

Animal welfare to be strengthened in Wales

Maximum animal cruelty sentences in Wales are set to increase to five years and the Cabinet Secretary has written to Rt Hon Michael Gove MP, Secretary of State Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) on the issue of introducing legislation on an England and Wales basis.

Currently the maximum sentence in England and Wales for an offence under the Animal Welfare Act 2006 is six months, in addition to unlimited fine and ban.

Officials from England and Wales will now work together on the introduction of the Bill. The UK Government today submitted a draft Bill for the consideration of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (EFRA) Select Committee and intends to introduce the Bill as soon as Parliamentary time permits.

Cabinet Secretary said:

“We have always been clear the way we treat animals is an important reflection of the values of our society. Animals should be protected from pain, injury, fear and distress, and those who commit the worst acts of animal cruelty should face tough punishments.

“That is why I have written to the Secretary of State on the issue of introducing legislation on an England and Wales basis. Increasing the sentence to five years imprisonment will maintain a comparative sentencing regime across England and Wales and will bring clarity for enforcement agencies, the Courts and the public alike.

“It will also bring the maximum sentences for animal cruelty in England and Wales in line with Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland and the Scottish Government’s plans in this important area.”

The draft Bill published today sets out the government “must have regard to the welfare needs of animals as sentient beings in formulating and implementing government policy”.

Cabinet Secretary added:

“Our position on sentience has been very clear. We fully agree that animals are sentient beings and we will continue to promote and enhance animal welfare, both now and after we have left the EU.

“The issue of sentience not being of the face of any UK Bill was a concern for us and our stakeholders, particularly the British Veterinary Association. Therefore the inclusion of this sensitive element in this UK Bill will provide confidence and regularise the position.

“I will be meeting with the Secretary of State later this week and am pleased he is now backing up his messages on the importance of animal welfare and animal sentience with decisive action. I look forward to these discussions.”

[New targets for Wales to be officially TB Free](#)

Interim targets, covering 6-year periods, will be set for each of the TB Areas. These targets will specify overall reductions in herd incidence as well as the transfer of Spatial Units from higher incidence areas to lower incidence areas.

This means, for example, the Low TB Area will expand over time, to cover land currently classified as Intermediate, and High TB Areas will shrink as their Spatial Units are reclassified to the Intermediate areas. At the end of each 6-year period, progress will be assessed and milestones set for the following period.

Cabinet Secretary Lesley Griffiths said:

“We have made good progress in recent years towards eradicating TB in Wales. There has been a significant reduction in incidence across Wales and I am determined we continue that improvement.

“The 6-year regional milestones I am announcing today are key to delivering this. If achieved, Wales will become Officially TB free between 2036 and 2041.

“These milestones stress the urgency of the task at hand and reflect my ambition to see important progress in each region during each period. They will help convey the need for immediate action, to focus minds and to drive the progress necessary to achieve our collective goals.

“We have enhanced our TB Eradication Programme this autumn and the regional approach to TB eradication is intended to help us achieve our targets. We now need to focus on protecting the Low TB Area

from disease incursion and driving down disease in the Intermediate and High TB Areas. We will continue to build our programme as we progress towards our goal of a TB free Wales.

“Meeting our targets will not be easy. They are intended to be ambitious and to stretch us. Achieving them will require the cooperation and dedication of everyone involved. I am challenging us all, in Government, APHA, industry and our veterinary colleagues, to commit everything to ensure we eradicate this dreadful disease as soon as possible.”

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More work to be done despite Brexit progress – Mark Drakeford

Speaking ahead of a meeting of the devolved governments and UK government, Mark Drakeford has outlined the significant issues the Welsh Government want addressed as the 2nd phase of talks begin.

Mark Drakeford said:

“The progress we saw last week is to be welcomed but there is a huge amount of hard work to be done if we are to achieve the right sort of Brexit. This is just the green light for more talks, talks that will get to the heart of what our relationship with the EU will look like after Brexit.

“As the talks move on to discuss detailed issues related to the transition and to the long-term relationship, it is vital that the devolved administrations are fully involved with the negotiations in a way we have not been to date.

“These negotiations will involve questions such as agriculture support during and after the transition period, the sort of environmental regulation we will have in future and whether the UK will continue to be part of important European programmes for education and research, such as Erasmus Plus and Horizon 2020 – all issues which are firmly within the remit of the devolved institutions.

“It’s essential that the UK government agrees a common approach to these and many other issues – not least our future access to the Single Market – with the devolved administrations in advance of the negotiations, based on a proper consideration of the evidence.”

The Finance Secretary will be at the JMC (EN) meeting with First Secretary of State, Rt Hon Damian Green MP, who will chair the meeting, and other cabinet ministers.

“We also need firm proposals from the UK government on amendments to the EU Withdrawal Bill if a major constitutional battle – wasting time and energy on the part of all concerned – is to be avoided. The government needs to bring forward amendments before the bill leaves the House of Commons, as it has suggested is likely. If it does not, while we are clear that a UK-wide approach that respects devolution is the best approach, we are ready and able to put in place our own legislation: work on this has been underway for many months and everything will be in position, should it be needed.”

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