

People Before Profit Animal Rights & Welfare Policy

Final 5 October 2023 [updated after AGM 2026]

CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Introduction | 4 |
| Companion Animals (Pets) | 4 |
| Renters' right to have pets | 4 |
| Establishment of a National Vet Service | 5 |
| Ban Tail Docking, Ear Cropping, De-clawing and all other forms of mutilation | 5 |
| Conduct a full review of the Dog Breeding Establishments Act 2010 | 5 |
| Promote Responsible Pet Ownership and care for non-companion animals through the School Curriculum and Animal Welfare Charities | 5 |
| Increase Financial Support for Animal Welfare Charities | 6 |
| Positive Reinforcement Training | 6 |
| Euthanasia as a last resort | 6 |
| Ban on sale of animals through pet shops | 6 |
| Exotic Animals | 6 |
| Wildlife Management | 7 |
| Adequately Fund and Reform the National Parks and Wildlife Service | 7 |
| Establish a Natural Resources and Wildlife Council | 8 |
| End the Badger Cull | 8 |
| Ban all blood 'sports' including hare coursing and fox hunting | 8 |
| Pesticides and Poisons | 8 |
| Deer Management | 9 |
| 30% of Seas as Marine Protected Areas by 2030 | 9 |
| Ban bottom trawling | 9 |
| Nature Reserves | 9 |
| Wildlife corridors | 9 |
| Restore woodlands and re-wilding | 9 |
| Agriculture | 10 |
| Transport of Farm Animals | 11 |
| Slaughterhouses | 11 |
| Pig farming | 12 |
| Legislation is required to: | 12 |
| • ensure that all pigs are provided with natural light, appropriate space, temperature, bedding and enrichment materials. | 12 |
| • Ban sow stalls and farrowing crates which severely restrict the movement of sows and their ability to build nests. | 12 |
| Poultry | 12 |
| Cattle, sheep and goats | 12 |
| Fishing and Marine Life | 12 |
| Marine Protected Areas | 13 |
| Commercial fishing practices | 13 |
| Phase Out Fish Farms | 14 |
| Shark Fins | 14 |
| Recreational Fishing | 14 |
| Marine Life in Entertainment | 14 |
| Crustaceans | 15 |

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Not For Our 'Entertainment' | 15 |
| Ban Animals in Circuses | 15 |
| Animal Welfare in Zoos | 15 |
| Aquatic Parks | 16 |
| Ban Hare Coursing | 16 |
| Withdraw Public Funding for Greyhound Racing | 16 |
| Withdraw public funding for Horse Racing | 17 |
| Animal 'Entertainment' Abroad | 17 |
| Puck Fair | 17 |
| Live cribs | 18 |
| Veterinary | 18 |
| Animal Testing | 18 |
| Structural One Health – Animal Testing | 18 |
| Breeding | 19 |
| Veterinary Public Service | 20 |
| Regional Veterinary Laboratories | 20 |
| Wildlife Hospitals | 20 |
| Good Ownership programmes | 21 |
| Unionisation | 21 |
| Corporatisation | 21 |
| Fair Payment for Vet Nurse Students | 21 |
| Pet Insurance | 21 |
| Pet Food Labelling | 21 |
| Pet Abduction | 22 |

Note for PBP members:

The PBP National Council in June 2021 mandated the PBP steering committee "to establish a working group to review and propose updates and amendments to strengthen PBP's Animal Welfare Policy." The Steering Committee established this working group which have completed this draft for agreement at the National Council.

Some motions relating to the policy were received for the January 2022 National Council where this was the subject of an initial brief discussion. The caucus also asked for further feedback through the Internal Bulletin, which was received between then and now. We have taken on board the feedback, incorporating the amendments where we agreed. Of course, branches are free to put forward further amendments to the policy.

Introduction

People Before Profit (PBP) abhors the widespread cruel treatment of animals in our society. This arises from the organisation of society for profit and the rift between humans and non-human nature caused by capitalism.

Animal rights activists, together with the socialist left in Ireland have led the fight for improved treatment of animals over recent years - from the ban on wild animals in circuses which came into force on 1 January 2018 to the ban on fur farming. We are currently leading the way with a proposal to ban hare coursing.

Central to our belief is that animals are not raw materials for exploitation. They are sentient beings, who must be treated with respect and protected from mistreatment and abuse. We will introduce a Bill to recognise the sentience of animals in Irish law.

We fight for animal rights and welfare, as outlined in the policies set out in this document. We see this as an important part of the struggle to overturn the capitalist system, which is based on the abuse of Nature, including animals, and the exploitation of human labour. The eco-socialist society we are working for is one without exploitation, without cruelty and inequality for all.

Companion Animals (Pets)

PBP supports the keeping of pets. These relationships can be mutually beneficial to both human and animal. This mutual benefit is only possible when there is full personal commitment to the welfare of the animals. Pets must be provided with shelter, exercise, care, food and water appropriate to their physiological and behavioural needs. The following list outlines some of the more pressing issues that need to be addressed:

Renters' right to have pets

Renters should not have to choose between keeping their pets and having a roof over their head. Renters should be legally entitled to have pets in their rented accommodation unless there are issues specific to the property which mean it is not possible. Disallowing pets without an objective reason should be grounds for complaint to the RTB. The construction of culturally specific Traveller accommodation must take into account the centrality of horses in Traveller society and provide appropriate facilities, education, veterinary resources and form part of the Good Ownership Programme accordingly.

Establishment of a National Vet Service

Veterinary costs can be financially debilitating to pet owners, yet proper veterinary care is essential for any animal's wellbeing. Leaving this essential service in the hands of a for profit industry hurts both animals and humans and a free national veterinary service is needed to alleviate this suffering.

Ban Tail Docking, Ear Cropping, De-clawing and all other forms of mutilation

While the Animal Health and Welfare Act 2013 outlaws tail docking in most circumstances, ear cropping and de-clawing, sadly these practices persist to this day. PBP opposes all non-therapeutic mutilations on companion animals (neutering is considered therapeutic). More inspectors under the Animal Health and Welfare Act are needed with powers to enforce the existing legislation in this area.

Conduct a full review of the Dog Breeding Establishments Act 2010

Puppy farming is a severe problem in Ireland causing reputational damage throughout the world. Currently anyone with six or more breeding bitches must be licensed and registered by the local authority. The fact that dogs are social animals must be reflected in the regulations. There should be a minimum ratio of carers to dogs introduced to ensure high welfare standards and to ensure that all dogs are properly socialised. Random, unannounced inspections should be carried out by the Department of Agriculture, local authorities and the ISPCA. It should be an offence to comply with license conditions and to fail to comply with improvement notices issued by the Local Authority. A cap on the number of female dogs that can be kept should be introduced. A national inspection team is needed for consistency of approach and enforcement across the country.

Promote Responsible Pet Ownership and care for non-companion animals through the School Curriculum and Animal Welfare Charities

Education is the key to better animal welfare in Ireland. Animal welfare lessons and activities should be included in the national curriculum. Some animal welfare charities run courses for new pet owners. These courses should receive more funding and promotion making them available to all new pet owners rather than an income stream for the charity.

Increase Financial Support for Animal Welfare Charities

Although ex-gratia grants to animal welfare charities have increased in recent years, more funding should be made available for reputable animal welfare organisations. In the Programme for Government 2020, there was a commitment to double funding for animal

welfare groups from €3 million to €6 million over a 2-year period. This commitment has not been met. Not all animal welfare charities would meet this standard of reputability and so the proposed national vet service would screen which charities should be in receipt of these funds. Until the establishment of such a service, screening should be carried out by the Department of Agriculture.

Positive Reinforcement Training

Just like people, some pets have behavioural problems. Sadly, this has resulted in many healthy animals being euthanised. Education in responsible pet ownership should emphasise that negative reinforcement training techniques should be used as an absolute last resort. The default should be positive reinforcement-based training methods.

Euthanasia as a last resort

Euthanasia is, of course, necessary under certain circumstances, such as to alleviate the distress of a sick animal. This should be viewed as an absolute last resort and no healthy animal that could be rehomed should be euthanised. This needs to be reflected in legislation.

Ban on sale of animals through pet shops

People should be encouraged to adopt pets instead of buying them. We therefore call for a ban on pet shops and promote local adopt shops instead. Animals should not be sold for profit. Many animals sold in pet shops shouldn't be kept as pets anyway (for example parrots outlive their owners). Transportation of live animals is very stressful, they end up living in cages for an extended period. Adopt shops should be correctly licensed and frequently inspected by Department of Agriculture inspectors.

Exotic Animals

Not all animals are suited to being kept as pets in Ireland, some are distinctly not. Current laws state that to have a dog a person must have a dog licence but for any other animal the only criteria is being able to source that animal. We need legislation to restrict the species that can be kept, bred, or sold in Ireland, based on their welfare needs, risk to the public and risk to the environment should they escape. The importation of wild and exotic animals which are not suited to being kept as pets in Ireland should be banned.

Legislation on 'Dangerous Dogs'

PBP recognises that current legislation on 'dangerous dogs' is inadequate in dealing with the problem at hand. Poor management and lack of owner education are the main factors that contribute to dogs being a risk to the safety of those around them.

Adding breeds or crosses to the restricted breeds list is not a feasible solution. Banning breeds and tightening legislation drives abhorrent practices underground, leading to greater welfare and safety issues. Laws in this area have also shown to be unenforceable.

Whilst size dictates in practical terms the level of danger, it must be recognised that any dog who is not under the control of their owner represents a threat to safety. Owning a pet is not just an enrichment to the owner's life, it is a responsibility of care that the owner has undertaken by deciding to have a pet.

PBP's Good Ownership Programme would ensure that all dogs should be inspected by a vet for behavioural issues every 6 months for the first two years of life and annually thereafter. If the animal is found to have behavioural issues, the dog will be referred to a behavioural specialist within the veterinary public service. Attendance will be mandatory. Failure to effectively deal with behavioural issues could lead to confiscation of the dog. The programme would also include lessons on how to train and manage pet behaviour.

Dogs off leads in public spaces that are not dog parks does not represent adequate control of the dog. Adequate control is not only important for public safety but also for the safety of the animal due to traffic and other dogs.

Wildlife Management

Wildlife Management Policy sits at the intersection of animal welfare / rights and the biodiversity crisis. PBP's Policy seeks to both address the crisis of the sixth mass extinction event we are living through and protect the welfare / rights of animals.

By incentivising and prioritising industrialised agriculture, the Irish state has contributed immensely to the biodiversity crisis in Ireland. A radical alternative policy is urgently needed to turn things around.

Adequately Fund and Reform the National Parks and Wildlife Service

The NPWS has been disastrously underfunded since the financial crisis of 2008. Funding increased to €52.6 million in Budget 2023 however, this is still less than the public funds allocated to horse and greyhound racing and significantly less than what is necessary. The International Union for the Conservation of Nature has called for OECD countries to devote at least 0.3% of GDP. Ireland currently spends less than half of that amount. The NPWS should become a properly funded independent agency. Biodiversity conservation-based management plans are needed for all of our national parks. Funding should also be available for wildlife protection organisations such as Birdwatch Ireland and Irish Wildlife Trust

Establish a Natural Resources and Wildlife Council

A Natural Resources and Wildlife Council should be set up to oversee the implementation and formulation of policy in this area. It should comprise representatives of: County and City Councils, Inland Fisheries Ireland, the Parks and Wildlife Service, the Forestry Service, Water Ways Ireland, the Heritage Council, the Dept. of Agriculture, and such other government agencies and voluntary bodies and charities as have expertise in this area, e.g., Birdwatch Ireland and An Taisce.

End the Badger Cull

Every year millions of euros are spent on a badger cull with no scientific basis. Decades of culling has not succeeded in eradicating Bovine TB. It should be immediately replaced by a badger vaccination programme. The ban on badger baiting must be properly enforced. Until culling is ended, trapping should be done humanely, with appropriate traps and instantaneous death by IV injection by a vet or shooting by an expert marksperson. The use of free-running snares should be banned with immediate effect.

Ban all blood ‘sports’ including hare coursing and fox hunting

Hare coursing causes 150-200 unnecessary deaths of hares every year and hundreds of unnecessary injuries. Ireland remains an outlier in Europe by allowing fox hunting. These blood sports originated as diversions for the British aristocracy. Legislation must be enacted to ban all blood sports.

PBP is opposed to the hunting of all animals, including birds, for ‘sport’. Where it is necessary to control populations, non-lethal methods should be used. Lethal methods should only be used when the scientific evidence supports their use and all unnecessary suffering should be avoided and non-target species must be protected..

The practice of ‘lamping’, (hunting at night using lamps), should be entirely banned. All snares (which are banned in all but five EU countries) and traps which cause suffering should be banned.

Pesticides and Poisons

Glyphosate (Roundup) should be banned in Ireland immediately and the Irish government should support the call for an EU-wide ban. Ireland has the second highest levels of glyphosate in surface water in the EU. Other countries have moved to ban it already. The WHO’s International Agency for Research on Cancer concluded that it “probably causes cancer in humans”. By its very nature Glyphosate can trigger the loss of biodiversity.

Access to legally available poisons must be restricted to those licensed and trained to use them. Sales should be recorded in a national database which can be referenced to in the event of illegal poisoning of wild animals.

Deer Management

Non-lethal methods of population control should be used (as mentioned under blood ‘sports’). This includes contraceptives and neutering.

30% of Seas as Marine Protected Areas by 2030

The Irish government, in 2010, promised that 10% of Irish waters would be Marine Protected Areas by 2020. However, as of 2022, we are only at 2.4%. We need at least 30% of our seas designated as Marine Protected Areas by 2030 to help restore the damage done by overfishing, bottom trawling, and oil and gas exploration.

Ban bottom trawling

Bottom trawling (dragging heavily weighted nets across the sea floor), is destroying fragile marine ecosystems. The Irish government should ban bottom trawling in Irish waters immediately and push for an EU-wide ban.

Nature Reserves

We need a plan to develop nature reserves in public ownership across the country. This should include the rewetting of bogs. Councils should have the authority to designate local nature reserves as part of the County Development Plan process.

Wildlife corridors

We need to safely reconnect natural habitats that have become separated due to human development such as roads. Wildlife corridors should always be included in motorway design.

Restore woodlands and re-wilding

Restoration of woodlands and water meadows as a vital part of the battle to avoid climate catastrophe as well as restore biodiversity, stressing the need to avoid single species forests like Sitka Spruce. Monocultural plantation growing should be minimised and only continued to maintain existing wood and fibre based industrial production, or where a clear case for natural material substitution for other building and furnishing products can be demonstrated. Providing employment, rural products, biodiversity, public amenity and water management services should be promoted. Financial compensation should be provided to farmers who set aside any part of their land for native woodlands and re-wilding.

Agriculture

PBP supports the highest possible animal welfare standards within agriculture. That means opposing the industrialised model of farming which has been promoted over decades. This model only works for big agri-business. Small farmers, our environment, biodiversity and animals lose out. We stand for a shift to a model of regenerative farming, mainly plant-based,

incorporating a just transition for small farmers with a guaranteed decent income for all. That transition will necessitate a reduction in the number of cattle farmed in Ireland and a phase out of intensive pig and poultry farming. Respect for the welfare and rights of animals must be at the centre of that model.

Therefore we should move to a model of regenerative mainly plant-based farming, with focus on carbon sequestering plants that can be used to sustain our populations' caloric needs. The Agriculture Sector should match the same targets as other industries i.e. to reduce emissions by 50% by 2030 (currently they have only agreed to a 25% reduction in emissions). We have to have viable alternatives to the beef and dairy industries for farmers. Farmers and workers should be consulted from the beginning and listened to. By moving away from commercial animal agriculture, we could give significant amounts of farm land back for rewilding.

Farming with Respect for Animal Welfare

All farmed animals must be provided with adequate water, food, rest, shelter, freedom to exercise, and care appropriate to their needs. Suffering, pain, and stress for animals must be minimised at all times.

PBP opposes the use of growth and yield promoters in animals and those breeding programmes which are likely to cause suffering or damage.

Mutilations must only be carried out where they are essential to prevent injury or suffering to other animals or humans. They should not be carried out for commercial or non-therapeutic reasons. The docking of piglets' tails when a few days old (without anaesthetic or pain relief) should be ended immediately in line with the EU Pigs Directive.

Farmers should be incentivised to learn about animal welfare and implement the highest possible welfare standards on their farms. We need properly resourced regular inspection of all livestock farms to assess welfare standards will be necessary and subsidies should be conditional on appropriate welfare standards.

To avoid 'social dumping' of agricultural products with poor welfare practices, all imported agricultural products should also be required to meet the same animal welfare standards required here.

Unnecessary surgical procedures including certain methods of artificial insemination (AI) should be prohibited and AI should only be carried out by a suitably qualified veterinary practitioner.

Close Factory Farms for human and animal health reasons, and in order to reduce the emergence of new viruses and infectious diseases.

Ban the excessive use of antibiotics in animal agriculture.

We call for a dietitian / nutritionist lead mainly plant-based scheme by default in hospitals and Schools.

We call for a fund for Plant-Based Initiatives, like the Plant-Based Food Grant in Denmark.

Transport of Farm Animals

The live export of cattle and calves is big business, worth €123 million a year. Dairy calves are exported to EU countries for veal and young bulls and heifers are exported to non-EU countries. In addition to the stress and cramped conditions of transport of live animals, in many cases they are being exported to countries where animal welfare rules are almost non-existent. PBP opposes the live export of farm animals. We recognise that for many farmers, live export is an alternative to reliance on meat processors in Ireland. However, as part of a just transition for small farmers, including a ban on live export, we would take the meat processing companies into public ownership or establish state run processing plants and guarantee a decent income for all farmers

Animals being transported within Ireland should have adequate water, food and space. Transport should be limited to 8 hours for mammals like cows and sheep and 4 hours for poultry.

Slaughterhouses

All food animals should be slaughtered as close as possible to the farm of residence.

Every animal for slaughter should be instantaneously killed or rendered instantaneously unconscious and insensible to pain until death occurs. Slaughterhouses must be operated on the principle of minimising the stress and pain for animals.

All slaughterhouses should have CCTV, operated by an independent body and available to animal welfare inspectors, to ensure that best practices minimising stress and pain of animals are adhered to.

Pig farming

Legislation is required to:

- ensure that all pigs are provided with natural light, appropriate space, temperature, bedding and enrichment materials.
- Ban sow stalls and farrowing crates which severely restrict the movement of sows and their ability to build nests.
- Stop the routine docking of piglets' tails and the routine clipping of piglets' teeth

Poultry

Legislation is required to:

- Prevent the live export of ex-laying hens to the UK for slaughter.
- Ban all types of cages for laying hens.
- To ensure that poultry are provided with natural light, appropriate space and freedom to roam.
- Ban the import of eggs from hens in barren battery cages.
- Increase the space allowance for broilers and an end to factory farming production.
- Ban the importation of foie gras.

Cattle, sheep and goats

Legislation is required to:

- Ensure cattle, sheep and goats are provided with natural light, appropriate space, shelter, and freedom to roam outside.
- Control the use of animals genetically selected for high milk and meat yields, which can result in health problems.

Fishing and Marine Life

Like Wildlife Management, Fishing and Marine Life Policy exists where animal rights/welfare policy meets the biodiversity crisis. PBP's policy sets out to protect the stability of our oceanic ecosystem, on which all life relies, and improve the welfare of the fish and other creatures which inhabit it.

Marine Protected Areas

As mentioned in the Wildlife Management section, there is strong consensus within the scientific community that having a coherent network of Marine Protected Areas is the best tool to combat environmental degradation caused by the fishing industry. Currently just 14% of our inland waters and 2.3% of our marine and coastal areas are protected. To avoid an ecological crisis PBP calls for 30% of our waters both inland and offshore be designated Category 1 MPA's under the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) category system. This would prohibit all extractive activity and reserve the areas for wildlife and scientific research.

Commercial fishing practices

As eco-socialists, PBP supports those employed in the fishing industry and considers a just transition ensuring these workers do not suffer a reduced quality of life a prerequisite to the implantation of policies which may otherwise hurt them.

The tendency over time within the fishing industry has seen it become dominated by larger and larger vessels. These large ships create more environmental damage than smaller fishing vessels as well as producing more bycatch due to their indiscriminate large scale fishing techniques. Licences should be restricted on vessels greater than 12m. Not only would this benefit the environment and animals, but also smaller fishers who, at the moment, can be easily dominated.

Greater scrutiny is needed on by-catch. In recent years there has been an information vacuum on bycatch. CCTV cameras should be placed on vessels to monitor for the practice of illegally dumping by-catch back out to sea. Crucially the feed from these cameras should only be accessible to regulators, not trawler owners, so footage cannot be used as a weapon against the fishing workers by their bosses.

During the consultation period for the 2020 Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) a series of recommendations were put forward on the maximum sustainable catch rate for each species. In Ireland 65% of our quotas are above these recommendations. PBP calls for these quotas to be revised to correspond to the best scientific advice. In the case of ‘at extreme risk’ species (such as herring), we call for a total temporary moratorium of their fishing until such a time that their population has had a chance to recover to a sustainable size.

Certain fishing techniques, such as drag netting and long lining leave a disproportionate trail of environmental damage in their wake. PBP supports the banning of these techniques outright. We also stand for the banning of the use of live bait on the grounds that it is unnecessarily cruel.

New harm reduction technologies have been developed in recent years such as circular hooks and electric stunning techniques. PBP calls for grants to be made available for further research in this area to minimise the suffering of the animals involved. Alongside these grants for research, funds should be made available to install these technologies on boats and train fishing workers in their use.

Phase Out Fish Farms

Conventional fish farms are unnecessary to fish production. They cause unnecessary harm both to the animals they enclose and to the environment. PBP calls for them to be phased out by 2030. This must be done on the basis of a just transition, with a guaranteed decent job for anyone currently working in the industry. In the interim period, we call for an end the practice of overcrowding which leaves fish deprived of oxygen and distressed. In the lead up to grading, fish are often starved for days. This leads to hyper-aggressive behaviour and vicious fighting between the fish. Regulations must be introduced to stop this practise. Slaughter of farmed fish should be carried out humanely and mandatory stunning should be introduced.

We also call for increased research into more sustainable alternative fish farming practices, particularly onshore farming and agroecological methods that do not negatively impact waterways or the marine environment.

Shark Fins

Shark finning has been illegal in Europe since 2013, yet still the sale of shark fin soup persists in Ireland. The ban on the import of shark fins should be enforced, as this practice kills an estimated 100 million sharks each year.

Recreational Fishing

PBP calls for a review on the state of inland fisheries (most commercial fisheries are off shore) and place a moratorium on fishing in at risk areas.

PBP supports an information campaign for recreational anglers about harm reduction techniques, such as the importance of immediately stunning caught fish and an end the practice of using live bait. Education programme for anglers should be introduced warning of the impacts of lost or discarded fishing tackle which can cause injury to wild animals and lead poisoning to waterbirds such as swans.

Certain fish populations are currently in a very precarious state (such as salmon), PBP calls for heavy restrictions (or circumstance dependent total bans) on the issuing of fishing licences for these species until their populations have had a chance to recover.

Marine Life in Entertainment

There are many aquatic parks in Ireland north and south. Currently there are no large marine mammals such as dolphins and whales forced to perform for entertainment. This is to be celebrated and we would oppose any attempt to introduce this to the island.

Multiple aquariums have tiger sharks in captivity. These are 3-metre, 150 kg animals who are plainly not suitable for life in small enclosures. Tiger sharks live for less than 40% of their usual lifespan when held in captivity. PBP calls for their release as well as a ban on any further large sharks being held in captivity in Ireland.

The octopus is particularly unsuited for life in captivity. These incredibly intelligent animals attempt regular escape attempts when captive and even self-mutilate. PBP opposes their confinement in captivity and is opposed to the farming of octopuses. .

Currently in Ireland it is legal to import some species of captured reptiles. The adjustment for these animals is extreme and more than half die within their first year. PBP seeks to introduce a ban on the importing of formerly wild reptiles.

Crustaceans

Eyestalk ablation is cruel and unnecessary. PBP calls for it to be banned.

Eyestalk ablation is the removal of one (unilateral) or both (bilateral) eyestalks from a crustacean. It is routinely practiced on female shrimps (or female prawns) in almost every marine shrimp maturation or reproduction facility in the world, both research and commercial. The aim of ablation under these circumstances is to stimulate the female shrimp to develop mature ovaries and spawn.

We call for an end to the practice of boiling shellfish alive, there is no reason they should not be killed humanely immediately before boiling as such techniques exist. While alive in restaurants they should also be in tanks with enough space and food to be comfortable.

Not For Our 'Entertainment'

PBP recognises animals as sentient beings and is opposed to their abuse for profit and 'entertainment'.

Ban Animals in Circuses

History has shown us that the entertainment industry does not collapse when animals are removed as a source of entertainment. The use of wild animals as circus entertainment has been banned in Ireland since Jan 2018 despite massive objections from the circus industry at the time. Circuses are still very popular in Ireland despite the removal of most of the animal cruelty. Circus acts such as Cirque du Soleil are hugely popular, showing off human skills without cruelty to animals is just as, if not more entertaining. However, this ban does not go far enough and should be extended to include all animals including horses, domestic cats and dogs.

Animal Welfare in Zoos

Since the modernisation of Dublin Zoo and the foundation of Fota Wildlife Park efforts have been made to get as close to the natural habitat of the animal exhibits as possible. The same applies to the new wildlife park in Buncrana. However, troubling allegations about treatment of animals continue to be made. A genuinely independent review of animal welfare in our zoos is needed. Worse conditions prevail in some other countries and PBP will encourage people not to support them with an education program outlining the importance of the habitat and feeding programs to the mental well-being of zoo animals.

Aquatic Parks

As mentioned above, the octopus is exceptionally intelligent and should not be forced to live its short (1 year) in captivity for our entertainment. Octopuses and lobsters have been recognised as sentient in the UK recently in the Animal Welfare (Sentience) Act 2022. Tiger

sharks, who have a natural life span of 50 years, only survive 15-17 years in captivity. Sand sharks on the other hand only live for 7 years or so and should not be forced to do so in captivity for our entertainment. All are currently used as exhibits to draw in the crowds at Irish aquatic parks. PBP can see the educational benefit of aquatic parks but calls for a ban on the use of octopus, sand sharks and tiger sharks. Aquariums should not exhibit any animals that have been taken from the wild.

Ban Hare Coursing

As outlined in the Wildlife section of this policy document PBP firmly believes that hare coursing (both enclosed and open) should be banned as soon as possible. Until such time as the ban comes into effect:

- Veterinary personnel with the responsibility of overseeing the welfare of the abused hares must be banned from participating in the abhorrent activity.
- Dogs must be muzzled in Open Coursing until it is banned.
- “Blooding” dogs using kittens and baby rabbits, though banned, must be properly enforced.
- “Blooding” dogs by breaking the legs of hares and allowing them to be torn apart must be banned and properly enforced.

Withdraw Public Funding for Greyhound Racing

PBP recognises that the greyhound industry is an embarrassment to the general public who recognise it as barbaric. Cruel treatment of dogs is at the heart of the industry, with up to 6,000 greyhounds killed annually because they are not fast enough, as well as doping of animals to make them run faster, at the expense of their health. Recently a number of greyhound skeletons were found in a bog near Newbridge Greyhound Stadium.

PBP stands for the withdrawal of public funding, the banning of greyhound exports to foreign meat industries, the dismantling of Greyhound Racing Ireland and a ban on dog betting and any other stream of income this “sport” has.

Withdraw public funding for Horse Racing

PBP recognises Horse Racing as another cruel and despicable “sport” where animals are bred and disposed of when they fail to generate big profits. There is a huge and profitable industry built around it.

Horse racing is in receipt of more than €70 million a year in public funding, a multiple of what other sports get in core funding in Ireland. Most of that money ends up as untaxed

winnings in the pockets of multi-millionaires. PBP is opposed to this funding which should be withdrawn.

More than 1,000 horses have died as a result of injuries sustained at racetracks in Ireland over the past ten years. The rate of death is significantly higher than in the UK. An independent investigation is needed to uncover the causes of this, which may include the increased number of runners per race and the increased prevalence of jump racing. To reduce the number of unnecessary deaths of horses it may be necessary to phase out jump racing.

Oppose Hunting Tourism

PBP does not support Hunting Tourism. Tour operators promote the hunting of deer, goats, rabbit, foxes and birds in Ireland.

PBP will actively lobby against the Hunting Tourism industry by encouraging a gradual reduction in the number of species for which hunting licences can be issued.

Animal 'Entertainment' Abroad

Whilst PBP cannot affect the laws in any other country, we will actively encourage Irish holiday makers not to participate in animal based activities when holidaying abroad through an education program covering elephant and camel riding amongst other activities.

Animal Welfare Abroad

Ban the import of any animal-based product that resulted in animal suffering e.g. fur (farmed or wild trapped), clothing which is made from or contains hair, fur or feathers taken from live animals (e.g. Canada Goose clothing), foie gras etc.

Puck Fair

The treatment of wild animals in Ireland achieved international condemnation this year with the appalling treatment of a wild goat at Puck Fair. PBP calls for an outright ban on the use of any animal for such purposes with an immediate ban on the use of wild goats in Killorglin for this fair. A statue would do the job just as well. All traditional Fairs, Markets and Agricultural Shows shall be subject to inspection, and any animals which are being created cruelly or abused taken away from their owners immediately.

Live cribs

People Before Profit is opposed to animals being part of Christmas cribs. What does putting live animals in an enclosure in a city centre have to do with the 'Christmas spirit'? This is a completely unnecessarily stressful experience for the animals. There are plenty of other opportunities for children to see farm animals in their usual environment.

Veterinary

PBP stands with workers within the veterinary industry and understands that members of the veterinary profession are an integral part of ensuring that animals have their requirements met as suggested by the five freedoms.

Animal Testing

We call for the rigorous enforcement of the ban on cosmetic testing and the sale of cosmetics tested on animals within the Republic of Ireland.

Animal experimentation in biological and biomedical research has yielded innumerable benefits to humanity and is justifiable as long as animal welfare standards are enforced effectively. Enforcement of welfare standards in research should be carried out by an independent but state-funded body with adequate resourcing to ensure compliance - in practice this should mean careful monitoring of the resources allocated to the Health Products Regulatory Authority, which currently has responsibility for inspection of animal research facilities.

The emergence of potential alternatives to animal models in specific research contexts is to be welcomed - Irish and European research funding agencies should devote greater funding research into alternatives with a view to popularising their use and reducing the associated costs.

Structural One Health – Animal Testing

The Covid-19 pandemic and the spillover of other zoonotic diseases into human populations in recent years has highlighted the profound impact that human activities have on the evolution of new pathogens. The destruction of nature and destabilisation of ecosystems by capitalism is bringing humans and previously unexposed animal populations into contact with new diseases that we often have no population-level immunity against - e.g. Ebola. Meanwhile the capitalist drive towards profit maximisation and stabilisation in animal agriculture has demanded the genetic homogenisation of livestock and high density rearing of animals, leaving farmed animal populations more vulnerable to emergent diseases. The global value chains linking agriculture and food production can then act as a transmission belt, spreading new diseases around the globe.

People Before Profit endorse a ‘Structural One Health’ approach to the health of animal populations and to global agriculture - acknowledging the role of capitalism in accelerating zoonotic disease, going beyond the ‘One Health’ approach which places undue blame on farmers in the global south and on patterns of consumption uncommon in the Global North (e.g. consumption of ‘exotic animals’.)

We recognise that human and animal medicine are interconnected and therefore require any medicine or surgical procedure tested on animals or with the use of animals as models be also registered for use in animals as part of the registration process.

Breeding

The breeding of companion animals is an area that requires more management. Humans have a duty of care to the animals that we are breeding.

It is currently a requirement to register to breed dogs, where the owner owns six or more female dogs. This should be extended to all breeding. During the registration process any animals being registered for breeding must be able to meet healthy breed standards rather than propagating ‘aesthetically pleasing’ standards which result in deleterious consequences for the animals such as issues with mobility, cardiac issues, and syndromes such as BOAS in brachycephalic dogs (breeds with shortened snouts).

Ireland has a history of puppy farming, there have been clamp downs in the past, but this abuse of animals is pervasive. We need to stand against this practice in all its forms. Motherhood is taxing on the health and so to safeguard female dogs bitches used for breeding must be over one year of age and below eight years of age. Bitches must be limited to no more than four litters in their lifetimes, in any three-year period no more than three litters and no more than two litters born to a bitch by caesarean section. A maximum number of bitches per farm should be imposed.

Anyone who breeds more than two litters will be subject to possible home inspection by welfare officers with legal requirements to abide by any recommendations.

To facilitate this process, we recommend the establishment of a government body which promotes welfare-based standards with inspectors empowered with the ability to issue fines and confiscate animals.

Legislation currently stipulates that puppies cannot leave the mother before 8 weeks. PBP calls for similar legislation to institute a minimum of 12 weeks for kittens.

Veterinary Public Service

Access to veterinary professionals’ advice and care is a core component of addressing animal welfare. More inspections and higher standards for farming are required. To facilitate this, we would institute a Veterinary Public Service which would work with farmers to raise welfare standards. The Service would ensure that small holder farmers are not forced to make difficult choices between animal welfare and financial viability. Veterinary fees for companion animals are also very high. Pets and owners in working class communities are disproportionately affected as owners may struggle to afford such fees (also causing their owners distress). This service can also provide treatment to companion animals.

Regional Veterinary Laboratories

PBP condemns the closure of regional veterinary laboratories. Regional veterinary laboratories provide vital services to the rural community. An increase in funding for existing facilities is essential in order to provide for necessary upgrades and allow the replacement of old equipment. RVLs are critical to monitoring herd health and surveilling disease. This has a knock-on impact for farmers, agricultural workers and public health. Effectively dealing with disease is a welfare issue.

Reporting

We are aware that there is a financial implication for vets who report animal welfare issues. However, welfare standards must not be compromised in order for businesses to make higher profits. Any vet found to have ignored a welfare issue in a client will be held liable.

Wildlife Hospitals

We are delighted to see the first wildlife hospital in Ireland has finally found a home in Meath. We note that there was a long period of uncertainty for finding the funds and location for the premises. Having a place for animals to rehabilitate and be treated is a consideration for wildlife animal treatment and euthanasia. It also allows the alleviation of animal suffering directly and helps to preserve the ecosystems in Ireland which are already under pressure. In aid of preserving Ireland's natural heritage, we would ensure that there are sufficient wildlife hospitals to cover the island of Ireland. Any organisation which rescues wildlife casualties should be licensed and subject to minimum standards. The facilities should be inspected for suitability and to ensure that wild animals are not retained for any longer than necessary to rehabilitate and release.

Good Ownership Programmes

Most people in Ireland want to be good pet owners and look after their pets to the best of their abilities. Therefore, we would implement Good Ownership programmes for public education, including, breeding, vaccination, and nutrition. This will enable people to understand the pet welfare requirements and prevent welfare and public health issues occurring. This should be included in the school curriculum.

Unionisation

Veterinary care assistants, nurses and practitioners are workers, and it is vital that workers can independently organise and bring issues affecting their profession to the public and authorities. Therefore, we strongly support the creation of a veterinary union that is not affiliated to the small firm association with union reps regularly visiting workplaces.

Corporatisation

The corporatisation of the veterinary sector has an alarming implication for animal welfare. Large corporations will naturally push for worker exploitation and prioritise profitability over animal welfare. In addition to the current legislation specifying that practices must be owned by a veterinary practitioner we will enforce a maximum size of 8 practices per body.

Fair Payment for Vet Nurse Students

PBP call for the fair payment of veterinary nurse students who are currently undertaking hundreds of hours of unpaid labour.

Pet Insurance

Pet insurance is becoming more and more prevalent in Ireland. Insurance allows owners to treat their animals in many cases where they usually would not be able to afford it. To facilitate this and to avoid exploitation by insurance companies we would require greater clarity being given on pre-existing conditions and the elimination of considering bilateral conditions the same condition. We would also initiate price controls within the pet insurance industry.

Pet Food Labelling

We recognise the importance of transparency in food labelling. PBP requires pet foods to have clear labels on nutrition detailing quantities such as the fat content. This includes clearly specifying the recommended quantities for pets. This must also be independently verified within laboratories in the Republic of Ireland. This allows owners to be able to make educated decisions on what they feed their pets. Labels should also be clear on what the food is made from and the provenance of any meat products.

Pet Abduction

People Before Profit supports the introduction of a new offence of pet abduction. This will recognise the fact that pets are not equivalent to property and the loss of a pet is much more distressing than the loss of property.