature, or pose a risk to the health of humans.
- Husbandry: Bibliographic information must be available concerning the keeping of these animals.
- Precautionary principle: Where there are contradictory data or information concerning the keeping of type of animal, it will not be included on the list.

General derogations are in place for zoological gardens, laboratories, individuals already in possession of non-listed animals, subject to a licence, veterinary surgeons, circuses and traders under limited circumstances. Belgian officials report that trade in non-listed animals became very active as the legislation faced and overcame several domestic and EU legal challenges, and in 2013 it appeared that some “illegal” animals were still being kept and traded. However, there were no illegal animals in pet shops, reducing impulse buys; social control was robust, with people willing to report illegal keeping or internet advertising of illegal animals very quickly. There were also fewer illegal animals in animal shelters⁷².

At the time of writing (August 2014), the Netherlands was in the process of completing legislation for a positive list for mammals, with the list of species under final consideration. The criteria established by the Netherlands regulation cover:

- The animal's need to move and to have a particular environment.
- The average size of the adult animal.
- The animal's need for periods of activity or inactivity during the day or in a particular season.
- The animal's need to forage and eat, including the composition of its diet.

71. Case C-219/07, National Raad van Dierenkwekers en Liefhebbers VZW and Andibel VZW v Belgische Staat, [2008] ECR I-4475

72. Els Vanautryve, FPS Public Health, Food Chain Safety and Environment, Department for Animal Welfare, Belgium <http://www.fve.org/news/presentations/Conference%20on%20exotic%20animals/ppts/Els%20Vanautryve.pdf>

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- The animal's need for safety and the availability of shelter.
- The animal's need to reproduce and raise young.
- The animal's need to groom.
- The animal's social or biosocial needs.
- The animal's need for stimulation and enrichment⁷³.

The legislation also requires consideration of the potential for species to become invasive.

The selection of species is obviously a key issue in developing a positive list regime, and in both Belgium and the Netherlands this has been done with input from scientists, animal welfare groups and trade representatives. This work can provide a base on which other countries can build. The Federation of European Veterinarians, which supports a positive list approach, encourages member states to work on their own lists:

“FVE calls for competent authorities to work on the establishment of lists of animals, based on a thorough assessment, according to certain scientific criteria, of the risks for the animal itself, its owners and the society, the indigenous species and ecosystems. Animals shall be approved for keeping by private individuals on the basis of their listing. We encourage all European national authorities to establish bilateral relationships with the countries which have already implemented such a system in their national legislation.

“Sharing of knowledge and experience should be actively promoted at EU level. European Commission shall assist member states towards that direction and facilitate the dissemination of information through European wide initiatives. Further to this, European Commission shall look into putting in place consistent legislation laying down clear rules for import and keeping of wild animals in EU. Establishment and adoption of lists by the EU member states have to be a fundamental requirement of the EU legislative framework.”⁷⁴

OneKind urges all UK governments to work together to develop a positive list system to regulate the keeping of exotic species in Scotland, England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

73. Adapted from *Think Positive: Why Europe needs 'Positive Lists' to regulate the sale and keeping of exotic animals as pets* Eurogroup for Animals, AAP Rescue Centre June 2014

74. FVE position paper FVE/013/pos/006 http://www.fve.org/uploads/publications/docs/006_fve_position_on_positive_lists_of_exotic_species_final.pdf

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Pet Animals Act 1951 must be updated as soon as possible to reform the pet trade and ensure that only animals suitable for domestic settings may be kept as pets.

There is a need to provide improved protection for all animals being traded or privately kept as pets, whatever their species. The legislation should set out to ensure that the animal gains some benefit from being kept.

While many commercial and private breeders care well for their animals and aim to ensure that they are sold to appropriate homes, others do not. Examples of these problems can be seen in puppy farms, the explosion of online sales, the intensive rearing of hamsters, guinea pigs and other small “furrries”, the sale of rabbits in pet shops, backroom breeding and sale of kittens, and in the provision of poor care advice – or none at all – to purchasers.

Pets should not live for prolonged periods in the confined unnatural environments of pet shops or wholesale premises. Welfare-based model licensing conditions, such as the Model Management Conditions for Pet Vending (MMCs) currently being developed by animal welfare groups, should be applied consistently by local authorities inspecting pet shops – although MMCs must not be seen as a substitute for comprehensive secondary legislation to reform the pet vending trade as a whole.

2. A positive-list-based system should be introduced to address the trading and private keeping of exotic, non-domesticated or “wild” pets, for reasons of animal welfare, public health and protection of biodiversity.

OneKind calls on all UK administrations to use this approach to ensure that animals in private keeping are confined to those whose physical and behavioural needs can demonstrably be met in such a setting.

The legislation should facilitate a reduction in the numbers and types of non-domesticated birds, mammals, fish and reptiles in private keeping. Derogations may be made for licensed private specialist keepers where there are good reasons for such exceptions, for relevant institutions, and for animals that are already in private keeping at the time of introducing the legislation.

3. The review of the Pet Animals Act 1951 must ensure the effective regulation of retail and wholesale suppliers and internet sales, focusing on vendors and purchasers in each administration.

An important element of this reform will be for all UK administrations to work together to regulate the internet trade in animals within the UK, including classified advertising websites, retailers’ sites and specialist breed or hobby forums.

4. There should be a simple prohibition on buying animals – or at least certain classes of animals, such as vertebrates – without seeing them first.

Other than in exceptional circumstances (for example in an accredited rescue centre), the sale of a puppy or kitten unless its mother can be seen must be prohibited as a matter of urgency.

5. Dog breeding legislation should be reviewed and consolidated as part of the process, so that welfare provisions are consistent for all species.

Compulsory microchipping and a general licensing scheme for dogs could be harnessed to monitor the welfare of dogs used for breeding.

6. Resources must be made available for stringent and comprehensive local authority enforcement and associated public education.

Increased regulation must be accompanied by training for enforcement agencies as well as adequate time to inspect breeders and take necessary action.

7. Import regulations for pets must be reviewed and enforced more stringently.

Long distance transport is a stressful experience for most animals and there are significant related issues of animal health and welfare and potential disease transmission, as well as serious, documented concerns about animals being bred and reared in conditions that would not be permitted in the UK.

8. There should be an investment in public education encouraging people to acquire rescued pets.

The drive to acquire pedigree or unusual animals can deprive many animals in rescues and shelters of the chance to start a new life with a loving family. OneKind believes that the true role of the companion animal is that of a family member whose sentience is recognised and whose needs are fulfilled in a caring environment. All that can be found in the relationship with a rescue pet.

RESOURCES – SOME RECOMMENDED SOURCES OF FURTHER INFORMATION

Wild Pets in the European Union ENDCAP, 2012

Analysis of national legislation related to the keeping and sale of exotic pets in Europe

Eurogroup for Animals, 2013

http://eurogroupforanimals.org/files/campaigns/downloads/528/eurogroup_for_animals_-_exotic_pet_report.pdf

Think Positive – why Europe needs Positive Lists to regulate the sale and keeping of exotic animals as pets

Eurogroup for Animals and Stichting AAP, 2014

Assigning Degrees of Ease or Difficulty for Pet Animal Maintenance: The EMODE System Concept Warwick et al,

Emergent Disease Foundation J Agric Environ Ethics DOI 10.1007/s10806-013-9455-x

<http://emergentdisease.org/assets/documents/EMODE.pdf>

Pet Shop Primates: An Investigation into the Sale of Non-Human Primates by Licensed Pet Shops in England

Born Free Foundation 2014

http://www.bornfree.org.uk/fileadmin/user_upload/files/zoo_check/reports/Pet-Shop-Primates.pdf

A far cry from nature Two-part documentary by the Animal Protection Agency and International Animal Rescue about Terraristika, one of the largest exotic animal markets in the world, which takes place in Hamm, Germany

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tLAJR_dIL28

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CNuO5KfBGmk>

Pushing at an open door – how the present UK controls on rabies are failing RSPCA 2014

<http://www.rspca.org.uk/ImageLocator/LocateAsset?asset=document&assetId=1232734650750&mode=prd>

Pet Origins

Giving our companions a better start in life:
the case for reform of UK
pet vending legislation



HumanKind. AnimalKind. **OneKind**

10 Queensferry Street, Edinburgh EH2 4PG
Tel: 0131 225 6039 email: info@onekind.org Registered Charity No. SC041299

www.onekind.org