

# Scottish SPCA joins Battersea and Edinburgh Dog and Cat Home to call for increase in maximum jail sentence



Scotland's animal welfare charity will be joining Battersea and Edinburgh Dog and Cat Home at the Scottish Parliament today (20 September) as the charities are joined by MSPs to call for tougher sentences for animal cruelty offences.

The Scottish SPCA supports the maximum jail sentence for those convicted of cruelty and welfare offences under the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006 to be increased, from 12 months, to five years.

Scottish SPCA Chief Superintendent Mike Flynn said, "Sentencing for animal abuse is very inconsistent in Scotland and we feel a five year maximum jail sentence would provide the sheriff with a greater range of options.

"Under current laws animal abusers will get a lighter sentence than those found guilty of fly tipping which needs to change.

"The Scottish SPCA is the only animal charity in Scotland able to investigate cruelty to animals and help take people guilty of abuse and neglect to court."

Head of Education and Policy Gilly Mendes Ferreira said, "We feel the current maximum sentence in Scotland for animal cruelty offences doesn't act as a deterrent since very few sheriffs' use the maximum sentence.

"In 2016 our investigations led to 33 bans on keeping animals,

including five life bans, 25 fines, 13 community payback orders and only three jail sentences.

“There are large inconsistencies in animal cruelty sentencing throughout Scotland which we would like to see addressed.

“Our supporters and the general public have been very vocal about an increase in maximum sentencing as they want to see justice for the animals who have been abused, abandoned and neglected in Scotland.”

Speaking about an increase in the maximum sentencing Emma Harper MSP for South Scotland said, “I support a review of the sentencing for animal cruelty and animal welfare crimes and I would encourage inconsistencies found across Scotland for sentencing animal cruelty crime to be addressed.

“I recently learned that fly-tipping currently carries a heftier sentence of 5 years compared to the 12 months for cruelty crimes against animals. I’d like to see this change.”

Ruth Maguire MSP for Cunninghame South said, “The Scottish SPCA does wonderful work in preventing cruelty to animals and in making sure that animal welfare law in Scotland is enforced.

When trusted expert organisations such as the Scottish SPCA point out areas where the law could be improved, I think that it’s incumbent upon us all to listen to them and consider their advice carefully.

Their investigations have found that very few sheriffs’ use the maximum sentence. Many people will share their concern that this impacts on its ability to act as a deterrent – and would wish to see the operation of maximum sentences for animal cruelty in Scotland.”

Margret Mitchell MSP for Central Scotland said, “It is clear that the current penalties for animal abuse are hopelessly

inadequate.

On a daily basis there is harrowing evidence that they do not serve as any meaningful deterrent.

The abuse often results from a thriving illegal business where perpetrators can make big money whilst keeping defenceless animals in appalling conditions.

It is then left to charities like Scottish SPCA to care for these often traumatised animals.

The time is long overdue to redress the balance with the increased sentences suggested."