

07 December 2022

Dear Convenor of the Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee,

The Scottish SPCA is gravely concerned about the impact that the Retained (EU) (Revocation and Reform) Bill may have on animal welfare.

From speaking to our partners and contacts from across the UK, we believe there are 44 laws under the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018 relating to animal welfare and, should they disappear, this could have a catastrophic impact on Scotland's animals. Most of these laws are devolved, including 18 laws relating to farm animals, and it appears they will be worst affected. The ban on battery cages for laying hens, stalls for sows and crates for veal calves could be lost. Scotland has some of the highest welfare standards in agriculture and this could have a detrimental impact on the welfare of farm animals and on the farming industry.

The reserved issues include the ban on the use of animals for cosmetic testing, regulation on the use of animals in scientific research, the trade in endangered species and protection of wild birds.

Scotland has robust protections for companion animals but they are not exempt from the impacts of this Bill. It will affect how we take our pets across borders when going on holiday and the commercial movement of cats and dogs. Commercial movement of animals is an area where legislation should not be compromised due to the impact this can have on the low-welfare pet trade.

The sunset clause is of great concern due to the tight timeframe to reinstate statutory protections for the 44 animal welfare laws. The Society supports the contribution of David Bowles to Committee, who is Chair of the Trade and Animal Welfare Coalition and Head of Public Affairs at the RSPCA, including his suggestion to either abandon the Bill or push the deadline of the Bill back to 2028 as it was when it was first introduced in UK Parliament.

The Scottish public is passionate about animal welfare and the Scottish Government has worked tirelessly to be at the forefront of animal welfare globally. This Bill could jeopardise what the Scottish Government and the Scottish SPCA have worked long and hard for.

I hope our comments will be useful as you finalise discussions on this Bill and we would be more than happy to discuss any of the points raised above further.

Kindest regards,

Gilly Mendes Ferreira

Head of Innovation and Strategic

Relations