

Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee
Wednesday 25 February 2026
5th Meeting, 2026 (Session 6)

PE2130: Make it illegal to remove all the hair from a horse's tail

Introduction

Petitioner James A Mackie

Petition summary Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to introduce a ban on the removal of all hair from a horse's tail to leave a bare stump, other than for medical reasons.

Webpage <https://petitions.parliament.scot/petitions/PE2130>

1. [The Committee last considered this petition at its meeting on 26 November 2025.](#) At that meeting, the Committee agreed to write to the Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity.
2. The petition summary is included in **Annexe A** and the Official Report of the Committee's last consideration of this petition is at **Annexe B**.
3. The Committee has received new written submissions from the Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity, and the Petitioner, which are set out in **Annexe C**.
4. [Written submissions received prior to the Committee's last consideration can be found on the petition's webpage.](#)
5. [Further background information about this petition can be found in the SPICe briefing](#) for this petition.
6. [The Scottish Government gave its initial response to the petition on 8 January 2025.](#)
7. Every petition collects signatures while it remains under consideration. At the time of writing, 61 signatures have been received on this petition.

Action

8. The Committee is invited to consider what action it wishes to take.

Clerks to the Committee
February 2026

Annexe A: Summary of petition

PE2130: Make it illegal to remove all the hair from a horse's tail

Petitioner

James A Mackie

Date Lodged

4 December 2024

Petition summary

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to introduce a ban on the removal of all hair from a horse's tail to leave a bare stump, other than for medical reasons.

Background information

The tail is an extension of the horse's spine, made up of two parts: the dock, the skin and muscles covering the vertebrae; and long hairs (the skirt) that fall below the dock. It is a vital part of the horse's anatomy serving several functions: balance and temperature regulation, pest deterrence, and communication of the horse's mood.

The practice of completely docking a horse's tail was banned in 1949.

Many horse breeders try to present their horses in a "historic manner". As they cannot dock the tail, they remove all the hair from the tail, leaving the bare stump. That practice is cosmetic and can cause the horse stress, as well as exposing the horse to, or hiding, other conditions.

An alternative to removing tail hair is braiding which keeps the hair out of harm's way and can be undone easily allowing the tail to function as it should.

Annexe B: Extract from Official Report of last consideration of PE2130 on 26 November 2025

The Convener: PE2130, which was lodged by James A Mackie, calls on the Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to introduce a ban on the removal of all hair from a horse's tail, leaving a bare stump, other than for medical reasons. We previously considered the petition in March, when we agreed to write to the Government to seek further information on the work to update the "Code of Practice for the Welfare of Equidae", including timescales for completing the update and how the petitioner and other stakeholders might contribute to the process.

In the Scottish Government's response, which was sent to the committee in April, it was stated that the new equine code was being drafted by stakeholders and that the Government was confident that a

"sufficiently wide-ranging and varied base of equine expertise"

was already contributing to the development of the new code. The Government anticipated that the code would be published by late summer, but there is no evidence that that happened.

In addition, in their submissions, the petitioner and the charity Animal Concern suggest that a number of organisations are supportive of a ban. They also point to the decision that was taken by the Great Yorkshire Show to ban all horses with shaved tails from any competition or exhibition.

Do members have any comments or suggestions for action? Given that we were promised that something would be published by the end of the summer, which did not happen, it might be appropriate for us to keep the petition open a little bit longer and to write to the Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity to ask for a progress report and a rather more clear timeline for the publication of the Scottish Government's equine code.

Fergus Ewing: I agree. In doing so, we could ask the Government to respond to the petitioner's submission of 30 October and Animal Concern's submission of 5 November. The petitioner pointed out that we should perhaps have written to the Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, and I think that he is probably right. So, mea culpa, or perhaps nostra culpa—that was our fault. I thought that I should put that on the record, because I am grateful to the petitioner for pointing that out.

There is quite a lot in the submissions from the petitioner and Animal Concern, so it would be helpful to put those points to the minister, although the main point is that, although the Government promised that the code would be published in the summer, it has not yet materialised.

The Convener: Thank you, Mr Ewing. Due to your erudition, Latin is used more frequently in this committee than it is in any other committee of the Parliament. In any event—mea culpa, nostra culpa or whatever—are we content to keep the petition open and to pursue the issues as described?

CPPP/S6/26/5/9

Members *indicated agreement.*

Annexe C: Written submissions

Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity written submission, 8 December 2025

PE2130/F: Make it illegal to remove all the hair from a horse's tail

Thank you for your letter of 1 December 2025 regarding PE2130: Make it illegal to remove all the hair from a horse's tail.

The Committee will wish to note that following discussions with equine stakeholders, it has been agreed that the existing Equine Code will now be replaced with Equine Guidance. Unlike Codes, Guidance does not require to be laid before and approved by resolution of the Scottish Parliament and is therefore much easier to keep up to date. This ensures that evolving equine practices, changes to statute etc. can quickly be written into Guidance and published in a timely manner.

Regarding the timeline for publication of the new Equine Guidance, I can advise that the Scottish Government is aiming to publish it in early March 2026. In terms of where this work has got to, the Equine Working Group responsible for drafting the new Guidance is currently engaged in a final round of consultation with key equine stakeholders to essentially road test the Guidance and obtain feedback. Following this stage, final amendments will be made where necessary, at which point the Guidance should be ready for final formatting and publication.

Responding to the issues raised by Animal Concern on the practice of trimming/shaving an equine's tail, I can advise that this practice will be addressed in the new Equine Guidance. I can also confirm that the Scottish Government has no plans at this time to legislate to prohibit the removal of the hair on an equine's tail.

I hope this is helpful.

Yours sincerely,

JIM FAIRLIE

Petitioner written submission, 28 January 2026

PE2130/G: Make it illegal to remove all the hair from a horse's tail

Despite the concerns of many equine societies and vets, the Government has no intention of doing anything to stop the practice.

The SSPC have indicated that they are against the practice and the Great Yorkshire Show, one of the biggest agricultural and equine shows in the UK has announced it will not accept any horse at its show where the tail has been shaved off.

The Government has yet to publish its equine guidelines even in draft form. The public and concerned groups have no idea what the Government may put in the guidelines and what protection it will give to horses, as it states that it has no intention to legislate against the practice. The issuing of draft guidelines for equine

health and safety should be published to get the public's opinion and from that a judgment on legislating against the practice can be properly debated and made. The public is concerned that the government is not listening to genuine concerns, therefore ignoring the situation.

Should the committee decide to close the Petition, it will be open to me to submit another Petition in the next Parliament once the Government publishes its draft guidelines.