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The Scottish Conservatives are calling for there to be better protection for animals sold in pet shops throughout Scotland.

Scottish Conservative MSP Jeremy Balfour is today launching a consultation on a member's bill that will ensure that local authorities have more power to protect the welfare of pets sold in shops.

Research from animal charity Blue Cross has found the current legislation governing pet shops, the Pet Animals Act 1951, is outdated, leading to issues with enforcement and interpretation as the legislation is being inconsistently applied.

The new member's bill would seek to increase the transparency and consistency of standards required for pet shops, and give local authorities the tools they need to ensure effective compliance.

The Scottish Conservatives said the change should lead to better conditions for animals and ensure that Scots purchasing animals from pet shops are confident that they have been raised responsibly.

Scottish Conservative MSP for the Lothians Jeremy Balfour MSP said:

"With animal welfare being a fully devolved issue, the Scottish Parliament has a real opportunity to improve the lives of pets and pet owners across Scotland.

"Current legislation governing the sale of pets is outdated and failing to protect animals or pet owners.

"Every pet bought from a pet shop, no matter the species, is important to their new owner. It is the latest addition to their family.

"Every Scot wants their pet to have had the best start in life and be in good health at the point of sale.

"This legislation will ensure our system is sufficiently robust to protect animal welfare and enable the public to buy with confidence, safe in the knowledge that the pet shop they are buying from is a reputable, licensed establishment which has been subject to a stringent licensing process."

Nigel Baker, the CEO of the Pet Industry Federation said:

“As the UK trade association for pet businesses, the Pet Industry Federation (PIF) welcomes the launch of Jeremy Balfour’s consultation on pet shop licensing.

“At over 60 years old, the legislation governing pet shops sales in Scotland is very outdated, and doesn’t fully take into account the changing business models around pet sales that have emerged in that time.

“The legislation is in urgent need of an overhaul in order to safeguard animal welfare and ensure that standards of licensing and inspection are applied and enforced consistently across Scotland.”

Becky Thwaites, Head of Public Affairs at Blue Cross said:

“We have been pleased to work with Jeremy Balfour MSP on this proposal to improve the licensing of pet shops across Scotland.

“Current legislation around the selling of pets is vastly outdated and we welcome the opportunity to bring it up-to-date to better protect the welfare of pets in Scotland.

“We hope that interested parties will take the opportunity to take part in this consultation to ensure both pets and their owners are protected at the point of sale.”

A link to the consultation document is available here:

<http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/Bills/108075.aspx>