



LEAGUE
AGAINST CRUEL SPORTS



**WINS FOR
ANIMALS 2023**



End hunting with dogs



Hunting with Dogs (Scotland) Act

This year got off to an incredible start with the passing of the Hunting with Dogs (Scotland) Bill after many years of campaigning. The League was acknowledged as being the main driving force behind the Bill and the impact of our success means trail hunting is no longer legal north of the border.

League launches Business without Blood Sports pledge

In April we hosted the launch of our Business without Blood Sports pledge at the Houses of Parliament. The event brought together a community of over 160 compassionate and like-minded organisations that have all committed to protect animals from being persecuted in the name of 'sport.'



National Parks campaign launches in Brighton

In July, the National Parks campaign was officially launched in Brighton, near the South Downs, followed by roadshows in Cardiff and Leeds. The campaign aims to get all 13 National Parks across the UK to ban hunts from using their land. To date we have received 21,000 signatures for our petition and 10 National Parks have put bans in place.



Ministry of Defence cancel Memorandum of Understanding with the League

Earlier this year the ex-Secretary of State for Defence, Ben Wallace terminated the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the League and the Ministry of Defence (MoD). The agreement had been in place since 2009 and allowed the sharing of information on the licensing of hunting on land managed by the MoD, so it could be monitored for compliance with the law.

Over 10,500 of our supporters petitioned Ben Wallace MP to express their anger at the decision and it was debated twice in the House of Commons.



Sickening footage of Avon Vale hunt digging up foxes emerges

In February, sickening footage of the Avon Vale Hunt digging up foxes and then setting their hounds on them came into the public domain. Using this footage, we highlighted our campaign calling on DEFRA to ban hunting on its land, using a variety of supporter actions. Our supporters sent a total of 22,300 emails to Thérèse Coffey, ex-Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, and our social media campaign called on DEFRA to ban hunting on their land, which reached 208,000 people.



Channel 4 news covers our hunting season figures

In April, our end of hunting season figures was picked up exclusively in a long piece on Channel 4 News. In just five months between the beginning of November 2022 and April 2023, 621 cases of hunt havoc and 361 incidents of hunts being involved in suspected illegal hunting in England and Wales was reported to our Crimewatch service. The news segment also shone a light on our MoD campaign and how taxpayers are paying for the refurbishment of the Royal Artillery hunting kennels, as well as progress on hunting laws in Scotland.



Animal Crimewatch service receives increasing number of hunt havoc reports

This year we received an increasing number of reports about hunts causing chaos in local communities and out of control hounds, into our supporter funded Animal Crimewatch service. One of our reports was picked up by the BBC and showed fox hounds caught on camera marauding through a private garden in Wiltshire and the hunt blocking a busy B-road, causing delays for motorists, and risking public safety.



Labour's policy programme includes 'closing loopholes in fox hunting ban'

In October, the Labour Party conference approved the party's provisional policy programme drawn up by its National Policy Forum that is likely to shape the next general election manifesto. Under the farming and animals section it contains a commitment to "close loopholes in the fox hunting ban, outlaw trophy hunting (including imports from overseas) and ensure animals are treated with respect." To have such a 'public' pledge from Labour at this stage, and continued commitment to the issue despite change in the party's environment team, is great news, but our ambition is to have 'trail hunting' explicitly included in the final manifesto.



Hunts folding and merging

The dominos are truly falling and in 2023 alone we have seen 10 hunts disbanding and 20 hunts merging to form 10 new hunts. Hopefully, the trend will continue into 2024!

Time for Change Coalition Against Hunting launch

In June we launched the Time for Change Coalition Against Hunting at Camley Street Nature Park in London. Drawn from an array of more than 30 of the UK's most influential animal welfare and environmental organisations and umbrella groups from across the UK, the coalition is estimated to be one of the largest ever brought in the UK, counting many millions of the public in its joint supporter base. The coalition is demanding the next government strengthen laws on fox hunting.



Supporters put pressure on local showgrounds to ban the Festival of Hunting

Thanks to the amazing response from supporters who sent in details of their local showgrounds, we contacted 49 showgrounds around the country to ask them not to host the Festival of Hunting, as they look for a new home. Additionally, seven county shows were also contacted to ask them to stop hosting hunts and hounds at their shows in the future.

League's Head of Campaigns interviewed by Channel 4 news as footage shows cruelty of stag hunting

Channel 4 News once again picked up the anti-hunting mantle sharing footage of stags being chased on National Trust land involving people on quad bikes as well as horses. Wildlife Guardians captured the footage, exposing the shocking brutality of stag hunting. We were invited to give our professional opinion of the footage, whilst also taking the opportunity to raise the issue of loopholes in the current Hunting Act 2004 and the requirement to strengthen it.

End Shooting of animals for 'sport'



Wales bans the use of snares

After many years of campaigning and playing an instrumental role in providing evidence to the Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee (ETRA), we were delighted that Wales passed a historic ban on the use of snares as part of the Agriculture (Wales) Act in June. Wales is the first country in the UK to take this momentous step, banning the use of all snares including the already illegal self-locking snares, as well as so called 'humane cable restraint' snares. The Act also outlaws licencing schemes and contains no exemptions.



Scotland follows Wales with plan to ban snares

The Scottish Government has confirmed that it intends to propose a full ban on all snares, with no exceptions. For decades we have been calling for a ban on snares, and within that time our professional field investigators have presented the Scottish Parliament, the Scottish Government, and before that the Scottish Executive, with countless examples of evidence illustrating the needless cruelty of these traps.



Plans for stricter shooting licences in Wales

It's looking highly likely that releasing pheasant and partridges for shooting (or any other purpose) without a license could be banned in Wales under new government plans. Currently there is little regulation for shoots on Sites of Scientific Interest in Wales. The results of a 12-week consultation, carried out by Natural Resources Wales, suggests that they will press ahead with their plan to require licenses, and will consider strengthening monitoring and enforcement measures—issues which we have raised about the current legislation for many years.

We release groundbreaking report on Trophy Hunting in the UK

In October we released a new, groundbreaking report, 'Making a Killing,' which investigated the extent, scale, and cost of this sickening sport, right here in the UK. The report sheds light on the number of businesses across 23 counties offering the 'sport' to trophy hunters of all levels of experience – and in many cases to novices without any prior practice or training for as little as £60.



REVIVE National Conference in Scotland

On 12 November, the REVIVE Coalition held its National Conference in Perth to discuss the unsustainable practices which surround grouse moor management and wildlife management. The event was hosted by Chris Packham with key speakers including Gillian Martin MSP, Environment Minister and Lorna Slater MSP, Biodiversity Minister. With the Wildlife Management and Muirburn (Scotland) Bill currently passing through parliament, this is a pivotal time to highlight the issues.



End fighting of animals for sport



Arrest of a dog and cock fighter

Following the work of our inhouse intelligence team, we supplied a comprehensive intelligence package to West Yorkshire police on a suspected dog fighter.

The subject was arrested for possessing a fighting dog, breeding a fighting dog and possession with intent to supply Class A/B drugs. Another suspect was arrested in connection with the investigation for possession of weapons, class B drugs and a number of cockerels with injuries believed to be used in cock fighting.



Suspected badger baiter charged with 30 animal welfare charges

In 2021 we investigated a suspected badger baiter in Northern Ireland and shared our findings with police and the Ulster Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (USPCA). In September this year, Jason Lee Kennedy was accused of organising and attending animal fights, along with sharing videos of the so-called sport with others, keeping wild animals and intentionally or recklessly injuring badgers. He was subsequently charged with 30 animal welfare charges and the case has been sent to the Crown Court where the penalties for the offences Kennedy is alleged to have committed are much higher.



Cockfighter selling illegal veterinary medicine investigated



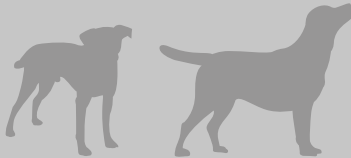
Our intelligence team identified a cockfighter through research on Facebook, who was posting images of illegal veterinary medicine. This was shared with Veterinary Medicines Directorate VMD who subsequently sent the subject a warning letter as part of their prosecution process.

Sentencing guidelines offer greater protection for animals

Following the passing of the Animal Welfare (Sentencing) Act, in which the guidelines did not propose to take full advantage of the maximum five-year sentence, but instead proposed an 18-month sentence for the most serious animal cruelty offences, we urged the Sentencing Council to review the guidelines for judges and magistrates. Following a consultation, we were pleased to hear that those now convicted of the most serious animal cruelty offences can expect to receive a custodial sentence of between six months and three years six months, with a starting point of two years in prison.

Intelligence team uncover potential UK dog fighting ring

Our intelligence team has been undertaking a systematic intelligence collection project to capture details of potential UK dog fighting kennels, their dogs, and where possible, identify those behind them. Five suspected dog fighting groups have been identified within the Met Police area, West Midlands, West Yorkshire and Essex, and intelligence packages have been shared with police within the regions.



Win the hearts and minds of a broader audience



Leaguecast attracts 57 per cent more listeners

Our podcast, Leaguecast, has attracted new listeners over the past 12 months, increasing the audience by 57 per cent. This year we released seven episodes featuring a range of topics including the Hunting Act, trail hunting and major landowners, as well as the views of ex-hunters. On our special episode – What hunting means to me – we spoke to Becky and Nicky, two livestock farmers who grew up in hunting families and had no choice but to hunt from a young age. The episode appeared in the top 25 per cent of podcasts downloaded within the first seven days of release - a huge achievement.



League CEO Andy smashes his MoD march for animals challenge

Andy not only completed his challenge but smashed his target of £30,000 – all thanks to you, our kind-hearted supporters. As you are aware Andy marched 10km over the MoD Salisbury Plain Military Training area on 20 May, carrying 25kg – not only to raise vital funds, but to bring attention to, and challenge the decision by ex-Defence Secretary, Ben Wallace MP, to terminate the MoU between the League and the MoD.

Supporters join us to celebrate Fox Day 2023

On 26 May, we celebrated our second year of Fox Day. The day is a celebration of our love and appreciation for foxes. This year we reached more than 222,000 people across social media and more than 7,000 people signed our official record to show their support for foxes, helping us to continue to raise the plight of our foxes across the UK.



New T shirt collaboration with Teemill

In May we launched our fabulous new T shirt collection, in collaboration with Teemill. All T shirt designs come in adult and children's sizes, are printed to order, made from organic cotton using renewable energy and come in plastic-free packaging. All profits support our campaigns to end hunting, shooting and animal fighting across the UK and make ideal gifts for loved ones, or simply as a treat for yourself – there's something for all tastes!



Supporters join us for Wildlife Reserves online session

In June, our Wildlife Reserves team hosted an online session with supporters so attendees could hear about the fantastic work being done in the world of rewilding and conservation on our reserves and across the UK. Paul Tillsley, Head of Conservation and Education was joined by guest speaker, Yolanda Cruwys, from Rewilding Britain.

New supporters boost our campaigning actions

We had an incredible year in terms of supporters taking actions to support our campaigns to protect animals. This year alone, more than 95,000 actions have been completed by our supporters, be it writing to their MP, sharing our campaigns, writing to their local councils, or writing to their local National Parks authority as part of our most recent campaign. Through our work this year, we have also recruited more than 10,500 new supporters to our email distribution list, an increase of 149 per cent from the previous year.

Supporters join us at our Baronsdown reserve for the annual rut

In October, we welcomed our supporters to our flagship wildlife reserve, Baronsdown, in Somerset. Over two days, our supporters heard about our achievements over the past year from our CEO, Andy Knott MBE, and were also given a presentation about our wildlife reserves from Paul Tillsley, Head of Conservation and Education. Supporters were then treated to an educational walking tour of Baronsdown, as well as a trip in the Land Rover to the high fields to see the abundance of stags and hinds.



Photograph: Sue Pooley Photography

GET IN TOUCH

League Against Cruel Sports

New Sparling House
Godalming
GU7 1QZ

01483 524 250
supportercare@league.org.uk
league.org.uk

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(no. SC045533)



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