

## **CROSS PARTY GROUP IN THE SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT ON ANIMAL WELFARE**

**50th meeting**

**Tuesday 17 January 2012**

**6.00pm Committee Room 6, Scottish Parliament**

**MSPs:** Christine Grahame MSP (Convener)  
Elaine Murray MSP  
Neil Bibby MSP

**Associate Members:** Patricia Saluja, University of Aberdeen  
Denis Hearsum, Perth and Kinross Council  
Jack Johnstone, Dogs Trust  
Louise Robertson, League Against Cruel Sports  
Mike Flynn, Scottish SPCA  
Beverley Williams, Scottish Government  
Andrew Voas, Scottish Government  
Libby Anderson, OneKind (Secretary)  
Kirsty Connell, OneKind  
Louise Robertson, League Against Cruel Sports  
Tina Warren, Scotland for Animals  
John Patrick, Scotland for Animals  
Helene Mauchlen, British Horse Society  
Ross Montague, Scottish Countryside Alliance  
Ailsa Anderson, Scottish Land and Estates  
David Craig, World Horse Welfare  
Nicolle Hamilton, British Association for Shooting and Conservation  
Brian Hosie, Scottish Agricultural College  
George Leslie, Canine Concern Scotland  
Edna Elliot-McColl  
Patricia Neeson

**Guests:** Kate Fowler, Animal Aid

**Apologies:** Jim Hume MSP  
Claire Baker MSP  
Claudia Beamish MSP  
Chris Draper, Born Free Foundation  
Nigel Miller, National Farmers' Union Scotland  
Charles Everitt, National Wildlife Crime Unit  
Keith Meldrum, World Horse Welfare  
Jean Fairlie, Scottish Kennel Club  
Adam Reed, University of St Andrews

### **1. Minutes of previous meeting**

These were approved.

### **2. Matters arising**

Patricia Saluja (PS) noted a typographical error on page 2. She also asked for clarification of a passage which referred to good welfare on farm and at slaughter contributing to a better end product. Libby Anderson (LA) said she believed the speaker was referring to the added value that consumers found in higher welfare products. Andrew Voas (AV) added that good animal welfare was reflected in the quality of meat.

The Convener (CG) told the Group that there were many new Cross Party Groups and MSPs were finding it difficult to attend as many as they would like. She believed that there would have to be a review of groups. However the Animal Welfare Group was in a good position being broadly based and well established.

### **3. Presentations: Use of CCTV in slaughterhouses**

**Kate Fowler (KF)** spoke about investigations undertaken by Animal Aid in nine slaughterhouses in England. Around three years ago there had been coverage of slaughter issues on television which Animal Aid had felt showed a sanitised version of the reality. In order to investigate, Animal Aid had entered slaughterhouses and installed cameras to record what really went on. The locations were randomly chosen and results were made public as they emerged.

The recorded footage showed that animal welfare laws had been broken in eight of the nine establishments.

Animal Aid had secretly filmed:

- pigs burnt with cigarettes;
- animals punched, kicked, goaded, beaten, dragged by their ears and tails, and picked up by their fleeces and thrown into the stun pen;
- animals being deliberately given electric shocks through their tails, legs, ears, snouts and open mouths;
- animals going to the knife without adequate stunning;
- animals stunned and then allowed to come round again;
- bodged and multiple stuns;
- ewes being stunned while a lamb suckled them;
- ewes watching as their lambs were killed;
- a sheep too sick to stand – or possibly already dead – being brought to slaughter in a wheelbarrow;
- seriously injured pigs forced to drag themselves through the slaughterhouse;
- pigs falling from slaughter lines into blood pits and being dragged out and re-shackled while other pigs looked on;
- an inadequately stunned calf kicking on the floor while the stun operator stood on him to keep him still;
- animals screaming and struggling to escape;
- animals being kicked in the face, slapped and thrown to the floor;
- sheep being decapitated while still alive;
- a bovine stunning pen without the compulsory head shelf fitted, which caused misplaced stuns and additional suffering; and
- animals left in the stunning pens for up to three hours before being stunned.

Altogether, around 250 hours of footage was taken. Vets were working in all of the premises, but a vet was only seen on one occasion. The findings had been made public and passed to regulators as the project went on, and some re-training had taken place. However there seemed to be a view that the perpetrators were just individual “bad apples”.

KF said that, for her, Utopia would be meat-free, but as that was not the case Animal Aid would work to ameliorate conditions for animals at slaughter. CCTV might not be the whole answer but it would at least help vets to assess situations and make improvements. The Animal Aid footage had already been used by Bristol University in a re-training package.

There had been a conviction recently for breach of hygiene legislation, and there continued to be worrying reports about accidents and thefts of items such as shotgun and captive bolt guns. Having cameras installed might deter such conduct, as well as answering questions about what was actually going on in

slaughterhouses. There was a real need for closer monitoring - an independent regulator could do this by examining random clips from CCTV footage – allied with more guidance and training.

KF had met with Ministers or officials in all four administrations and the responses had been positive, with CCTV being seen as a useful tool. However Animal Aid continued to believe that it would ultimately have to be a mandatory scheme. Those already employing best practice would comply with a voluntary scheme, while others would be less likely to do so.

**John Patrick (JP)** said that Scotland for Animals could confirm what Animal Aid had found. They had heard similar stories from slaughterhouse staff and others such as veterinary students. There was a culture of intimidation in some premises, with staff afraid to pass concerns to their line managers. The line-based production methods militated against making complaints: if an incident occurred, the line would have to stop and the informant could expect reprisals. Scotland for Animals had been told about: cows with broken tails; animals beaten with bottles; animals beaten and dragged across the floor. This was serious brutality but it was not captured on camera. It was time to install CCTV in slaughterhouses to stop these abuses. JP also wanted to see the day when no animals were slaughtered at all, but that was not the case at present.

The cost of installing CCTV in a slaughterhouse in Scotland would vary from £6,000 to £25,000, with an annual maintenance cost of around £600 – a drop in the ocean compared with other regular maintenance.

JP said that QMS supported the use of CCTV and would not oppose legislation.

In terms of legislation he believed that the current slaughter legislation – the Welfare of Animals (Slaughter or Killing) Regulations 1995 (WASK) could be amended by statutory instrument. However these regulations were due to be repealed this year. He believed that secondary legislation could be made under the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006 (the 2006 Act). New slaughter regulations to implement Council Regulation (EC) No 1099/2009 on the protection of animals at the time of killing were imminent, and these allowed member states the flexibility to adopt national rules, so it would not amount to gold-plating.

Using CCTV would protect animals and workers alike – a worker had been killed in an accident at Sandyford abattoir in November and in a previous incident a worker had been shot. It was rare to see the animal welfare movement and the meat industry agreeing on an issue, and Scotland had an opportunity to lead the way. JP asked the Group to recommend that legislation be considered, to ask the Scottish Government to issue a consultation on the issues, and to ask MSPs to support the campaign. If animals were to be eaten they should at least be slaughtered as humanely as possible, but at present the legislation was not fit for purpose.

### **Discussion**

CG asked the Scottish Government officials to comment on the presentations. Beverley Williams (BW) recognised the problems in slaughterhouses: the Scottish Government and the Food Standards Authority recommended CCTV use on a voluntary basis. It would be difficult to introduce compulsory CCTV under the current WASK as it was running out; and the new EU regulation did not contain any reference to the use of cameras. There could be secondary legislation under the 2006 Act, but this would not be easy: it would involve a considerable amount of work and resourcing, and therefore was not likely to happen quickly.

CG confirmed with BW that any statutory instrument would be subject to affirmative procedure. She wondered also whether an MSP might take the subject for a Member's Bill.

George Leslie (GL) asked about the size of the abattoirs involved. KF said the majority were small to medium-sized, although one or two were larger, and mainly slaughtering sheep, cows and pigs. GL commented that smaller abattoirs tended not to have the line system, which had contributed to many of the problems. There was a risk of vandalism to cameras, but he still supported their use.

JP said that CCTV was mainly installed in cutting rooms to prevent theft, but not in killing areas. It had to be mandatory to ensure that footage was of the correct quality to be admissible as evidence. Operators could install cameras voluntarily and claim they offered high welfare, but the resolution would not be good enough for court. Legislation was therefore required to ensure compliance with the technical issues.

Ross Montague (RM) said that a major problem in Scotland was the lack of abattoir facilities in rural areas. The abattoir on Islay had recently closed and Galashiels had stopped killing. Having to transport animals further afield for slaughter was a welfare issue. Abattoirs were closing because of cost and red tape. He was not saying that CCTV was a bad idea but consideration must be given to the cost. CG said that all legislation must be accompanied by a financial memorandum.

JP said he had spoken to Quality Meat Scotland (QMS) about the cost impact. The Scottish Government awarded millions of pounds in subsidies, including money for upgrading abattoir facilities. He had been told that the Scottish Government could not subsidise the installation of CCTV but he believed there was a precedent in grants of £10million recently given to renovate flats in Glasgow.

BW said she and JP had recently spoken of this. Once something was made a legal requirement, government could not give a grant for meeting that requirement. Another way to address this would be to issue guidance on the best way to site or position cameras.

Jack Johnstone (JJ) asked how many slaughterhouses there were in Scotland. JP said there were 42. RM thought this figure would include cutting plants and there might be fewer. JP said his figure included the Vion poultry plant. Andrew Voas (AV) said he would be surprised if there were as many as 42.

Denis Hearsum (DH) suggested that legislation was not necessary if slaughterhouse customers insisted that the premises have CCTV. KF said that Animal Aid had carried out preliminary work on this<sup>1</sup>. They had approached supermarkets and the ten largest supermarkets had taken this option. JP said that the voluntary approach meant that there was no enforceable stipulation about the siting of cameras, or the required quality of footage. Evidence of cruelty would not be captured. DH said that the supermarkets could stipulate these and if the requests were not met, could simply stop buying.

CG asked the Scottish Government officials for more information on guidance. BW said that they would let the industry write such guidance, and a code could be made under the 2006 Act.

CG asked which Scottish slaughterhouses had CCTV. JP said that some had it, but not in lairage or killing areas. KF added that in their research south of the border Animal Aid had found that there were cameras in 19% of red meat slaughterhouses (amounting to 48% of red meat volume); and in 28% of white meat slaughterhouses (amounting to 59% of white meat volume).

AV asked if JP had spoken to QMS about whether they would support guidance and could incorporate it into their quality assurance scheme. JP said that QMS had no objection to legislation.

CG proposed that the Group could ask stakeholders such as QMS, supermarkets and industry bodies for their position on the provision of uniform guidance for slaughterhouses, allied with the possibility of an embargo such as the withdrawal of a logo. JP saw that as a first step but felt that legislation would be necessary after that. CG advised against stipulating legislation and asked which inspectorate would monitor legislation. JP said that Scotland for Animals would not support guidance as a substitute for legislation. KF said that there

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<sup>1</sup> KF has supplied the following additional information: The supermarkets that already insist on CCTV are: Asda, Aldi, the Co-operative, Iceland, Lidl, Marks & Spencer, Morrisons, Sainsbury's, Tesco and Waitrose, along with wholesalers Booker. Animal Aid has letters from each of their CEOs stating that CCTV would be in the slaughter and stunning areas for all species by the end of 2011.

was a risk that a voluntary scheme would not oblige operators to hand over footage. CG suggested however that operators might lose certification under assurance schemes.

Brian Hosie (BH) said there would be a lot of support for CCTV in the meat industry. It was a major employer and exporter, providing jobs in remote areas. Scotland's "act" must be cleaner and more defensible, and he was sure that the Scottish Association of Meat Wholesalers (SAMW) would support a transparent approach.

Mike Flynn (MF) said that he regularly visited slaughterhouses. He did not think the industry would object to installing CCTV and in some instances it would provide protection against untrue allegations. He thought it unlikely the QMS standards would cover CCTV, although supermarket schemes did.

It was proposed that a sub-committee of the Cross-Party Group be set up to work on this issue. The Secretary would arrange this. JJ suggested that the sub-committee could review the issue for a year or 18 months, after which the Group could consider whether the legal route was worthwhile. MF drew a parallel with the measures covering competence in shooting deer introduced under the Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011 where the provision existed but would only be brought in if a review showed that it was necessary. This gave people the opportunity to comply voluntarily.

RM recommended that NFUS be consulted, as users of abattoirs. LA said that she would write to the whole Group and ask who wanted to be on the sub-group, and with input from the sub-group would carry out a mini-consultation on approaches to guidance and/or legislation. While the officials were constrained by resources and government priorities, the Group was able to take a political approach.

BW repeated that the industry would write the guidance and the Scottish Government could endorse it. JP asked for legal input to the sub-group.

CG asked if supermarket kite marks covered welfare at slaughter. KF said they did not as brands tended not to show anything about slaughter. MF said that all accepted farm assurance schemes included conditions on humane slaughter. AV said that supermarkets had rigid requirements, expected food to be safe, and carried out audits; KF said that was the case in theory but there were exceptions.

**Action Point: Secretary to write to Group and seek volunteers/nominations for sub-group. Sub-group to recommend stakeholders for consultation, and draw up questions.**

#### **4. Next meeting**

March 2012. Suggested topic – review of the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006.

#### **5. Any other business**

JJ said that Dogs Trust had written to all local authorities in Scotland offering to supply free microchips, training and scanners. There had only been five replies. He asked Group members to pass on any local authority contacts to him.

Helene Mauchlen (HM) thanked the Group for its support on the issue of licensing and registration of equine establishments. A good deal of evidence had been collected and used for lobbying MSPs, Scottish Government and Ministers.

Subscriptions were now due and could be given to the Secretary at this meeting or the next. The rate was £10 per organisation.