



CONSIDERATION OF PETITION PE1400

The Scottish SPCA is Scotland's oldest and largest animal welfare organisation.

The Society's main objective is to prevent cruelty to animals and to promote kindness and humanity in their treatment.

To enable this, the Society has an effective and efficient Uniformed Service, comprising of 54 Inspectors, 10 auxiliary Inspectors and 26 ambulance drivers.

All Scottish SPCA Inspectors are authorised by the Scottish Minister to enforce the welfare provisions of the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006.

The Scottish SPCA is the main point of contact for the general public to report concerns regarding animal welfare issues, in the year up to and until 17 October 2011, the Scottish SPCA received 147,961 telephone calls in relation to animal welfare concerns, only 13 of these calls related to circuses, 5 of which were concerns over Annie the Elephant following the media reports of her treatment in England.

As has been explained to the committee, circuses have to be licensed by the Local Authority where they have their home base, as such none of the current UK based circuses are registered in Scotland.

One of the main concerns surrounds the speculation of a ban on circuses in other parts of the United Kingdom, and that if this was to occur, some circuses may relocate to Scotland, this is similar to the concerns that led to the ban being placed on Mink farms in Scotland, even although there were no Mink farms in Scotland at that time.

In 2011 only two travelling circuses featuring animals visited Scotland, Zippo's circus and Bobby Roberts's circus. Since Annie the Elephant was retired from the Bobby Robert's circus, neither of these circuses have what would be described as exotic species.

Domesticated species such as dogs and equines do not present the same welfare problems as exotic species in that they can be freely exercised and accommodated out side their mode of transport.

The difference between the requirements for domestic and exotic species in this context, was highlighted a decade ago when an Italian travelling circus visited Scotland with a menagerie of exotic species ranging from Giraffes, Hippopotamus, Rhinoceros, Elephants and big cats.

The transport and accommodation for these animals was in animal welfare terms nothing short of a disgrace, however, given the terms of the legislation at the time, no prosecution could be raised.

Both circuses that performed in Scotland this and in previous years, have an open door policy in relation to the Scottish SPCA, both circuses are inspected by Scottish SPCA Inspectors before their first performance in Scotland and on random visits during their tour. No welfare concerns have been raised by our Inspectors during these visits.

During the consultation phase of the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006, the Scottish SPCA was of the understanding that the issue of circuses could and would be addressed by the Scottish Government under secondary legislation.

In relation to the above petition, the stated policy of the Scottish SPCA is;
The Scottish SPCA is opposed to the exhibition and presentation of animals in circuses and travelling menageries.

Whilst our stated policy is against animals in travelling circuses, the Scottish SPCA will continue to visit and inspect any circuses in Scotland and provide a true account of any findings.

Michael Flynn
Chief Superintendent