



Cymdeithas Frenhinol Atal Creulondeb i Anifeiliaid Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

William Powell AM
Chair, Petitions Committee,
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA

Your ref: P-04-398

28th September 2012

Dear Mr Powell AM,

The RSPCA is grateful that the Committee has invited our views on the 'Animal Offenders Register' petition currently under consideration.

As the main enforcer¹ of animal welfare legislation in Wales (and England) the RSPCA would certainly welcome a comprehensive investigation into the practicalities and legalities of a register of offenders. It is a complex area, however, and in our opinion would require careful exploration and thought.

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Vice Patron His Grace
The Archbishop of Canterbury

We are aware of similar systems, e.g. in San Francisco where the city council has required both animal sellers/traders and sanctuaries to check against a central database if the person they are selling or rehoming the animal to has an outstanding conviction. The database is funded by a one-off fine/fee paid by the offender at the time of conviction. Clearly the costs and administration of such a database, as well as who has access to the sensitive data it holds, are issues that would need to be addressed.

Unfortunately I am not able to provide comprehensive figures on the rates of recidivism amongst those convicted of animal abuse, however the RSPCA has taken many prosecutions against individuals who are in breach of banning orders. As such this issue is of concern to us, for there is no way of monitoring those who have been convicted (post-conviction) and no way of knowing how many have gone on to acquire animals despite being banned, by a Court, from keeping them. Usually the RSPCA, police and local authorities have to rely on the public reporting such situations to us, which is far from ideal.

¹ Please see www.politicalanimal.org.uk/wales for data and statistics on the work of the RSPCA and the prosecutions taken in Wales each year.

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The petition's authors are correct in highlighting the link between animal abuse and interpersonal violence. Whilst it would be far from correct to say that all those who abuse animals will graduate to violence against humans, it is true that many of those convicted of violent offences in respect of humans, have previously abused animals. Despite clear correlations between such violent behaviours there is a dearth of research in terms of what deters animal cruelty and it is also perhaps too early to speculate as to whether the animal offenders registers operating in the USA are working. Nevertheless the idea of an animal offenders register still has merit and something that we have previously discussed informally with Welsh Government officials.

If we can be of any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

A rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in black ink. The signature appears to read 'Claire Lawson' in a cursive, slightly stylized script.