

Animal Rights Coalition



Animal Welfare Issues
we would like to see included
in the Manifesto of
Political Parties

2012-2013

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ANIMAL ZOOS: Animals should not be restricted in small cages as is already in fact happening in some so called entertainment venues. Malta does not have the space to house large animals adequately. The idea of seeing animals behind bars is an outdated one. The same applies to dolphinariums; the sea around Malta is one of our main assets and we enjoy it to the full. It is, therefore, unjust that we deny dolphins and other animals the right to enjoy what is in fact their natural habitat.

ANIMAL CIRCUSES: When public opinion both in Malta and overseas is turning against animal circuses and other exploitation of animals, Malta should be more proactive in this regard and circuses featuring animal acts should no longer be issued with permits to visit Malta. Instead, more emphasis should be given to promote and bring to Malta non animal circuses as a means of cruelty free entertainment.

PET SHOPS AND IMPORTATION OF ANIMALS: Better regulations are needed when it comes to the importation of exotic animals. Non indigineous animals such as crocodiles and other reptiles, and large potentially dangerous animals such as tigers, should no longer be allowed to enter the country. There are enough abandoned cats and dogs as a visit to any sanctuary will prove. If irresponsible people purchase these exotic/dangerous animals and then set them loose this would be disastrous both for the local wildlife, the animal itself, and also humans. Pet shops should be closely monitored and controlled in this regard. Any owners of exotic/dangerous animals should prove that the animal is being kept in a suitable and secure environment and is covered by sufficient insurance to cover costs/damages if their 'pet' escapes or injures another animal or a human. Further breeding from exotic animals already on the Island, should not be allowed so that these animals will die out naturally.

KAROZZINI: For years the karozzini issue has been in the media and this long dragged out affair has brought shame to Malta both here and abroad. The situation needs to improve without further delay. Promises alone do not suffice in this regard and immediate action is needed. ALL horses should have adequate shelter from the weather and access to a water supply. Any owners convicted of ill-treatment/neglect should have their animal confiscated and not be allowed to own a horse ever again.

HORSES IN COMPETITION: These are getting more frequent and popular. The Organizers should inform the AWC on dates when these events are going to take place so that the AWC can ensure that a vet is present from start to finish; the expenses to be borne by the organizers. There should also be adequate shade and water facilities for the horses. Illegal horse races must be immediately stopped and horses should be confiscated from their owners. The organizers should be dealt with in a manner that deters them from ever organizing such races again.

HUNTING AND TRAPPING: The hunting issue is a controversial one. The majority of the Maltese people do not want to see the few birds we have, shot out of the sky or condemned to spend their lives in small cages. There are still illegalities with regard to hunting and trapping (shooting protected species/shooting outside the dates and times specified etc.) The perception is that hunters try to influence party policies by threatening to withhold their votes. However, animal and bird lovers also vote and have rights to enjoy nature and the countryside. The ALE should be strengthened so that illegalities are curbed and suitable punishment handed down. Where illegalities occur the season should be brought to an end immediately. Anyone caught hunting or trapping illegally should have their guns or equipment confiscated and should be barred from ever again holding a licence.

RECREATION AREAS: Areas (eg parks/beaches) should be made accessible to dogs with their owners. Green wardens/ a strengthened ALE are needed to stop abusers, rather than blaming all dog owners for individuals who do not clean up after their dogs. Many people consider their dog as part of their family. Why then shouldn't dogs be part of family outings as happens abroad?

NATURAL AREAS: should remain untouched given that so few green areas are left. Besides protecting them as they are a haven for our natural fauna, we also owe it to our children to preserve these natural areas. If further destruction continues, future generations will be denied what is their natural heritage by right.

TREES: The widespread decimation of trees needs to stop and old and established trees especially indigenous ones should be protected as happens in other countries. Furthermore, there should be restraint when it comes to pruning. Besides benefitting humans by improving air quality and providing shade, trees are also important where animals are concerned as they provide a habitat and resting place for birds and other creatures

ANIMAL SANCTUARIES: More help should be afforded for sanctuaries to reach the more stringent standards introduced recently. More spacious accommodation should be given to the SPCA, both in Malta and Gozo. Where Sanctuaries pay rent to the state this should be waived. A system should be in place whereby anyone committing a crime would be assigned to do maintenance work including road surfacing etc at Sanctuaries. (However it should be left in the Sanctuary's hands as to whether these people should have any contact with the animals). Animal abusers should have their pet confiscated and banned for life from keeping another animal.

BREEDING: There should be strict control where breeding of animals is concerned. This will help to alleviate the problem of strays. Animals are not merely a way of making money for their owners and should not be seen as breeding machines. A bitch should only have ONE litter a year. The same applies to the breeding of cats. The AWC should have a list of ALL breeders, and the AWD should not allow the practice of these animals that are presently being forced into a life of being constantly caged for such purpose. Young animals should stay with their mothers at least until they are properly weaned. Conditions in pet shops should be checked regularly. All puppies should be registered before being sold.

A.W.C: The Animal Welfare Council should meet regularly. Its first priority should be the welfare of ALL animals. It should see itself as the voice of voiceless animals. . If a member in the Council misses three consecutive meetings he/she should be asked to resign and his/her position be made available to another elected person who is ready to take the position seriously. If a member of the council takes up another appointment and by doing so will fail to give his full attention to the AWC, so failing the animals, he should also be asked to resign.

ANIMAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT: Whenever there are allegations of neglect, or of animals being kept in unsuitable condition, surprise inspections should be held by the Animal Welfare Department, accompanied by a vet/expert in that particular species. For the sake of transparency and accountability, if the allegations of neglect are made against a Government or parastatal entity, the inspection team should also include a member of a related NGO, a journalist or an independent, trusted member of the public. A detailed report of the findings of the inspection should be published and made available to all interested parties.

CRUELTY TO ANIMALS: The possibility of harsher sentences for animal abuse is available, yet, still suspended sentences are given which are seen as just a slap on the wrist which reinforce the message that animals do not matter. Animal abusers should be dealt with in such a way that it is a deterrent to anyone else thinking of harming animals.

RAT and SLUG POISONS: At present these can be easily bought off ironmongery shops or pet shops and no record is kept as to who bought them. Overseas, stricter sales registration exists for rat, slug poisons, etc. This should be introduced locally as there is evidence that these poisons are also being used inappropriately.

FISH: There should be specifications as to the minimum size of fish that can be caught. Any fish smaller than the minimum should be thrown back. This even for reasons of sustainability. The practice of some children catching fish and other marine creatures and leaving them in small buckets of water to boil to death in the summer sun, should be strongly discouraged, maybe through means of an educational campaign

FARM ANIMALS: Farm animals should be inspected regularly to ensure that they are kept in good condition. Legislation regarding animal welfare should include ALL animals bred for food, including rabbits. It should be made illegal for rabbits and poultry to be reared in garages/sheds where they do not even get to see the light of day. Breeders should attend an animal welfare course.

The transport and slaughter of animals for food should be as humane as possible with regular inspections and if necessary CCTV to monitor the process. Journey times should be as short as possible, avoiding the hottest parts of the day and the animals must not be cramped. The vehicles used for transporting animals should be inspected regularly to ensure that there are no irregularities which might cause pain or injury. The animals must not be left for hours in the lorry waiting to enter the abattoir. The driver of the lorry and any other persons who load/unload the lorry should be trained to do their job in a way that ensures the welfare of the animals. Abattoir personnel must also undergo an animal welfare course to do their job in the most humane way possible. This all to cause less stress to the already suffering animals.....

WORKING ANIMALS: Provision should be made so that, when working animals such as Police dogs and horse; guide dogs; search and rescue dogs; etc. get to an age when they can no longer work, systems are in place so that they can have a dignified and comfortable retirement, in return for the service they have given to humans. This should ideally be with the handler they have worked with but if this is not a practical solution, a suitable alternative should be found with expenses funded by the state.

EDUCATION is the key to improving the animal welfare situation. The animal welfare programme with a link person in every state school which used to function up to a few years ago should be re-established, so students are educated about animal welfare issues.