

Welcome to your summer edition of Protect





The year ahead promises to be an important one for our work in protecting wildlife from the horrors of blood sports.

We've done the groundwork. Our public affairs team has been busy at parliament. Our campaigns team has been busy working with you, our compassionate supporters to collect petition signatures and for you to contact your MPs about our concerns.

Our new chief executive Emma Slawinski has hit the ground running and is pledging to work in partnership with as broad a range of people as possible to make cruel sports a thing of the past.

And the government has taken note, but we still need your help to ensure they live up to their promises. It has said it will introduce the most ambitious animal welfare plans in a generation.

It has pledged that they will hold a consultation to ban trail hunting – the deception invented by hunts to get round the fox hunting ban – later this year. But we also need the government to remove the other loopholes in the Hunting Act and introduce prison sentences to act as a deterrent.

The barbaric traps known as snares have been banned in Wales and Scotland. It's England's turn next.

Your energy, generosity and donations are helping us to stop wildlife being persecuted in the name of sport. Let's keep the momentum going. Let's make 2025 a memorable year for animals. The time for change is now.

Mike Nicholas editor

Jonathan Shortt designer

Mike



Our Goals

End hunting, shooting, animal fighting and other cruel sports and the associated practices that enable them.



Win the hearts and minds of a broader audience.



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IT'S TIME FOR CHANGE

Stronger fox hunting laws are a step closer

The League achieved a key breakthrough this spring in its campaign against hunting with dogs when the government took the first step towards delivering stronger fox hunting laws. Environment minister Daniel Zeichner announced in parliament in April that the government is to launch a consultation later this year to ban trail hunting.

He quoted League figures compiled by our intelligence team showing the scale of suspected illegal fox hunting still taking place and the havoc being inflicted on rural communities by hunts.

We welcomed the beginning of this formal process that could help end fox hunting once and for all by banning one of the main excuses being used by hunts to conceal the chasing and killing of animals.

The Hunting Act, a milestone in animal protection at the time it came into force, was meant to end fox hunting, but the hunts have spent twenty years exploiting weaknesses in the law to carry on hunting animals.

Hunts invented trail hunting after the fox hunting ban, an activity in which they purport to follow a scent trail that has been laid by a person. However, this increasingly discredited excuse is a smokescreen being used by hunts to conceal their hunting of foxes from the public, police and courts – trails are hardly ever seen being laid except during the occasional lame PR exercise conducted by the hunting world.

The statement by the minister in April was made during a debate in the House of Commons organised by Perran Moon MP, who called on the government to not only ban trail hunting but to fully strengthen the Hunting Act.

This would involve removing the exemptions in the law currently being exploited by hunts and the introduction of prison sentences for those that break the law so that there is an effective deterrent.



These are key asks which the League's public affairs team has been lobbying successive governments to introduce in recent years.

We want to thank our supporters around the UK who backed our calls for the Government to set out a timetable for when it will ban trail hunting, in line with its manifesto commitments at the last general election.

In February, to mark the 20th anniversary of the Hunting Act coming into force, we delivered a petition with more than 100,000 of your signatures to the prime minister at 10 Downing Street, calling for the law to be strengthened to prevent illegal hunting with hounds.

We had the backing of a raft of celebrities and more than 30 environmental and animal welfare organisations in the Time for Change Coalition Against Hunting, founded in 2023 to campaign on behalf of hunted animals.

Celebrities who publicly backed the League's campaign included actors Maxine Peake, Evanna Lynch, Mike Beckingham and Wendy Morgan; wildlife TV presenters Chris Packham, Hannah Stitfall and Iolo Williams; and GP, TV personality and author Dr Amir Khan.

Emma Slawinski, chief executive of the League Against Cruel Sports, has set out the League's next steps. She said: "We look forward to working with the government to help strengthen fox hunting laws in order to end this barbaric activity as soon as possible by closing all the loopholes currently being exploited by hunts including trail hunting.

"Twenty years ago it was thought that fox hunting would end for good when the Hunting Act was introduced but the hunts carried on killing. Now we have a second chance to really consign fox hunting to the history books if the legislation is strong enough."

'We delivered a petition with more than **100,000** of your signatures to the prime minister at 10 Downing Street'





We need to leave cruel sports in the past

Emma Slawinski talks to Protect about her new role as the chief executive of the League Against Cruel Sports. Emma Slawinski has been campaigning for animal welfare since her primary school days.

Growing up near the South Downs she was surrounded by fox hunting and 'game' bird shooting. "I remember being absolutely horrified that people were hunting and shooting animals for fun. It was a very visceral feeling of powerlessness and a desperation to make it stop."

"I couldn't understand how people, who seemed perfectly normal in other ways, couldn't see how utterly wrong it was. I was outraged, and that sense of outrage is still with me today."

She has dedicated her life and career to protecting animals and effecting legal change ever since.

In March, after previous roles at Compassion in World Farming, World Animal Protection and the RSPCA, where she was director of policy, prevention and campaigns, she took up a new position as chief executive of the League Against Cruel Sports.

"It felt like coming home because I'd volunteered and then worked in animal protection organisations all my life," says Emma.

"I've been fortunate to work across a wide range of animal issues – on animals in science, companion animals, farming and wild animals. Like many people in our movement I have seen some awful things, and my way of coping with that is to do everything I can to change the world for animals. Animals enrich our lives so much that protecting them seems an obvious thing to do. I believe that when animals flourish and do well, so do people. It's never been a fluffy 'aren't they cute?' sort of thing for me. It's always been just as much about the human condition, about what kind of people we want to be."

'I remember being absolutely horrified that people were hunting and shooting animals for fun. It was a very visceral feeling of powerlessness and a desperation to make it stop.'

She has worked on many campaigns but some stand out – including getting a commitment from the European Commission to end the use of cages in farming across the EU.

"This has yet to be enacted" she says, "but it was a great day when the commitment was made, and, slowly, slowly, the end of cages is coming nearer".

Other campaigns included the Animal Welfare (Sentience) Act 2022, which recognised the sentience of animals – "their ability to feel pain but also joy and other complex emotions".

She also worked on a campaign to introduce the Animal Welfare (Livestock Exports) Act 2024, which banned the live export of animals for fattening and slaughter.

As a longstanding supporter of the League Against Cruel Sports, she was "over the moon" to be appointed as chief executive.

"I've always been impressed by the League's ability to raise awareness of what's happening when it comes to cruel sports – but also to achieve change," she says.

"My role feels like a tremendous responsibility but also an incredible opportunity and a real privilege. This is a 100-year-old organisation with a fantastic track record of changing the world for animals and an amazing team of dedicated staff and volunteers."

Four months in and she is clear on the priority for the organisation. "Our immediate focus is on strengthening the Hunting Act and removing loopholes that allow hunts to carry on killing wildlife with dogs", and she was delighted by the government's announcement of the consultation to ban trail hunting by the end of the year.

"The Hunting Act was a milestone in animal protection but unfortunately there are loopholes that are being exploited by people who want to keep on hunting foxes," she says.

'When I think back to my childhood and hearing the horns sounding a kill and the guns firing relentlessly, I'm proud to play a part in silencing them forever.'

The League's overarching objective is to end cruelty to animals through "so-called sports", not only hunting with dogs but commercial 'game' bird shooting, animal fighting and tackling the cruelty within animal racing too.

"There is only one direction of travel when it comes to these cruel sports, and that is leaving them in the past – in the history books where they belong," says Emma. "The biggest lesson of my career is that if you stay committed and tenacious and speak the truth, then eventually the change you want to happen will happen."

She is committed to working in partnership with other organisations across the animal protection, environment, conservation and nature sectors – "as broad a range of people as possible" – to



effect change. "My default setting is to be working in partnership as it takes all of us to make change happen" she says.

She is keen to grow "the widest possible supporter base" and talks warmly of the League's supporters. "They are the changemakers" she says "writing letters, fundraising, signing petitions, attending events. They are a remarkable group of people."

Away from work, she spends her time in the West Sussex countryside with her family. She has a rescue dog called Coco and two horses, Tori and Luna, a young rescue horse she adopted from the RSPCA.

"In the animal protection movement we are always building on the work of those who came before, and paving the way for those who will come next. The League plays a vital part in that — ending cruel sports and redefining what is acceptable. When I think back to my childhood and hearing the horns sounding a kill and the guns firing relentlessly, I'm proud to play a part in silencing them forever."



The scale and cruelty of game bird shooting

The League is campaigning to highlight the scale and cruelty of 'game' bird shooting and is lobbying for an end to this barbaric practice so that animals are no longer sacrificed for sport.

The shooting industry inflicts more suffering on animals than any other blood sport in the UK.

The industry's own figures show that around twenty million game birds such as pheasants and red legged partridges are shot annually.

This staggering figure includes many who were wounded rather than being killed outright, increasing the levels of cruelty being inflicted on the birds.

To achieve this level of killing and maiming, an astonishing 61.2million pheasants and red legged partridges are bred each year and released into the countryside simply so they can be shot en masse.



Huge numbers are being shot simply for entertainment and the profits of the shooting industry – research undertaken by our intelligence team confirms this, uncovering a growing number of reports of the dead birds being dumped, rather than being sold to a game dealer.

This release of the non-native birds can have a profound detrimental impact on the environment – affecting local ecosystems, native wildlife and natural habitats.

Campaigning to end the caged breeding of game birds

To support the bloodthirsty shooting industry's lust for huge numbers of victims to be blasted out of the sky it has its very own factory farming system that breeds the tens of millions of chicks needed every year.

Birds are kept in cramped bleak cages for much of their lives for breeding purposes to produce the eggs needed to fuel this cruel industry.

The birds don't even qualify for some of the minimum welfare standards other farmed birds receive.

They experience severe distress and injuries due to their confinement and can hurt themselves in futile attempts to escape.

Wales is home to Europe's largest game bird farm Bettws Hall where at its peak, it is understood that 800,000 eggs are produced every week by 90,000 breeding birds confined to cages.

'Birds are kept in cramped bleak cages for much of their lives'

More than 100,000 of you have now signed a petition calling for an end to the use of cages in farming and many of you have generously given a gift in support of ending this cruel sport.

The League is now calling on the Welsh and UK Governments to ban the caged breeding of game birds.

It's a first step in ending the brutality of shooting altogether. But it's a simple step and one that is morally right.

The persecution of wildlife

The suffering goes beyond that being inflicted on the birds as other animals are targeted by shooting gamekeepers.

A wide range of wildlife species, from foxes to protected birds of prey that they perceive to be a threat to the artificially high stocks of game birds they seek to build up, are ruthlessly persecuted.

Figures produced by the RSPB show more than 1,500 incidents of bird of prey persecution since 2009 including vulnerable and recovering species such as the hen harrier and white-tailed eagles.

Shockingly 75 per cent of all individuals convicted of bird of prey persecution-related offences were connected to the game bird shooting industry.





Poisoning, trapping and shooting are common tactics employed by gamekeepers against wildlife.

One particularly cruel trap is the snare, a wire device which will tighten around the neck, torso or legs of their victim, causing immense suffering and pain before the animal is shot by the gamekeeper or faces a lingering death.

Government figures show up to 200,000 of these traps lie hidden in the English countryside at any one time with the majority being laid by the shooting industry.

They're indiscriminate killers with the same research from Defra showing nearly three quarters of the animals captured are not the intended target species and include animals such as hares, badgers and otters and even people's pets.

Imagine if your cat or dog went missing in an area littered with these medieval devices.

Calls to ban snares in England

The good news is that the League has campaigned successfully with partners in recent years to get snares banned in both Scotland and Wales.

We're now calling on the UK Government to deliver on its manifesto commitment to ban snares in England so that we can end the pain and suffering they inflict on animals.

There is an early day motion

– a motion used by MPs in the
Commons to draw the attention
of the House to a particular issue

– calling for a ban on snares.

Please write to your MP and ask them to sign the early day motion calling for a ban on the use of snares in England.

league.org.uk/take-action

Thank you to the thousands of generous supporters who donated to our Missing Appeal in March. We highlighted how the shooting industry destroys wildlife and tortures animals; how hundreds of thousands of animals go missing across the UK, whether they're caught in cruel traps, shot for 'sport' or poisoned. Your support will help us fight for wildlife and we thank you for standing by their side.



CAMPAIGNERS AGAINST CRUEL SPORTS

TIME FOR CHANGE

League animal welfare campaigners held an event outside the Welsh Parliament Senedd building in Cardiff in May to highlight the stark reality behind breeding game birds in cages.

Six actors dressed in 'end shooting' T-shirts were locked inside cages to represent the tortuous conditions pheasants and partridges are kept in by the shooting industry.

It showed lawmakers in both Wales and England how tiny, cramped

and cruel the cages are when scaled up to human size, to help them truly understand the urgent need for these cages to be outlawed.

Members of the Senedd joined the campaigners to show their support and to be photographed with the actors and cages.

It's down to you, our wonderful donors that we can organise such events, and thank you for helping to fund our campaign to end the coldblooded shooting of game birds.

New group for campaigners against cruel sport

The League has created a dedicated online platform called Campaigners Against Cruel Sports where you can connect with other supporters and campaign on behalf of animals to build a better world for them.

You will find a welcoming community of like-minded campaigners committed to tackling

fox hunting, 'game' bird shooting and other sports where animals are suffering for people's entertainment.

Launched on the Circle platform in December, it now has hundreds of supporters using it and it will soon host a series of videos which will help empower our supporters to campaign as effectively as possible.

You can join Campaigners Against Cruel Sports at: league.org.uk/circle-sign-up/



Tackling grouse shooting through land reform

In Scotland, the League is tackling the widespread killing of grouse, a wild bird that is being shot for the entertainment of a privileged few.

Every year, hundreds of thousands of grouse are massacred. And it's not just the birds that are being sacrificed for people's pleasure.

The League has identified a circle of destruction in which hundreds of thousands of foxes, stoats, weasels and crows are killed by gamekeepers to increase the number of grouse available to be shot.

The heather on the moors which is home to the grouse is also burnt to promote more food for the grouse causing significant environmental damage.



Meanwhile, the shooting estates also use mass medication techniques on the population of wild birds and litter the moors with toxic chemicals.

'The League has identified a circle of destruction in which hundreds of thousands of foxes, stoats, weasels and crows are killed by gamekeepers to increase the number of grouse available to be shot.'

The League is not alone in condemning this blight on Scotland's land. We are the proud founding partner of the REVIVE coalition which is a unique coalition of wildlife, environmental and social justice organisations who have come together because we believe that Scotland's land could be better owned, managed and taxed.

It has mass support - more than 19,000 people have signed the REVIVE campaign pledge and around 700 people attend its annual conference in Perth each November.

It also lobbied successfully for new legislation in 2024 to help protect endangered birds of prey such as golden eagles and hen harriers from being killed by gamekeepers.

Any shooting estate now implicated in the illegal killing of birds of prey will lose their licence to shoot grouse on the land. The reason that grouse shooting is so widespread in Scotland is because the country has the most concentrated land ownership anywhere in the developed world.

Just 321 people or companies own 50 per cent of private land. Best estimates indicate that there are about 120 shooting estates that operate on around one million hectares of Scottish land.

Land reform is a huge issue in Scotland. REVIVE wants to bring about lasting change in the way land is used and will be campaigning in the run up to the Scottish elections at Holyrood in early 2026.

It has launched the Big Land Question tapping in to the clear political will to change the way land is owned and managed in Scotland.

We will conduct opinion polls, citizens' panels and expert roundtables to get to the heart of the matter.

Our aim is to finally settle this Big Land Question with solutions that could benefit people, wildlife and the environment.



The forgotten animals targeted by hunts

The public is filled with horror at the brutal activity of fox hunting but hunting with dogs affects other animals in this country too - deer, otters, mink and hares all fall victim to organised hunts.

The barbarism of otter and mink hunting

Otter and mink hunting involves hunt staff on foot with accompanying hounds, hunting along rivers, in a bid to find and ruthlessly kill wildlife.

The hunting of both species is illegal under the Hunting Act which came into force in 2005.

Otter hunting
was first banned in
this country in 1978
when otters became a
protected species but the
otter hunts didn't disband.

Instead, they changed their name to mink hunts and created the Masters of Minkhounds Association – there are currently up to 12 hunts registered with it and they hunt the same rivers as they did before.

So, both the much-loved otter, an animal that is afforded enormous affection by the public, and mink are their potential victims.

Otter photo kindly provided by Colin Seddon



Red deer cruelly hunted across Devon and Somerset

Red deer are targeted by three hunts operating in Devon and Somerset between August and April every year.

The chase can go on for up to six hours and can cover more than ten miles with the stag fleeing from the hounds in intermittent desperate bursts of speed.

Hounds, riders on horseback and hunt followers on quad bikes, track the deer until the exhausted animal is cornered by its tormentors and then shot.

You'd think this was illegal in 2025 but it simply highlights the weaknesses in our hunting laws which banned hunting with dogs 20 years ago.

The hunts use exemptions in the Hunting Act which allow them to pretend to be 'rescuing' animals from suffering or conducting 'scientific research'. In reality it is a barbaric blood sport.

The League has been monitoring the activities of the hunts and in the last week of the season followed one hunt as it targeted three young stags on Exmoor.

For once all three animals escaped but only two days later a hunt

successfully killed a young stag in front of monitors from the North Dorset Hunt Saboteurs. It's estimated that hundreds of deer get killed in this fashion every year.

Hare hunt savagery

Hares are still being targeted by up to 68 hare hunts across England and Wales. These are primarily beagle packs operating on foot along with a handful of mounted harrier packs.

Hare hunting is described by the League's head of conservation and education Paul Tillsley as one of the cruellest blood sports he's had the misfortune to witness.

The hounds can chase the hares around in circles for up to 45 minutes until it finally tires and is savagely killed by the hunt hounds.

It's often confused with hare coursing which is widespread but no longer as formalised as it once was with large events replaced nowadays by 'lads with dogs'.

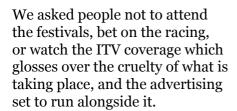
Hare hunt staff in contrast wear uniforms and as they are invited onto land by landowners rather than trespassing, attract less police attention than hare coursing – but hare hunting is just as cruel.

Take action

You can take action today by asking your MP to call for stronger hunting laws.

Boycotting horse racing festivals as death toll rises

The League called on the public to boycott the Grand National and Cheltenham festivals this year in protest at their shocking safety records and the terrible death toll of horses.



We warned in advance of this year's festivals that horses would die and sure enough, tragically two died racing at Cheltenham and two at Aintree.

'In a nutshell, horses are being sacrificed for entertainment and the profits of the gambling companies.'

The upsetting scenes in which green screens are put up around the prone bodies of horses after bad falls on the course are quite simply all too common.

One death is too many but figures researched by our friends at Animal Aid show a staggering 78 horses have now died at the Cheltenham Festival since the turn of the century and 67 horses at the Aintree Festival, home to the Grand National.

The Grand National race itself has seen 17 deaths since the year 2000 and the Cheltenham Festival has had a death every single year.

This year's Grand National saw the tragic death of Celebre D'Allen who died two days after being pulled up after the final fence; his jockey Jonny Allen having ridden him even after it became clear the gelding was struggling.

Meanwhile at Cheltenham, Corbetts Cross died after a fall during the event's flagship Gold Cup race, the second horse to die at the festival after Springwell Bay.

In a nutshell, horses are being sacrificed for entertainment and the profits of the gambling companies.

The League has lost patience with the horse racing industry and its disregard for the lives of the horses.

We have repeated our calls for the British Horse Racing Authority to be replaced with a new, independent horse racing regulator with animal welfare as its number one priority and an immediate ban on the use of the whip.

But the public is starting to wake up to the realities of horse racing. This year's Cheltenham Festival saw it its attendance slump by 4.9 per cent and audience figures have now fallen by 22 per cent since 2022.

Emma Slawinski, the League's chief executive summed up what more and more people are thinking when she said, "It's time for change and for these beautiful animals to stop being raced to their deaths."



We're delighted at the news announced by the Welsh Government that they intend to ban the cruel sport of greyhound racing which causes so many unnecessary deaths and injuries simply to drive up profits for the gambling industry.

Rescue greyhound photo kindly provided by Sue Pooley

The League has played a big role in the campaign, working with the Cut the Chase coalition, and helping to advise members of the Senedd, the Welsh parliament, to ensure the future welfare of greyhounds.

This historic decision will make Wales the first nation in the UK to ban this dangerous sport and we'll be looking to turn up the heat in England and Scotland in a bid to bring in bans there too.

We couldn't have got this commitment without you, our wonderful supporters.

Hundreds of you used our email action to respond to the Welsh Government's consultation on the issue, adding your voices to the thousands of compassionate campaigners across Wales calling for a ban.



While there is still much work to be done to ensure a ban is delivered, this announcement marks an important first step.

The Welsh government has now committed to introducing the legislation in the next year and before the next election in 2026.

Will Morton, head of public affairs at the League Against Cruel Sports, spoke about the decision. He said: "We're delighted that the Welsh Government has listened to all those who, like us, have clamoured for a ban on greyhound racing in Wales.

"We also invite the Westminster and Scottish governments to take note of this development and implement their own bans on greyhound racing."

The Greyhound Board of Great Britian, the industry's governing body has been required by the UK government to provide death and injury figures for racing greyhounds every year since 2017 and they paint a bleak picture.

A total of 1,234 greyhounds have died at trackside and 31,359 injuries were sustained by the dogs.

A report conducted by Professor Andrew Knight into greyhound racing established that racing around oval tracks puts huge strain on the greyhounds' bodies and is inherently dangerous. Accidents or pile-ups at or approaching the first bend are notorious and the report also highlights significant welfare concerns around the kennelling and standards of care applied to racing greyhounds.

The ban on greyhound racing will be phased in to protect the welfare of the greyhounds currently within the industry and to allow time for them to be rehomed with loving families.

Our public affairs team will be working closely with the Welsh government to help them deliver the ban and get suitable legislation passed in the Senedd.

Your voice really does make an impact and together we are leading the charge for a future where animals are protected from being persecuted in the name of sport.

You can support the campaign to ban greyhound racing across the UK by taking the following action:

www.league.org.uk/bangreyhoundracing



The League Against Cruel Sports' wildlife reserves in Somerset,
Devon and Derbyshire are great
places for wild animals. Ever since
the amazing generosity of donors
like you allowed the League to
purchase its first wildlife reserve
back in 1958, they have been
carefully managed with low levels
of grazing and minimal use of
pesticides, herbicides and fertilisers.

As a result of loyal donors' enduring support, the wildlife reserves have kept many of the plants and animals that have been lost in the wider countryside. Everything from rare lichens and fungi, to birds, bats, badgers and deer thrive on the hundreds of acres we manage.

However, on their own wildlife reserves cannot stop the rapid decline in wildlife that we are seeing throughout the countryside.



'Everything from rare lichens and fungi, to birds, bats, badgers and deer thrive on the hundreds of acres we manage.'

The UK is already one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world and we continue to lose species at an alarming rate. That is why the League has entered into partnership with neighbouring landowners to develop projects that will benefit wildlife on a landscape scale.

Britain is often seen as a nation of animal lovers, but the reality is we are one of the least natureconnected countries in Europe.

Rewilding is a process that aims to correct this disconnect and to give nature the opportunity to recover by utilising the natural processes that we all rely on.

The League is working in partnership with neighbouring landowners, big and small, on projects to improve habitats for wildlife and increase biodiversity without compromising the integrity of our reserves.

Sometimes wildlife arrives without help once the habitat is restored, such as the beavers that appeared on one project site and produced two kits, and the goshawks that have started breeding in one of our woodlands.

For other species that are unlikely to recolonise naturally, reintroductions are the best option. As a result, we will soon see white storks in the skies over Devon and pine martens return to the woodlands of Exmoor for the first time in decades.

Thank you for helping to protect wildlife.



We use green and environmentally friendly paper, both biodegradable and recyclable. We're here for both the animals and the planet.

Get in touch

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