

Labour:

Protecting Animals



Our Labour values tell us that we have a moral duty to treat the animals we share our planet with in a humane and compassionate way. No other major political party has such a proven track record of decisive action for animals at home, on farms and in the wild.

The last Labour Government achieved much to end the cruel and unnecessary suffering of animals: the banning of hunting with dogs, securing an end to cosmetic testing on animals, banning fur farming and introducing the Animal Welfare Act 2006.

This is a legacy that we are proud of – one which we believe shows that Labour is the only party to trust on animal welfare.

A Labour Government will continue to lead the way on animal welfare, starting with these six pledges that build on our previous achievements at home and abroad.



Ed Miliband
Leader of the Labour Party



Maria Eagle
Shadow Secretary of State for the
Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Defend the Hunting ban

Ten years ago the Labour Party ended the cruel practice of hunting with dogs. Labour believes that the unnecessary and prolonged suffering of defenceless animals has no place in civilised society.

The hunting ban is a testament to the progress made since the days of bear baiting and other such barbaric blood sports.

Yet despite its success and the overwhelming support of the British public, the Hunting Act 2004 is under threat from the Tories and the Liberal Democrats, who have promised to hold a free vote on repealing the Act. David Cameron has repeatedly stated his opposition to the Hunting Act.

Only Labour can protect the Hunting Act because Labour is the only major political party committed to defending it.

Ban the use of wild animals in circuses

Travelling circuses are no place for wild animals. Being moved from place to place in cramped and substandard enclosures, forced training and performance, loud noises and crowds of people are the unavoidable distressing realities for animals in circuses.

The Labour Party believes that animals should not be subjected to the unacceptable conditions of circus life. Unfortunately despite calls from the British public, MPs and animal welfare campaigners, this Tory-led Government have failed to take action to end this abuse.

Despite promising to ban the use of wild animals in travelling circuses in England in March 2012, the Tory-led Government blocked the legislation. The next Labour Government will ban this cruel practice.





End the Government's ineffective and inhumane badger culls

Bovine TB is a scourge on our countryside; it devastates livelihoods as well as communities. The last Labour Government spent £50 million and ten years on a field trial which came to the conclusion that badger culls could make no “meaningful contribution” to reducing Bovine TB – and in fact could make the problem worse.

The Tory-led Government decided to go against the science and proceed with badger culls. Following repeated failures to meet deadlines and targets, they have now effectively become an inept unscientific mass cull with no rigorous monitoring or evaluation.

The Government disbanded the Independent Expert Panel, which found the first year of pilot culls in 2013 were neither effective nor humane. A member of the panel has since described the Government's approach as “willfully ignoring” the concerns of its own scientists and “as an abuse of the scientific method”.

Only a Labour Government will end these disastrous badger culls and put scientific evidence at the heart of policy. We will work with scientists, wildlife groups and farmers to develop an alternative strategy to get the problem of Bovine TB under control, including stricter cattle measures and prioritising badger and cattle vaccinations.

Improve the protection of dogs and cats

Poor dog breeding practices cause suffering. There are more puppies being bred than there are good homes available, while large scale ‘puppy farms’ and ‘backstreet breeders’ operate in terrible conditions where dogs are frequently sick or unsocialised.

Unlawful trafficking of puppies with little to no regard for their health means many fall sick or die shortly after purchase, leaving their owners heartbroken and lumbered with huge vet bills. Unsocialised dogs can present a threat to humans and other animals and are victims of the trade that views them as mere commodities.

Ineffective regulation, a lack of information for pet owners and a failure to deal with irresponsible and cruel breeding practices have shown that the Tory-led Government cannot be trusted to improve dog welfare. There are also concerns relating to the breeding and sale of cats.

Labour will review the inadequate regulations on the sale and breeding of dogs and cats. It is clear that poor breeding and rearing practices contribute greatly to the number of abandoned animals rescue centres have to deal with. The next Labour Government will build on our landmark Animal Welfare Act 2006 to develop a strategy which brings together improved dog and cat welfare.

Tackle wildlife crime and reduce animal cruelty on shooting estates

Birds of prey are intensively persecuted, and iconic birds such as the hen harrier are in danger of being lost as a breeding species in England. More needs to be done to protect these birds of prey on shooting estates.

The practice of snaring also needs to be reviewed. Snares can cause extreme suffering to animals and often a painful, lingering death. Because snares are used mainly, though not exclusively, on shooting estates to protect game birds, it is right that Labour works with stakeholders to address this cruel practice.

The Labour Party is clear that more should be done to reduce the suffering of animals on shooting estates. The next Labour Government will undertake an independent review on how to:

- End the illegal persecution of birds of prey, such as the hen harrier
- Prevent non-target animals getting trapped in snares
- Ensure the humane treatment of game birds

Lead the fight against global animal cruelty

The humane treatment of all animals should be a benchmark for any civilised society. National governments have a duty to work together to fight animal cruelty across the world.

The last Labour Government had a proud record of achievement on international animal welfare including the introduction of the EU trade ban on seal products, preventing commercial whaling and banning the use of great apes in animal experiments.

The next Labour Government will again lead international efforts to combat illegal wildlife crime, including online. Labour will push to end all commercial whaling, and prevent the poaching and near extinction of endangered species such as elephants, rhinos and tigers, which perpetuates criminal activity and undermines economic development in the countries in which it occurs.

The next election will be the most important for a generation. Labour is the only major party that offers a clear choice to protect the welfare of animals. Our decisive record of action for animals at home, on farms and in the wild is a source of pride. A vote for Labour on 7 May is a vote against animal cruelty.