10 May 2022

# Dismay as Government breaks promise to protect animals in Queen’s Speech

Government abandons plans to outlaw practices such as foie gras and fur imports that are cruel to animals and that public wants to see banned

**A coalition of thirty-eight major animal welfare organisations has reacted with ‘dismay and frustration’ after the UK Government dropped plans to bring in a ban on imports of foie gras and fur from the Queen’s Speech.**

In defiance of the latest public opinion and in a clear breach of its manifesto promises to improve animal welfare, the Government appears to have abandoned plans to put a stop to imports of foie gras and fur as well as adverts for animal tourism practices involving cruelty such as elephant riding. But in a backwards step for animals, it has proposed a Bill which would permit the use of genetically edited farm animals.

Speaking on behalf of the #DontBetrayAnimals campaign, Emma Slawinski Director of Advocacy and policy at the RSPCA, said: “We are deeply dismayed that the Government has gone back on its word to prioritise animal welfare by abandoning the Animals Abroad Bill, so that animal protection laws such as bans on imports of foie gras and fur will no longer go ahead, nor will bans on adverts for animal tourism practices involving cruelty such as elephant riding and tricks.

“To make matters worse, it is proposing making genetically edited farm animals lawful - something that up until now has been banned in the UK.

“The Government’s abandonment of the Animals Abroad Bill speaks for itself; it is a betrayal of animals and shows contempt for public opinion. We would strongly urge the Government to reintroduce this proposed legislation.

“The Queen’s Speech was an acid test of the Government’s true commitment to honouring the animal welfare pledges it made to the public. So its failure to include bans on cruel practices such as foie gras and fur imports suggests that the Government prefers to outsource its cruelty to other countries rather than genuinely wanting a better deal for animals .

“After today’s disappointment, we have concerns about whether the Government intends to keep its word on future animal welfare legislation, such as the Animal Welfare (Kept Animals) Bill, so that practices such as the live exports of animals for slaughter, keeping primates as pets and the cruel puppy import trade become consigned to history as soon as possible.”

Recent national polling from the #DontBetrayAnimals campaign\* shows British voters want to see the Government deliver on its promise to protect animals.

* Almost three quarters (72%) of respondents want to see this Government pass more laws designed to improve animal welfare and protect animals from cruelty,
* More than three quarters (77%) want to see the Government ban the importation of animal products with production methods already banned in the UK, including fur.
* An April 2022 MRP poll shows 85% want a law to ban UK adverts for foreign tourism practices that “train” elephants and other species by severe abuse.

**Quotes from more coalition members:**

James West, Senior Policy Manager at **Compassion in World Farming**, said: “*We are extremely disappointed that despite encouraging proposals to end the import or sale of foie gras, laid out in the Government’s Action Plan for Animal Welfare, this policy seems to have been completely dropped. We urge them to reconsider and ensure that this appallingly cruel product is outlawed. It is also vital that the Government honours other promises it has made to improve farm animal welfare, including the manifesto commitment to end live animal exports.”*

Sonul Badiani-Hamment, **FOUR PAWS UK** Country Director said: “*The British public have repeatedly been promised improvements to animal welfare legislation. However, once more we are left reeling from the lack of legislative progress on issues such as our hypocritical importation of fur and foie gras products, that are considered so cruel they are illegal to produce in the UK. It’s time for the Government to listen to the 72% of people who want more legal action on animal welfare, and to start enacting the demands of the electorate.”*

Claire Bass, executive director of **Humane Society International/UK**, said *"The government has inexplicably kicked bans on fur trading and trophy hunting - and a whole raft of other hugely popular animal protection policies - into the long grass today, letting down millions of voters and animals. Including the Animals Abroad Bill in the Queen’s Speech was an open goal to score public opinion points . As recently as January, the government promised to ‘raise the bar for animal welfare and take the rest of the world with us’, but that’s sounding sadly hollow today. With strong public and political support from across Parliament, we will continue to fight for these laws.”*

Duncan McNair, **Save the Asian Elephants** (STAE) said*: “Save The Asian Elephants is dismayed, and its millions of followers will be horrified, that Government has so callously dishonoured its numerous promises of law to protect highly endangered Asian elephants from unethical tourism in the time that remains for them.”*

Peter Kemple Hardy, head of campaigns, **World Animal Protection,** said***"****We are extremely disappointed that the Government has failed to meet the expectations of the British public, who overwhelmingly supported the measures in the promised Animals Abroad Bill. This is a missed opportunity to help end the cruelty and suffering inflicted on countless animals, trapped in industries that ruthlessly exploit them as commodities. We will continue to fight for every animal to have a good life."*

**Notes to editors**

* Link to [MRP poll data here](https://spaces.hightail.com/receive/1bvU5iosao)
* Groups backing the #DontBetrayAnimals campaign are: Animal Aid, Animal Equality UK, Born Free Foundation, Compassion in World Farming, FOUR PAWS UK, Humane Society International/UK, The Humane League UK, League Against Cruel Sports, LUSH, Naturewatch Foundation, PETA UK, RSPCA, Save The Asian Elephants, World Animal Protection UK.
* \*The polling was run on the Focaldata platform. Data was collected from a nationally representative sample of 10,018 adults between 11th and 20th April 2022. Using the polling data, Focaldata completed a constituency-level analysis using MRP modelling.
* Over three quarters (77%) of voters think UK Government should ban the importation of animal products, such as fur, where farming and production methods are banned in the UK, including:
  + 82% of women and 72% of men
  + 61% of 18 - 24 year olds, 73% of 25-36 year olds, 76% 35 - 44 year olds, 82% of 45 - 54 year olds, 82% 55 - 64 year olds, 81% of 65+
* The MRP polling analysis estimates support amongst:
  + Over three quarters (78%) of the 10, 15, and 20 most marginal Conservative-held seats
  + Almost three quarters (74%) of Red Wall voters
  + Over three quarters (79%) of voters in the Cabinet’s constituencies
  + 15 Cabinet members with 80%+ support are: Dominic Raab, Liz Truss, Sajid Javid, Kwasi Kwarteng, Alok Sharma, Anne-Marie Trevelyan, Therese Coffey, Nadhim Zahawi, George Eustice, Brandon Lewis, Chris Heaton-Harris, Suella Braverman, Kit Malthouse, Michelle Donelan, Jacob Rees-Mogg.
* Almost three quarters (72%) of voters would like to see the UK Government pass more laws designed to improve animal welfare and protect animals from cruelty, including:
  + 75% of women and 69% of men
  + 66% of 18 - 24 year olds, 75% of 25 - 34 year olds, 74% of 35 - 44 year olds, 74% of 45 - 55 year olds, 73% of 55 - 64 year olds, 69% of 65+

The MRP polling analysis estimates support amongst:

* + Over three quarters (72%) of the 1-0,15 and 20 most marginal Conservative held seats
  + Almost three quarters (70%) of Red Wall voters
  + Almost three quarters (72%) of voters in the Cabinet’s constituencies

**Ends**

**Notes to editors**

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