

Making Tracks



Green MEPs vote to end cruel and controversial “bullfighting subsidies”

In October, MEPs voted in the European Parliament on an amendment put down by Keith and Bas Eickhout MEP on behalf of the Greens/EFA Group to stop subsidies for bullfighting from the European Union.

Despite a very close vote with more votes in favour, it unfortunately didn't reach an absolute majority of 377 with 323 MEPs voting for and 309 against. 58 abstained.

Keith said:

“Bullfighting is a very cruel industry which would probably entirely collapse if the EU withdraws its funding and so it should.”



▲ It's cruel and should be consigned to history, we'll keep working towards winning the next vote

The EU subsidises the controversial sport of traditional bullfighting in Spain to the tune of £13.5 million a year via European farm subsidies.

Although the vote was lost, there are high hopes that if a vote is forced again next year it may finally be voted through.

Jean said:

“Bullfighting may still exist in the collective imagination romantically linked with Hemingway and Spanish tradition. This is exactly where bullfighting should be – in fiction and in the past”

Government call on the badger cull is still wrong

The UK Government has ignored scientific evidence after the pilot badger cull was more than doubled in length. Experts had warned that the risk was increased tuberculosis in cattle – and that a cull would not be the solution. This Government has a worrying habit of commissioning studies from evidence based research, and then ignoring it if it doesn't 'fit' their agenda.

When Natural England granted an extension to the cull it came as a relief to the Environment Secretary at the time and the National Farmers Union (NFU), because both

argued that culling badgers was an essential part of curbing the rise in bovine TB.

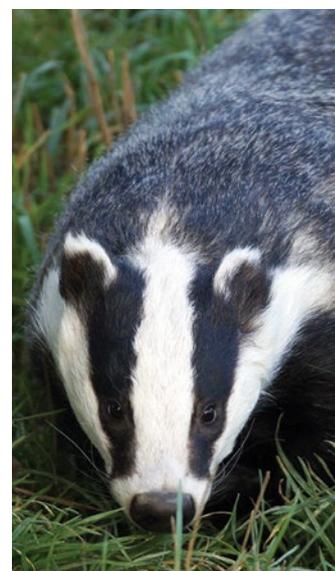
The position taken by Jean, Keith and Molly is that the chief vet's advice to extend culling was based upon a view of the available evidence that was incomplete. TB is a huge problem for cattle farmers and this needs acknowledging. But they deserve better than to be left with the bill for culling when the assumed benefits are diminishing, and costs are spiralling.

The first of two badger culls in England has been costed at an astonishing £3,350 for

every individual badger killed.

This is inhumane, ineffective, and expensive. Vaccination along with improved biosecurity is where we should be looking.

Jean wrote to the Secretary of State at Defra in November reiterating firm opposition to the cull, as well as raising concerns that the Government had refused to maintain an Independent Expert Panel to oversee badger culls.



▲ Badger at British Wildlife Centre

Wildlife is for sale on the internet

Keith, Jean and Molly joined the International Fund for Animal Welfare to support the launch of a new report: "Want-ed – Dead or Alive – Exposing Online Wildlife Trade."

It exposes a massive scandal. In just 6 weeks in early 2014, skilled investigators from IFAW found 33,006 live wild animals and their parts and products available for sale on

280 online marketplaces in 16 different countries.

The shocking scale of online wildlife trade is deeply worrying and Keith has invited IFAW to present their report in Strasbourg soon so that governments, policy makers, law enforcers and online marketplaces tackle wildlife cyber-crime head on.

Keith said: "We must get to grips with online wildlife crime and I look forward to meeting advisers from IFAW to start taking action on this needless trade."



▲ IFAW lobby in the European Parliament

Beavers in the River Otter

There's growing anxiety over the fate of beavers discovered in Devon's River Otter. Reflecting public concern, Friends of the Earth launched a legal challenge to the government's claim that the beavers were non-native and should be removed.

Molly questioned the Commission over when European beavers would receive protection under the EU's Habitats Directive. She pointed to evidence that European beavers (*Castor fiber*) have been living wild in the UK for over 15 years; some animals may have been in UK rivers for five or six generations. The Commission responded that beavers would not automatically be granted protection under the Habitats Directive and the UK government was within its rights to 'take measures to prevent or remediate unauthorised introductions that have not been sufficiently studied or prepared'. However, for now at least, public pressure has won the day! The beavers are likely to remain living in the River Otter, providing they are free of disease.

Why EU pesticide regulations are more necessary than they have ever been

Honey bee populations are in decline across the world and recently we received warning of a new threat. A study funded by the Insect Pollinators Initiative showed another reality of the effects of climate change because an exotic parasite, found to target bees, is set to flourish in northern Europe if the Earth continues to warm. If we don't wake up and protect them – in the face

of fierce opposition from the pesticide industry, then a fatal combination of intensive agriculture and avoidable climate change will mean the demise of this vital pollinator species.

This is on top of evidence that links exposure to neonicotinoids to the decline of both honey and bumble bee populations. The EU's Pesticide Regulation 1107/2009 stated that no pesticide can be au-

thorised if it has a harmful effect on bees. We believe that it is imperative that we safeguard bees, as well as other pollinators. It is profoundly important that the EU ban is upheld. As policy makers our obligation, which we take profoundly seriously, is to protect our environment: which includes a responsibility to farmers so that ultimately we protect our food security.

Export of Dartmoor Hill ponies linked to horsemeat scandal

During her visit to the 'Christmas Without Cruelty' Fair in Exeter, Molly was shocked to learn of the export of Dartmoor Hill Ponies to Ireland and Europe. The charity People4Ponies shared with Molly the evidence they have of the export of these rare breed ponies, often crammed 40 per lorry when exported.

The charity, which specialises

in helping wild and traumatised ponies, says that live exports expose the lack of welfare in transport and the failure of the authorities to police regulations designed to protect Britain's wild ponies. They also point to a disturbing connection to the horsemeat scandal. In the autumn of 2013, for the first time, none of the dealers appeared at any South

West wild pony market. In the absence of any change in the law, the exposure of the horsemeat scandal suggests a link between the ponies of Dartmoor and their use as horsemeat. Molly is supportive of calls by the charity on Defra to ensure an end to the export of wild ponies from Britain.

In the European Parliament Greens have also been press-

ing for robust legislation on origin labelling for meat. Earlier this year, a majority of MEPs backed Greens and sent back inadequate legislation to the Commission. Greens believe that following the horsemeat scandal, there is a need for full transparency in the food production chain, including country of birth labelling.

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