

**PE1561/C**

Rabbit Welfare Fund Email of 28 May 2015

Dear Petitions Committee

I am writing to you on behalf of The Rabbit Welfare Fund, which is the largest charity in the UK dedicated to rabbit welfare.

We are in support of the above named petition and see this as a great opportunity for Scotland to lead the way for rabbit welfare in the UK. We would like to be included as stakeholder along with PIF and SSPCA for any discussions that take place.

Our thoughts on each individual point are below:

- **Introduce a licensing regime for sellers of young rabbits similar to that for young cats and dogs.**

For sellers of any rabbits (not just young ones) to be licenced and inspected as pet shops, even if the sales are taking place from their own home, if it looks like this is for commercial gain. Using the definition of 'breeder' that is used for dogs for example (2 litters or more in 12 months) would be a good bench mark for this. The explosion of on line sales means that physical premises are no longer needed and there seems to be a bit of a loophole here for rabbits. (And other species of course) These vendors may not be reporting to HMRC either.

- **Initiate a ban on pet shop sales via the implementation of Ordinances Protecting Rabbits as is operational in numerous States & Cities in Northern USA & Canada.**

To include on-line sales.

- **Create minimum standards for rabbit related products, such as housing and feed.**

These are very much needed. We understand that there was a draft code of practice for rabbits in Scotland and that this could possibly be updated to include these areas. Currently sales of rabbit items that have complete control and impact on their wellbeing and welfare are not regulated, and there are no official guidelines. For example, there are rabbit hutches for sale that are intended as long term housing for pets that are smaller than battery rabbit cage dimensions. This needs all to be addressed. This should include advice given, and could be incorporated in to the annual licence inspections for pet shops. On line retailers who sell products but not pets need to be captured here also.

- **Make one body responsible for overseeing and enforcing pet shop licensing regulations, e.g. the SSPCA.**

LA's are over stretched and the person responsible for pet shop inspections may not be an animal welfare expert. It makes more sense for this vital inspection to be handled by the best qualified and experienced people, and the SSPCA would be the ideal candidates here.

We would be delighted to discuss this in more detail and look forward to hearing about the Committee's next step.

Kind Regards,

Rae Todd