



LEAGUE
AGAINST CRUEL SPORTS

PROTECT

No19 JANUARY 2018

INVESTIGATE

Tally Ho is a No No 12

A real ban on hunting in Scotland is edging closer

EDUCATE

Sharing Knowledge on Dog Fighting 09

Knowledge is power, so we have produced factsheets on dog fighting for vets and police

PROTECT

Down to the Wire 07

Our new report offers viable alternatives to inhumane snares



Hot on the Trail

Did 2017 see the beginning of the end for trail hunting?

WELCOME

Welcome to the first *Protect* Magazine of 2018. Wait, where did 2017 go?

Time flying by might be a sign of ageing, but working at the League Against Cruel Sports certainly speeds things up a bit too! Last year we had two major challenges come out of the blue – a general election and an attempt to ban trail hunting on National Trust land. There's a great feature on how the National Trust campaign turned out, starting over there on page three. There's also a guest article from Helen Beynon, the National Trust member who proposed the motion, and as she says, not achieving the ban wasn't the end – it was just the end of the beginning.

It may, however, be the beginning of the end for hunts in Scotland. A couple of years ago the League really started focussing on the way Scottish hunts are jumping through loopholes in the law, and we collected powerful evidence to prove it. As well as a successful prosecution, the evidence led to government questions and an independent review, and last month the SNP passed a motion to support a real ban on hunting in Scotland. If this happens, it will be a major achievement – and may have repercussions in Westminster. Read more about this on page 12.

Our attempts to ban the use of snares in the UK are often blocked by those who claim that wildlife control is 'necessary' and that there 'aren't any alternatives'. A new League report counters both these points and will prove valuable in the fight to get these appalling weapons banned – see page 7.

During 2017 we put a huge amount of work into understanding and combatting dog fighting. We've been working with organisations, police, vets and individuals who are passionate about stopping this awful activity. One of these is Shakira Free Miles, founder of The SaveaBulls charity and winner of Vet Nurse of the Year in 2016. Meet Shakira and find out about her work on page 15.

There's plenty more in this edition, including some great photos from the amazing work our supporter groups do (could you join them?). And our regular stunning photo in the centre pages – worthy to go up on the fridge! Please enjoy this edition of *Protect* and as ever, thank you for your invaluable support, we can't do it without you!



Chris Pitt
with Stanley and Doris

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Hot on the trail of illegal hunting

2017 marked the beginning of the end for 'trail' hunting. That may seem like a bold claim to make, given that this activity has been thriving since the introduction of the Hunting Act in 2005, but we do not make it lightly.

After an unpromising start – the calling of an election which could potentially have led to a Parliament with a pro-hunt majority for the first time since the ban – last year saw two significant occurrences which were very damaging to those who support hunting.

The first was the election itself. We have covered this in detail in previous *Protects*, but instead of a pro-hunt majority in Parliament, there was such an outcry about hunting during the election that the Conservatives were forced to drop plans to hold a free vote on repeal of the Hunting Act for now. This means that it is unlikely there will be a direct attack on the Hunting Act from this Government in the form of an outright repeal at least until autumn 2019 (unless an election is called in the meantime, which could change things), although they may try to weaken the Act in other ways.

The second occurrence was the motion to ban trail hunting on National Trust land. As you will probably be aware, the motion failed by the narrowest of margins. But while this was disappointing, we believe it was actually a moral victory for anti-hunt campaigners.

NATIONAL TRUST – NEXT STEPS

While the overall result was against the motion, we won the popular vote. A total of 28,629 voted for the motion, compared to 27,525 against – a margin of more than 1,100. However, some members leave their votes in the hands of the Chairman of the AGM – and as the National Trust had stated that they were opposed to the motion, most of these 'discretionary' votes would have been used to support the continuation of trail hunting. The final result saw the motion defeated by 299 votes.

It's also worth noting that every year the National Trust give their 'advice' on each proposed motion, and traditionally National Trust members tend to follow this advice, in large numbers. Realistically then, this wasn't a level playing field, so to actually get more votes than those following the National Trust's advice was quite an achievement.

The other barrier which we had to overcome was confusion. The term 'trail' hunting is unfamiliar to most people. Most also believe that hunting is illegal (it is), and therefore they assume that trail hunting must be a legal sport. This is the line that the National Trust has been supporting, and therefore to them it sounds reasonable that they should allow a legal sport on their land.

Continued on next page...

HOT ON THE TRAIL OF ILLEGAL HUNTING (CONTINUED)



TRAIL HUNTING – THE TRUTH

A brief history lesson is enlightening: there are three main types of simulated hunting – ‘trail’ hunting, ‘drag’ hunting, and ‘clean boot’ hunting. The first two imply that foxhounds will be following artificial scents dragged across the countryside and this is why people think they are the same, but there are very important differences. Drag hunting has been around for 200 years, and involves the full regalia and tradition you’d expect to see on a hunt, however the hounds are trained to follow a non-animal scent – they are not trained to chase or kill animals – in fact they only ‘hunt’ in areas unlikely to contain foxes or hares. The National Trust motion did not attempt to ban drag hunting. Clean boot hunting is the least talked about and only uses bloodhounds who are set to follow the natural scent of people running, not of foxes or hares.

When actual hunting was banned in 2005, you would have thought that if hunts had wanted to hunt legally, they would have simply switched to drag hunting? But they didn’t – none of them. Instead they invented ‘trail’ hunting – which was designed to look and sound like drag hunting, but with many differences. One crucial difference is that the hounds were still trained to follow animal-based scents, such as fox or hare urine. So, if the hounds pick up the scent of a real fox or hare, chase and catch it, the hunt may claim it was an accident.

But it’s not the only difference. In drag hunting, the huntsmen know where the scent is being laid in advance of the hunt so they can stop the hounds if they deviate from it following any other scent, preventing risk to wildlife and people alike. ‘Trail Hunting’ is deliberately different, with the course of the trail – which is laid in areas likely to contain foxes or hares, – only being known to the (alleged) trail-layer. Without knowing where the trail has been laid, how can the huntsman stop the hounds chasing the scent of a real animal and killing it? The answer, of course, is that chasing and killing animals is exactly what he wants them to do, and if witnesses see it happening he can then claim ‘ignorance’.

In most successful prosecutions of members of hunts they were found guilty of illegal hunting while claiming to be ‘trail’ hunting. But many more have escaped justice, because the police and the CPS have often believed the hunt’s version of events, as trying to prove that the ‘accident’ the hunts claim was deliberate is very difficult.

Although it should be simple – you trained your hounds to follow animal-based scents, you put them in places likely to contain the animals they were trained to chase, and when they chased these animals you did not stop them when you could. Guilty.

One of the ways we want to strengthen the Hunting Act is the introduction of a ‘recklessness’ clause, which would enable people to be prosecuted not only when it can be proven they intended to hunt wild mammals with dogs, but also if it can be proven they were reckless by not preventing their dogs from doing so.

400 PAGES OF PROOF

We threw a lot of evidence at the National Trust campaign – 400 pages of it, in fact. To support the part of the AGM motion that asked for a stop to licensing trail hunting on NT land, we referred to the *Trail of Lies* report produced by IFAW in 2015, a comprehensive 200-page document which clearly shows that trail hunting is a cover for illegal hunting. Further information from hunt monitors since the report was published has confirmed its conclusions by expanding the data to cover the majority of hunts in England and Wales.

To support the part of the AGM motion that asked for a stop to licensing the exercising of hunt hounds on NT land, two reports were produced during the campaign. Firstly, the League’s 24-page report *The Conservation Problems of Hunting with Dogs During the Ban in England and Wales*, and soon after, Professor Steven Harris’ excellent 50-page report *The Impact of Hunting with Dogs on Wildlife and Conservation*. From both it is clear that a pack of hounds let loose in the

countryside, whether hunting or just being exercised, can cause disturbance to habitats, animals and the environment.

And finally, to support the part of the AGM motion that asks for a stop to 'exempt' hunting on NT land, the League has now produced a 150-page report titled *'Observed' to Death* about stag hunting, in which the abuse of exempt hunting by deer hunts is exposed. The Hunting Act 2004 allows some hunting to take place if done for particular purposes and following strict conditions, and this is known as 'exempt' hunting. Hunts have been exploiting these exemptions, as in the case of the 'Research and Observation' exemption, to avoid prosecution, and this new report shows exactly how stag hunts have done this across the last 12 years. We believe that if every National Trust member in the country had seen this evidence, then the vote to ban trail hunting would have been massive.

THE BEGINNING OF THE END

Trail hunting is still allowed on National Trust land, and still continues all over England and Wales. However, after the motion to ban trail hunting was proposed, the Trust changed their licensing conditions – this included banning the use of animal-based scents, and also banning terrier men. While we believe these changes didn't go far enough – a crucial part of all this is that hunts need to be closely monitored, something the Trust haven't effectively done in the past – they may be a step in the right direction if they are properly implemented (although so far it does not seem to be the case). It also suggested an underlying distrust of 'trail' hunting.

Since the vote took place, we have been watching National Trust properties very carefully, both in person and via the excellent output of the various dedicated hunt monitoring groups around the country. From the very first weekend of the hunting season, reports of hunts taking place on NT land were coming in. For each of these, we have been asking the National Trust questions, such as:

- Did they have a licence? If so, why weren't the details published on your website, as per your guidelines?
- If they didn't have a licence, why are you allowing them to trespass?
- If they are claiming to be trail hunting, why did they have a terrier man with them?

Every reported incident puts another question mark over the term 'trail' hunting – and all those question marks will help the public, journalists and MPs come to the realisation that trail hunting is nothing but a sham.

We may have lost the battle at the National Trust AGM, but we shall win the war.

TAKE ACTION

Are you aware of hunting on National Trust land near you?

Let our confidential Animal Crimewatch team know on **01483 361 108**

www.league.org.uk/crimewatch



ANIMAL
CRIMEWATCH

Taking on the Trust



By Helen Beynon, who tabled the motion to ban trail hunting on NT land

Over a year ago I was invited to a demonstration against the Atherstone Fox Hunt. Shocked this was still happening, I went. There, in full view of local councillors and hunt staff, peaceful protesters were pelted with horse manure, attacked, and even threatened with rape. Determined to find out more, I asked Northants Hunt Saboteurs if I could join them to see what was happening.

The first time I went to see a hunt in my area, I saw a hound struck down by traffic. Hounds are often left to stray. Weeping to see this beautiful animal in pain, friends told me he was likely to be shot as he was no longer 'useful'. On the second occasion I was seized by blind panic when I saw a fox chased by hounds, closely followed by riders. I was abused by hunt supporters for simply trying to see what was happening. I was driven at, spat on, whilst police did nothing. I got home and told my family I had gone back in time to a place where the law did not apply.

"I was driven at, spat on, whilst police did nothing."

When I found out the National Trust licensed this horror, I spent three days complaining before I was grudgingly told about members' resolutions. I wondered how I would get 50 members to support me, the minimum needed for resolutions. In less than a couple of months, 93 members agreed to support myself and the resolution to ban 'trail hunting' on National Trust land.

The journey led me to the National Trust AGM – I have never spoken at such a large event and without the support of one of the team, Sally, I'm not sure I'd have conquered my nerves. When the results were announced I was so dazed I didn't understand at first. When I realised that Chair's use of proxy votes had defeated the resolution I knew this could not be the end. So many members supported us!

It will be interesting to see how members, the media and the Trustees hold the hunts to account over the coming months. My husband thought I'd have more time after the vote, but as one fellow campaigner said, this is just the end of the beginning.'

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Walking in a winter wildlife wonderland

The winter months can mean hard times for wildlife and they cope with it in a variety of ways.

Red Deer naturally slow their metabolism to account for the reduced quality and quantity of food available and spend much of their time sitting around sheltering from the weather. They are generally sedentary animals and it is important that they have places, like the League's wildlife sanctuaries, where they can be left undisturbed.

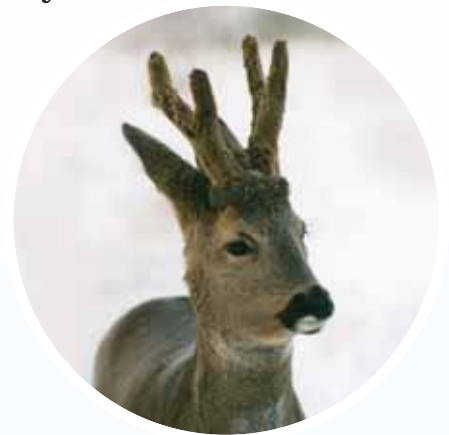
Hazel Dormice take extreme measures and hibernate under leaf litter until spring brings warmer weather. Sleeping through the coldest time of year may seem like an attractive proposition, but it is also a high risk strategy and 50% will die through predation or starvation. There is a concern that burgeoning numbers of pheasants roving through our woodlands are causing an increase in Hazel Dormouse winter mortality as evidence suggests that they peck the sleeping dormice to death.

Hedgehogs also usually hibernate, but recent mild winters have seen hedgehogs

active throughout the year. Hedgehogs are having a bad time nationally and you can help your local hedgehogs by providing a bit of cat food and water to supplement their diet.

Bats tend to spend the winter in traditional roosts where the temperature is stable, such as a cave or a roof space, waking occasionally for a drink and to do what comes naturally. A recent bat survey on Baronsdown detected at least five species of bat present and there are two active winter roosts.

Badgers spend more time in their relatively warm setts in winter, although come February the females give birth and will be ready to mate again. Like badgers, female Roe Deer use embryonic diapause to delay the development of their unborn kid, so they are born when there is plentiful food in spring. Strangely, Roe bucks lose their antlers and begin growing a new pair in mid-winter when food is scarce.



Foxes have to tough it out through the winter, no matter what the weather brings, retreating underground only in the worst conditions. They make the most of the misfortunes of others and, along with other scavengers, clear up the carcasses that would otherwise cause the spread of disease.

All part of our Baronsdown wonderland.



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Down to the wire

New research on viable alternatives to ‘inhumane’ snares must lead to ban

The use of snares to trap or kill wildlife has been practiced for many years, but they have also been abandoned or banned by many countries due to the indiscriminate and inhumane way they capture and kill animals. These wire nooses remain legal in the UK.

Those supporting the use of snares – predominantly from the ‘game’ shooting industry – claim the traps are humane, necessary, and that there are no alternatives. New research highlighted in our 2017 report, *The Problems of Snaring in the UK, and its Alternatives*, conclusively disproves these claims, and concludes that snares should be banned in all parts of the UK as a matter of urgency. Here’s why.

THERE ARE ALTERNATIVES

There are several alternative methods of ‘animal control’ that the report discusses, including seven non-lethal methods:

- No control
- Shepherding
- Tree guards (to prevent nibbling)
- Novel disturbances (such as flashing lights or rotating beacons)
- Guard animals (such as guard dogs or llamas)
- Habitat management
- Exclusion fencing

In the report all of the above and others are rated in terms of their efficiency, humaneness, safety, cost and how conservation-friendly they are. Snaring rates extremely poorly in these categories compared to all alternative methods.

THEY ARE MAINLY USED TO PROTECT ‘GAME’ BIRDS.

In 2015 the League commissioned a survey of major landowners in England and Wales to find out which types of wildlife management they carry out. 94% percent of respondents said they do not allow any snaring on land they own or manage.

Snares are predominantly used on land where shooting takes place. For example in upland areas in England, snares are used on 27% of landholdings which host shooting, compared to 0.1% of landholdings which do not.

“The report shows that snaring is not needed as there are many better alternatives”

Figures are similar in Wales and Scotland. There is no justification for shooting estates to continue using snares when non-lethal methods are available.

BANNED ACROSS EUROPE

The majority of EU countries have banned the use of snaring for quite some time. We contacted over 200 NGOs and Government officials of all the 28 EU countries and most have not reported anything that suggest that these bans are not working, or are causing significant problems. We only received reports of poor enforcement in Bulgaria and Italy.

CONCLUSIONS

The League’s new report shows that there is plenty of evidence that snaring causes many significant animal welfare and conservation problems, each of them serious enough to justify the banning of the use of snares. The report also shows that snaring is not needed as there are many better alternatives, and that banning snaring works in many countries. There’s no excuse: the Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish and UK Government should ban the use, manufacture, and trade of all type of snares.





WELSH ASSEMBLY SNARE PROGRESS

Our campaign to achieve a ban on snare use in Wales received a boost when the Welsh Assembly's Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee reported on their recent inquiry on the subject, which had been triggered by the petition we had started some months earlier.

The report made a number of welcome recommendations and crucially called for the Welsh Government to tighten the law on the use of snares in Wales if evidence (including the newly introduced, annual reviews of the current, voluntary Code of Practice on snare use) shows that a voluntary approach is not working.

The Committee recommended that when preparing any future legislation, the Welsh Government look at the Scottish experience of snare licensing and landowner responsibility

(vicarious liability) and should also consider an outright ban on snare use. The Welsh Government has responded to the report, accepting all the recommendations and outlining next steps. Addressing the data gaps in terms of snare use in Wales was identified as a priority so that future policy making can have a better evidence base.

A Natural Resources Wales consultation which closed in September contained a number of specific questions on snares and snare use and the League



submitted a full response, once again highlighting that only an outright ban on the manufacture, sale and use of snares can ensure that animal welfare is fully safeguarded.

We await the outcome of this consultation and continue to highlight our concerns to Welsh Assembly Members and Welsh Government officials.

SHARING OUR KNOWLEDGE ON DOG FIGHTING

Informative factsheets produced by the League are now available for professionals involved with people or animals linked with dog fighting.

The factsheets are designed specifically for veterinary professionals and law enforcement officers to enable them to identify the signs of dog fighting and take further action if required.

The Vet factsheet highlights typical wounding patterns for dogs involved in fighting, plus a range of signs to look out for such as puncture wounds, damaged gums, crudely cropped ears and tails and white marks on fur which could hide scarring. The factsheet also offers advice on how to record and report potential dog fighting activity.

The Law Enforcement factsheet includes the signs of dog fighting that a police officer might come across, such as frightened dogs showing aggression, with scarring on the face, head, front legs and thighs; home 'veterinary kits' such as antibiotics and sewing kits; and equipment potentially used by dog fighters including treadmills and 'break sticks' which are used to separate fighting dogs. There is also advice on the various legal powers that can be used to tackle dog fighting, the locations it can take place, and the connections between dog fighting and other serious crimes.



TAKE ACTION

If you would like a copy of one of the factsheets, they are available on our website or by calling us on **01483 524 250**

Are you aware of dog fighting in your area?

Contact our confidential Animal Crimewatch line on **01483 361 108**

www.league.org.uk/crimewatch



TOUGHER SENTENCES FOR ANIMAL ABUSE

The League, along with other animal welfare organisations, has been pushing for increased sentences for animal cruelty and last year this work paid off.

The Scottish Government beat Westminster to the punch by announcing a commitment to increasing the maximum sentence for some animal cruelty offences to five years.

The new sentencing will cover most animals which are kept as domestic, circus or farm animals, including dogs, cats, snakes, lizards, horses and many others.

A series of animal cruelty cases have demonstrated that longer sentences are necessary. These include the Ayrshire Ark case, a disgusting animal "sanctuary" where inspectors discovered dogs with injuries suspiciously like those inflicted in dog fights.

The League then welcomed Michael Gove's announcement in October that sentences were to be increased in England and Wales. Philippa King, Acting CEO of the League Against Cruel Sports said:

"Alongside other animal welfare charities we've been campaigning for more appropriate sentencing for animal cruelty for some time, so it's excellent news that the government has listened to the people who are dealing with this on the front line."

A petition supporting the League's call to introduce stronger penalties for those involved in dog fighting topped 100,000 signatures during 2017.



SCOTTISH HUNTERS ARE UN-APPEALING

Two members of the Jedforest Hunt in the Scottish Borders, who were found guilty of illegal fox hunting following evidence provided by the League Against Cruel Sports, dropped their appeal against the convictions.

The guilty verdict of father and son, John Clive Richardson and Johnny Riley on 29th June 2017 made them the first members of a mounted hunt to be convicted under the Protection of Wild Mammals (Scotland) Act 2002.

Robbie Marsland, Director of the League Against Cruel Sports, Scotland said: "We welcome the news that John Clive Richardson and Johnny Riley have abandoned plans to appeal their conviction proving beyond any doubt that the pair broke the law back in February 2016.

"This was the first successful prosecution for mounted fox hunting in Scotland and while we were delighted to secure a conviction, we remain of the view that the law needs to be strengthened."



Evening on Baronsdown
© Graham Floyd



LEAGUE
AGAINST CRUEL SPORTS



TALLY HO IS A NO NO IN SCOTLAND

The campaign for a real hunting ban in Scotland is gathering pace...

In November Green MSP Alison Johnstone announced at a League reception at Holyrood that she intends to lodge a Members' Bill in the Scottish Parliament to ban foxhunting.

Members' Bills are the equivalent of Private Members' Bills in Westminster. Ms Johnstone, who has been a longstanding opponent of blood sports, has guaranteed that the Parliament will formally consider whether or not to introduce a full ban. The SNP-led minority Government are, meanwhile, consulting on bringing forward their own legislation. Although Ms Johnstone's bill is a massive step forward, it's still essential for us to keep putting pressure on the Scottish Government to change the law.

Meanwhile, SNP party delegates have been debating foxhunting. In a debate led by activist Ashley Douglas and Ruth Maguire MSP, the National Council policymaking meeting on 2nd December voted overwhelmingly to support a ban on mounted hunts using dogs and a restriction on the number of dogs that can be used to flush to guns.

The SNP's decision is non-binding on the Scottish Cabinet, but the League are delighted that party activists are onside with a real ban (at the same meeting, the SNP also voted to support the introduction of licensing for driven grouse estates).

The news about the Members' Bill and the SNP come off the back of a tremendous amount of work by League Scotland staff and supporters. We spent the autumn showcasing our new report, Tally Ho!, and new footage at party conferences. The vast majority of people we spoke to were horrified that huntsmen are still crying "Tally Ho!" and setting dogs on foxes in 21st century Scotland.

We also had supporters taking to the streets the length and breadth of Scotland in support of a ban, have regularly had stories in the press covering the activities of our team of investigators, and have been busy talking to MSPs, Government officials, journalists, partner organisations and members of the public.

Key issues are that the Scottish Government must ban mounted hunts from chasing and killing foxes with hounds, there must be a limit of two dogs used to "flush from cover", and the law in Scotland must include a clause on recklessness, thereby preventing "trail hunting". We hear that the Government will legislate in 2019; we'll be using every day between now and then to campaign for a real ban.



OUTRAGE AS HUNT CASE DISMISSED DUE TO 'INSUFFICIENT EVIDENCE'

A trial of three members of the Derwent Hunt was dismissed by a magistrate who ruled there was "no case to answer" due to "insufficient evidence" – despite video footage showing the pack of hounds in full pursuit of a fox.

The footage, captured by members of the Sheffield Hunt Saboteurs Tommy Woodward, shows riders dressed in red waiting with a full pack of hounds outside a small copse as terrier men are sent in. Shortly after, the footage shows the hound pack in full pursuit of a fox, with no attempt to recall them seen from the hunt staff.

FINAL RACE FOR BIRMINGHAM GREYHOUNDS

In 2017, on the exact anniversary of its opening, Birmingham's Hall Green Stadium held its final greyhound race. The track was destined for demolition to make way for houses.

Hall Green wasn't the only major Greyhound track to close in 2017, with Wimbledon also closing down to make way for a new football stadium.



BULLFIGHTING BLOCKED IN THE BALEARICS

The Parliament of the Balearic Islands, a region within Spain which includes Majorca, Menorca and Ibiza, have effectively banned bullfighting – in spite of Spanish government attempts to prevent the 'sport' being stopped.

The government had previously overruled a ban in neighbouring region Catalonia, so the Balearians worked within their own regulations to find a way to stop bullfighting legally.

They did this by amending animal welfare regulations so that, for example, killing or injuring a bull in a bullfight is banned.

SENTIENCE AND SENTENCING

Positive measures to protect animals were announced by the government in December.

The Animal Welfare Bill 2018 includes an increase in sentencing for animal abuse from a maximum of six months jail to five years, and also states that animal sentience must be recognised in any future laws.

The League's Chris Luffingham said: "This move is a welcome and huge step forward for animals. When you consider that dog fighting is among the crimes covered by the new sentencing, it's obvious that six months maximum imprisonment was never enough. The world is waking up to the fact that animals are fully sentient individuals able to feel pain and suffer, so it's a no-brainer that our legal system needs to recognise this."

The League has been campaigning for an increase in sentences for animal cruelty for some time. Our petition specifically asking for tougher sentences for those involved in dog fighting has been signed by over 100,000 people.

FOX HUNTING OPPOSITION GROWS

Public opposition to fox hunting has hit 85%, its highest ever level, according to our annual polling with Ipsos Mori.

The figures, released on Boxing Day, show that 85% of the public support keeping the ban on fox hunting, up from 84% last year. Opposition to legalising deer hunting (87%) and hare hunting and coursing (90%) is also high. The use of respected and consistent polling over the years clearly shows how opposition to hunting has grown: opposition to legalising fox hunting has risen from 73% in 2008 to 85% this year. The number of people in rural areas supporting the ban on fox hunting has risen significantly from 69% to 81% in just five years.

VINNIE JONES TACKLED FOR ANIMAL CRUELTY

Former footballer and actor Vinnie Jones shot into the headlines after apparently posting an image on his Twitter account showing what appears to be more than 100 dead foxes, accompanied by the comment "A real night lamping #foxes anyone beat this?"

Philippa King, Acting CEO for the League, said: "The joy expressed here highlights the true nature of this activity, which is killing wildlife for fun and has nothing to do with fox control."

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Time for a ban

League NI has been working to bring Northern Ireland in line with the rest of the UK in terms of banning hunting - and not only do we want a ban, but we want watertight legislation that cannot be undermined by hunts.

Daniel Barclay,
Public Affairs Officer,
Northern Ireland

In 2015 an Ipsos MORI poll showed that 61% of people in the country believe it is illegal to hunt animals using dogs (it isn't), and this fact is played upon to keep the issue low key in relation to the wider public.

We hear repeatedly that hunting "is not cruel"; "it is humane" - and this line is peddled across the board but we all know, including the hunting fraternity, that it is total fallacy.

We have a growing base of support in Stormont at the moment and we have a lot more sitting on the fence, waiting to see which side to come down on, but we are confident we can push them on to ours. In the first half of 2017 we met former leader of UUP, Mike Nesbitt, who was shocked and upset to see the reality of hunting and also snares, and left that meeting vowing his support. He has since resigned as party leader but is still an active MLA.

We hosted a meeting of farmers opposed to hunting in 2016 as well, and this was covered by the media. People are starting

"People are starting to stand up against the sheer arrogance of the hunt..."

.....
to stand up against the sheer arrogance of the hunt who feel they have the right to ride through and churn up any land they see fit with wanton disregard for bio-security and respect.

On one occasion a concerned lady contacted us to say that the local hunt had discovered that a family of foxes were living on her land and were going to ride through it two days later. This family has a court order from the mid-90s in place although she was told they did not recognise it, but on our advice she contacted the Countryside Alliance to say she would go public and to the PSNI if this hunt breached the working code of practice.

They responded by contacting all the local hunts to demand they toed the line, and that is what they did. We will continue to protect wildlife as best we can without a ban in place, and will keep campaigning until until we see this violent tradition outlawed.

But this will take time and focus. We have the groundwork laid, and we continue to build upon it. This is the age of information and there is nowhere for the reality of hunting to hide behind. Everything is caught on digital media and once online, it is forever available for those who seek it, and once seen cannot be unseen.

We will continue to fight for a ban on all cruel sports and with the tide of public opinion having overwhelmingly turned, it is time the minority in government heeded the call for democracy. This will happen in Northern Ireland and the League Against Cruel Sports will keep the focus and spotlight firmly on the things that the minority want to keep under the radar.



INTERVIEW



Seeing past the bull

Shakira Free Miles is an award winning vet nurse and campaigner. Her The SaveABulls campaign challenges Breed Specific Legislation in this country, which is enshrined in law under the Dangerous Dogs Act.

You must be busy enough as a vet nurse – why did you decide to start The SaveABulls?

I started The SaveABulls campaign after witnessing healthy, happy puppies being euthanised at a charity clinic. This is the reality of breed specific legislation (BSL). These puppies were labelled as 'dangerous' based on how they look alone. In law if a dog 'looks like it might be a risk' that's considered enough to justify euthanasia, however, scientific evidence proves otherwise. After learning about BSL, I had realised that there was no real active governmental lobbying or veterinary awareness about this situation. Doing nothing was simply not an option, so I decided to develop my own veterinary and evidence based campaign to highlight how BSL fails to protect the public from dog bites and also leads to the destruction of happy, healthy, well adjusted pets.

How will changing BSL impact on dog fighting

There is a current assumption that it's 'Pit Bull' type dogs that are abused through dog fighting. However this is frequently not true; there are many different types of dogs that are abused in this way. But the Government insists that the four breeds set out in the BSL are bred for fighting and therefore do not make suitable pets, and this encourages the perception that they are dangerous to people and leads the

public to believe that it's inevitable that the dogs will behave in this way. But there is substantial evidence that this isn't the case. The subjective nature of BSL also allows for the very victims to be judged as prohibited breed simply based on the fact that unscrupulous people have forced them into this awful world.

What experiences have you had with dogs involved in dog fighting?

Unfortunately, I've seen many, many injuries caused by accidental fights in the park and many I now would certainly question. Since educating myself I can certainly reflect and remember a few cases which have caused me great concern. I now write in veterinary journals to ensure that the profession is more aware and equipped with information to ensure their concerns can be addressed.

Do you think veterinary professionals are aware enough of dog fighting? Will the League's new factsheet help?

The profession may be aware that it is happening, however I do not think they are aware enough of the consequences. I am proud to say that I assisted the League team on this veterinary educational initiative and feel that it is imperative to ensure vets feel educated and safe when trying to help the dogs that are the true victims of dog fighting.

What needs to change to improve protection for dogs involved in dog fighting?

I personally think that it should be mandatory that vets and nurses report any acts of animal cruelty, especially dog fighting, with the support from the governing body that they are immune to any disagreements or action. And BSL should be replaced with legislation that's more effective at protecting the public from dog bites and which allows any dog rescued from dog fighting to be supported and considered for rehoming.



TAKE ACTION

To find out more about Shakira and SaveABulls, take a look at: www.saveabulls.com

Read more about our veterinary factsheet and how you can help spread the word on page 9.

FLYING THE FLAG FOR THE LEAGUE

Thanks to the wonderful work of our volunteers and supporter groups, the League's name and campaigns reach thousands of people across the country every year.

Whether at large festivals, local street stalls or protests at National Trust properties, dedicated League supporters have once more been helping animals by getting our messages out to the general public. Our heartfelt thanks to everyone who has given their time and energy on behalf of our shared cause!

CAN YOU HELP?

Joining one of our supporter groups – or starting your own – is a fantastic way to do something for animals, and can take as little or as much time as you want to give. It's also a great way to meet like-minded people!

We already have several established supporter groups around the UK, but we're about to get even bigger and better! We are trialling three expert Regional Campaigns Managers who will be active around the country backing our supporter groups and helping to attract more volunteers. With their help our aim is to hold more events, organise more local campaigns, form partnerships with local people and organisations, for example animal rescue centres and vets, put up posters, distribute leaflets and generally help to ensure the League is visible, effective and respected across the country (even more than we already are!).

So it's a great time to get on board – if you can spend even a small amount of time helping us, please get in touch and we'll point you at your nearest group.

TAKE ACTION

Can you give us some of your time to help us help animals?
Call us on **01483 524250**





THANK YOU FOR MAKING A DIFFERENCE TO ANIMALS

OUR FIRST WILDLIFE SANCTUARY EVENT (IN A WHILE)!

In October 2017 we had the pleasure of welcoming some of you to our flagship wildlife sanctuary, Baronsdown. Located in Exmoor Park, Baronsdown is a 250 acre oasis which offers a safe home to a variety of wildlife including deer, badgers, otters, bats, rabbits, squirrels, dormice and more than 50 species of birds.



Emma Hughes
Individual Giving Assistant

This Autumn event was an exciting occasion as it was the first time in almost 15 years that our supporters had the opportunity to see the resident Red Deer during Rutting season, when they use their spectacular antlers to compete with rival males and attempt to win the right to mate with the female deer in their herd.

Baronsdown sanctuary is of significant importance to these majestic animals as the land is surrounded by shooting estates. It is one of the only safe places in the area where wildlife can live without fear, which is why it is so important for us to protect it. Paul Tillsley, our sanctuary manager, has looked after Baronsdown for many years. He has a wealth of knowledge about wildlife conservation and works tirelessly to manage and maintain the sanctuary grounds for the wildlife and natural flora and fauna to thrive there.

Baronsdown is closed to the public to ensure the animals and their habitats are left untouched. The Autumn event enabled our supporters to closely observe the Red Deer in their natural habitat, explore the sanctuary's beautiful grounds and learn about the history of Baronsdown and why it is imperative we protect it.

The Autumn Rutting Weekend was a great success and we were all blown away by the beauty of Baronsdown.



We are so grateful to those who did attend the event and it was an absolute pleasure to meet so many like-minded people.

We have already begun planning for the next event in May, and if you would like to attend please contact me at the League's Head Office on 01483 524250 or email emmahughes@league.org.uk.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR CHRISTMAS SPIRIT!

There were lots of cheers in the League Head Office over the Christmas period as the support we received from all of you for our Christmas appeals was truly wonderful!

Whether you donated to our appeal to help dogs who are forced to fight to the death, or dug deep to help us reveal the true cruelty behind the Boxing Day Hunt, you provided £65,521.15 to enable us to carry on the fight to end all cruelty in the name of 'sport'.

On behalf of the animals we serve to protect, thank you for your ongoing support. We really can't do it without you.

As you can see from the Baronsdown article above, this sanctuary is of vital importance to the animals we serve to protect. We are working hard with the sanctuary team to identify how we can maintain, and improve, our services to animals next year.

So keep your eyes peeled this spring time as we may call on your support!



GIFTS AGAINST CRUEL SPORTS

As many of you will know, at the end of last year we launched a brand new service called *Gifts Against Cruel Sports*. This enables you to buy a gift for your friends and family, as well as help defend persecuted animals!

Your support was overwhelming and we were delighted to see Christmas cards, tote bags, mugs, t-shirts, calendars, tea towels, cuddly toys and pet accessories flying off the shelves! We hope your loved ones enjoyed receiving them as much as you did choosing them.

All proceeds go towards our ongoing mission and provide us with valuable funds to investigate animal cruelty, educate members of the public and government officials, and protect hundreds of thousands of animals including foxes, badgers, deer and hares in our wildlife sanctuaries.

We also thank you all for your patience with our delivery service. We realise Mr Postman took a while to reach some of you and this was because of the overwhelming generosity from you all, we were blown away with the demand! A wonderful outcome for animals – as all the profits are used to protect them – but we realise this was a point of frustration for some of you. We promise to iron out the kinks for next year!



© Justin Jensen

SPRING RAFFLE

Over £2,000 in cash prizes to be won plus the chance to be entered into a Super Seller Draw with a chance of winning an extra £200!

- 1st prize = £1,000**
- 2nd prize = 2 x £250**
- 3rd prize = 3 x £100**
- 4th prize = 10 x £25**

With so many cash prizes up for grabs, please consider taking part and helping to protect more animals from cruelty.

And that's not to mention the bonus Super Seller draw. If you buy or sell at least £20 worth of tickets you will automatically receive one entry into the draw and be given the chance to win a £200 cash prize.

All profits raised will help us to protect animals, so why not ask friends and family to take part too? This is a great way of helping us combat wildlife crime over the coming months.

You can also play securely online at: www.league.org.uk/raffle

If you do not wish to play online, please contact us using the details below and we will be delighted to post a raffle booklet to you.

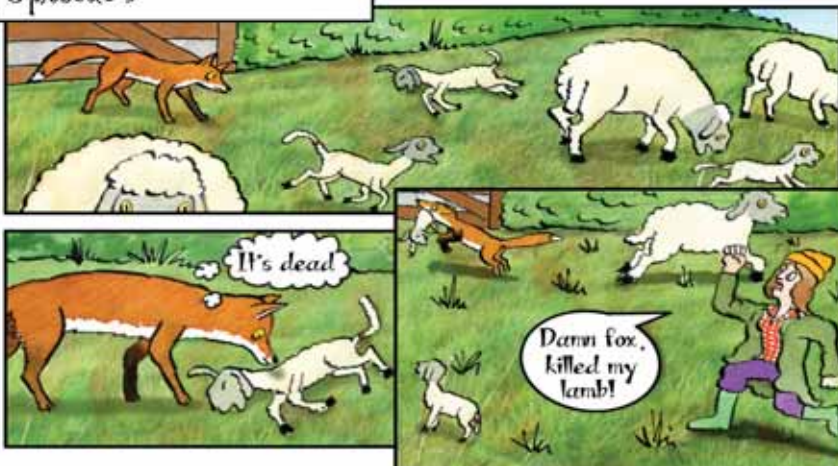
You can also request extras!

Call 01483 524 250
or email info@league.org.uk

Fauna - a fox's life

Episode 9

Separated from her family, Fauna searches for food.



Story by the League Against Cruel Sports, illustration by www.woodyfox.co.uk

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