Response to SG consultation\textsuperscript{1} on breeding activities with cats

I launched this petition in 2017 as a result of having worked for over 20 years on the front line of cat rescue in Scotland, which included trapping, neutering and returning/rehoming over 4.5K stray and feral cats. Over that time the numbers only got higher, and I witnessed extreme suffering. It was obvious that much clearer stronger measures would be necessary if we are to protect cats from serious welfare problems.

As things are, a large proportion of the domestic cat population each year dies from starvation and diseases; in addition, cats are poisoned, shot, trapped, mutilated, maimed, eviscerated and crushed on roads and in machinery. All of this is a result of thoughtless or uncaring over-production of cats.

My figures, which demonstrate the vast scale of this over-provision, have been acknowledged and agreed widely. Welfare and veterinary organisations themselves advocate a policy that neutering is better for cat welfare than not neutering at both individual and population levels.\textsuperscript{2} (Cat welfare experts consider the neutering procedure to be safe including in kittens as young as eight weeks and safer than serial pregnancy.\textsuperscript{6})

Our own Wildcat project and the International Union for Conservation of Nature Cat Specialist Group report crucial evidence of high and accelerating numbers of un-neutered domestic and ferally living cats in Scotland.\textsuperscript{3}

Clearly, feral cat numbers cannot keep increasing as the carrying capacity of the environment will be reached. Gaps are created by mortality (the average life span of wild-living cats is 2-3 years in Scotland) but are continually filled by overspill from the pet cat population.

A large proportion of the domestic cat production each year will inevitably die from starvation, disease and injury because there is no more room in the wild for dumped and over-spill cats.

Acute suffering and death on this scale is unacceptable – the reason for my petition.

I submitted statistical and technical evidence in detail to the SG consultation.\textsuperscript{4} I wrote a briefing to inform the Minister and offered to meet her. I received a reply from an official recounting the SG position (cats are no bother), mentioning selected responses to my petition that prefer the status quo but not citing those that evidence the acute crisis.

The SG published a summary of responses on 16 April 2019.

Over 95% supported regulation of dog/cat/rabbit breeding – this is a step in the right direction. HOWEVER, the SG proposal of a threshold of 3 and more litters each year (before a licence is required) would not improve things for cats. It would simply sanction (in law) the present atrocious level of suffering and as such would make things dangerously worse.\textsuperscript{5} If all the owners of female pet cats believe that ‘it’s OK’
to produce 2 litters a year that would produce FOUR MILLION new pet cats a year. (There are only c. 800,000 cats that have homes in Scotland.)

The majority of responses stated scientific and technical evidence should be the basis for calculating a threshold.

Question: Why are my figures and the IUCN SCG evidence\(^3\) showing there is an acute welfare problem for high and accelerating numbers of un-neutered domestic cats in Scotland not apparently being taken into account as evidence?

Question: Why is Scotland far behind countries around the world that are already taking strong measures to reduce their cat populations for welfare reasons, measures which have the support of all caring people?

Warning. Images provided in the link below illustrate the agony and cruel deaths endured by a large proportion of the cat population in Scotland – which will inevitably affect increasing numbers of cats at present over-production levels. These images may cause distress.

https://catsliberation.wordpress.com/2019/08/08/cruel-deaths-suffered-by-wild-living-cats/