

Scottish Animal Welfare Commission

**Annual report of SAWC
activity 2021-2022**

December 2022

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SCOTTISH ANIMAL WELFARE COMMISSION

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1. Word from the Chair

I am very pleased to be able to introduce this second annual review of the activities of the Scottish Animal Welfare Commission (SAWC) since its last report in October 2021. Despite the continuing difficult global circumstances, the SAWC Commissioners have now begun to have some face to face meetings to discuss activities, which have been very useful for detailed discussions, although online meetings and hybrid meetings are also in place and can be time efficient methods of meeting. The Commission continues to be very active in developing its work to address specific issues, and publishing reports as will be detailed below.

As the work of SAWC has become more developed, and processes more mature, work has continued to focus on issues they perceive to be very timely, and relevant to delivering on their remit, considering important welfare issues for wildlife and companion animals. Other issues that were also considered this year were those where there was a timely or important need to express an opinion for Scotland's animals, and in response to requests for input from Scottish ministers and the RAINE committee. Although SAWC takes guidance and requests from Scottish Government and others, it is independent in forming the workplan, and any recommendations are arrived at on the basis of evidence, considered from the point of view of animal welfare costs or benefits.

SAWC has also continued to develop strong working links with related groups. The SAWC Chair and secretariat participated in the annual EuroFAWC meeting in June and SAWC members regularly attend meetings of the Animal Welfare Committee (formerly Farm Animal Welfare Committee). The SAWC chair has also been seconded to one of the AWC working groups on lamb castration and tail-docking and SAWC invites the Chair of AWC to attend SAWC plenary meetings. SAWC looks forward to continuing close and supportive contact with AWC and with the new Animal Sentience Committee. SAWC also maintains close working relationships with the Wild Animal Welfare Committee, which contributes to reports on wildlife matters. These contacts ensure that SAWC is able to provide a strong and impartial view on animal welfare for Scottish farm, companion and wild animals.

2. Introduction and Terms of Reference

1. The Scottish Animal Welfare Commission (SAWC) was established by the Scottish Animal Welfare Commission Regulations 2020, made under section 36 of the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006. The function of providing advice on the protection of wildlife under section 23 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 has been assigned by Ministerial declaration.

Further information on the Commission, including reports and minutes of previous meetings, is published when available on the [SAWC web page](#).

2. SAWC's terms of reference are to focus on the welfare of wild and companion animals in Scotland while also providing scientific and ethical advice to the Scottish Government. The Commission will only consider areas that are within the normal current remit of the UK Animal Welfare Committee and the UK Zoo Expert Committee where these relate to the overall responsibility to consider the welfare needs of sentient animals in all areas of Scottish Government policy or at the specific request of the Scottish Ministers. The Commission will not consider matters that are reserved to the UK Government, including the welfare of animals used in scientific procedures.

The Commission provides written reports and opinions to Scottish Ministers giving practical recommendations based on scientific evidence and ethical considerations on the welfare of sentient animals in Scotland, and the impact of policy on welfare.

3. This review provides an update on the work the Commission has undertaken since publishing its [first review in October 2021](#), including reports published and on-going activity. This fulfils the requirement for an annual report in regulation 14 of the Scottish Animal Welfare Commission Regulations 2020, which states that:

- The Commission must, as soon as practicable after the end of each financial year prepare and publish a report on the exercise of its functions during that year and send a copy of the report to the Scottish Ministers.
- The Scottish Ministers must lay a copy of the report before the Scottish Parliament.
- It is for the Commission to determine the form and content of each report.

3. Ways of Working

The Scottish Animal Welfare Commission (SAWC) has been established to provide independent advice to Scottish Ministers on the welfare of sentient animals, primarily wildlife and companion animals, with particular reference to:

- how the welfare needs of sentient animals are being met by devolved policy;
- possible legislative and non-legislative routes to further protect the welfare of sentient animals; and
- the research requirements to provide an evidence base for future policy development.

SAWC provides written reports and opinions to Scottish Ministers (and to such others as Scottish Ministers may direct) giving practical recommendations based on scientific evidence and ethical considerations on the welfare of sentient animals in Scotland, and the impact of policy on welfare. It is required to publish any advice it provides, which is available on its [website](#).

The Commission is required to submit an Annual Report to Scottish Ministers which they must lay before the Scottish Parliament.

Members of SAWC are appointed in a personal capacity on the basis of their particular expertise and experience in aspects of animal welfare, which they use to consider welfare issues of relevance to animals in Scotland. They do not act as representatives of their employer or any other organisation with which they may be associated, neither are they remunerated by the Scottish Government. A [Register of Members' Interests](#) is publicly available on the SAWC website.

SAWC provides advice on matters (i) referred to it by Scottish Ministers, (ii) referred to it by such other persons as Scottish Ministers may direct, and (iii) as the Commission itself considers appropriate. It is required to prepare an annual work plan which must be approved by Scottish Ministers.

Plenary meetings of SAWC are held at least 4 times a year. These are generally physical meetings, as circumstances allow, although members unable to attend in person may do so virtually. A record of members' attendance is included in the Annual Report. Officials from the Scottish Government Animal Welfare Team are invited to attend each meeting, with other Scottish Government officials invited to be represented depending on each meeting's agenda.

In addition to the Annual Report, which includes a general review of developments in policy and legislation so far as they impact on the welfare of sentient animals in Scotland, SAWC produces four types of outputs: 1) short responses to specific questions from the Minister responsible for animal welfare or other members of Scottish Government 2) letters to Ministers on specific areas of welfare where members of SAWC feel their advice will be useful in decision-making; 3) responses to Scottish Government public consultations; and 4) following a detailed inquiry by the Commission, substantial reports which focus on a specific topic.

Responses to consultations, queries and letters to Ministers are usually drafted by an ad hoc sub-committee, although information may be sought from relevant bodies as required.

Substantial reports are prepared by Working Groups drawn from SAWC membership but will usually require additional views and inputs from outside the Commission. For issues involving wildlife, SAWC meets with NatureScot at the inception of a working group to discuss the issue and gain background information on work to date on the area. Similarly, other agencies, such as the Animal and Plant Health Agency, may also be involved in initial meetings to provide similar background to an issue. In some instances, SAWC may co-opt an external member to a Working Group where there is a need for additional independent expertise, although all decisions are made by SAWC alone. In evidence gathering, SAWC will approach relevant stakeholders for written and/or oral views on the issue under consideration.

All opinions, advice and recommendations provided by SAWC represent the independent, collective view of the Commission.

4. Work Plan and Work Group Activity

In the past 12 months, the Commission has held 4 plenary meetings – in December in 2021 and in March, June and September in 2022. Minutes and records of attendance are published routinely and held in the Documents section of the Commission's [web page](#).

The Commission published its [initial work plan](#) in July 2020. This was followed by refreshed plans in [2021](#) and [2022](#). Smaller working groups lead the projects and also discuss some areas identified for consideration in the medium term. Updates on the activity and output of these groups is as follows. Where reports are referenced, further information can be found in the "Publications" section.

Aquaculture

The working group was formed to consider the welfare of farmed fish in Scotland, including to provide an opinion on the welfare aspects of practices that are required to make the sector sustainable. The group is initially considering the welfare issues arising for farmed Atlantic salmon, and wild animals when protecting farmed fish from predation by seals (such as use of acoustic deterrents). Evidence-gathering sessions included a visit to a salmon farm, a literature review, surveying and interviewing a range of industry experts, and conducting an ethical review.

Written advice was given to Scottish Government's Marine Scotland Licensing Operations Team on 12 August 2022.

The working group is due to publish its initial report on acoustic deterrent devices by February 2023.

Beavers

The Beavers Working Group have investigated welfare issues associated with the management and control of wild beavers in Scotland. Activity was paused while a judicial review, considering the issue of licences for killing beavers, was underway. This concluded in October 2021, at which point members reconvened to continue their evidence gathering process, which included reaching out to a range of relevant stakeholders for their views.

The working group published its report on 13 December 2022.

Dog Training

The working group was initially established to review whether dog trainers and dog training methods should be regulated. The group tasked itself with firstly reviewing and providing an initial report on the welfare issues associated with the use of electronic collars on dogs. Evidence gathering included engagement with a range of stakeholders, a demonstration of dog training practices and a review of the available literature on the issue.

The working group is due to publish its report by February 2023.

After publishing the initial report, the working group intends to expand its remit to look at wider aspects of dog training, grooming and other companion animal services.

Exotic Pets

The working group has considered animal welfare issues surrounding the keeping of exotic pets in Scotland and the potential need for further regulation. It has consulted

a number of different sectors during its enquiries, including local authorities, APHA, Scottish SPCA, pet and trade industry stakeholders, Scottish/UK animal welfare NGOs, and EU stakeholders and officials. An interim report was published in September 2021. The need for a literature review on welfare issues associated with exotic pets was identified. This was commissioned by Scottish Government and completed by SRUC, with the researcher working closely with the working group. **The working group published its final report and the literature review on 11 November 2022.**

Sentience

A Sentience Sub-Committee was set up at the end of 2021, in order to assist the other members of SAWC in filtering and prioritising issues relating to animal sentience. Ongoing work includes the development of an ethics and justice framework, drawing on recent Aquaculture Working Group work, and assembling evidence in relation to fish sentience.

Snaring

The working group reviewed the welfare issues surrounding the use of snares in Scotland, taking into account the implications of a decision to keep or amend current legislation relating to their use.

The working group published its position paper on 23 November 2022.

Wildlife Welfare

The Scottish Government has a Programme for Government commitment to publish 'a strategic approach to wildlife management that puts animal welfare at the centre while protecting public health and economic and conservation considerations.' SAWC has been engaging with NatureScot on their wildlife welfare principles which forms part of this commitment.

Greyhound racing

Recent petitions on banning racing greyhounds have increased awareness of potential welfare concerns.

In May 2022 SAWC responded to an enquiry by the Rural Affairs, Islands and Natural Environment Committee, with an [opinion on the welfare of greyhound racing in Scotland and on unlicensed greyhound racing tracks operating in Scotland](#).

SAWC has formed a working group to undertake more research and fully consider the available evidence, in order to reach a balanced conclusion by the end of February 2023.

Local authorities handling animal welfare issues

A working group was formed to consider reviewing how different authorities deal with animal welfare issues, whether there are experts who can assess welfare and whether any future recommendations could feasibly be met by the local authorities.

Other areas of the work plan that may be considered in the future:

Microchipping of domestic cats

Consider welfare aspects of microchipping domestic cats, compulsory neutering of cats and outdoor cat controls.

Wildcat reintroduction

Opportunity for SAWC to review policy or provide an opinion on welfare issues at some point.

Abattoir provision and opportunities for mobile slaughterhouses

From a Scottish perspective to review the welfare issues around numbers of abattoirs, slaughter journey times and the welfare of animals killed in mobile slaughterhouses.

Performing animals and animal encounters (potentially including therapy animals)

Currently stakeholder engagement activities in this area but SAWC could provide an opinion on welfare of animals used under these different types of management, including the lives of these animals when not on exhibit/in use.

Potential areas over a longer time scale:**Codes of practice vs industry guidance**

Provide an opinion on how information can be best disseminated and its impact in practice. Role for SAWC in reviewing revised or new versions of these (alongside activities of AWC), particularly those falling under areas of particular Scottish concerns such as aquaculture.

Rewilding

Projects involving release of wild, domestic or semi-domestic animals into a wild or partly wild setting raise various welfare concerns. SAWC would review these issues and provide best practice/policy advice – this could potentially follow on from current work looking at snaring.

Welfare of horses kept for racing

Currently no plans to look at this. May respond in future if specific questions from the Minister in this area.

5. Published Advice

[Review of Scottish Government activity affecting the welfare of animals, as sentient beings](#) – 17 November 2021

SAWC produced a report reviewing the delivery of animal welfare commitments made by the Scottish Government over the past five years, including its policy and legislative proposals. Future annual reports will review the previous 12 monthly periods.

[Letter to Cabinet Secretary on LSE Study on Cephalopod and Decapod Sentience](#) – 12 April 2022

SAWC provided a view on a London School of Economics study on cephalopod and decapod sentience, while welcoming the review of the evidence and evaluation by the LSE research team.

[Letter to Minister of Community Safety on Fireworks](#) – 10 May 2022

SAWC followed the progress of the Fireworks and Pyrotechnic Articles (Scotland) Bill and offered its views on the potential of the Bill to address animal welfare even more comprehensively.

[Letter to RAINE Committee on Greyhound Racing in Scotland](#) – 23 May 2022

SAWC responded to a letter from the Rural Affairs, Islands and Natural Environment Committee asking for the Commission's views about the welfare issues of greyhound racing in Scotland.

[Written advice on the issues associated with the proximity of seals to farmed fish](#) – 12 August 2022

This advice was given to Scottish Government's Marine Scotland Licensing Operations Team.

[Final Exotic Pets Report and Scoping Review](#) – 11 November 2022

SAWC produced a final report on the welfare of exotic pets in Scotland, following an [initial report on the welfare of exotic pets in Scotland](#) in 2021. A scoping review conducted by Scotland's Rural College (SRUC) on the evidence of exotic pets in Scotland was also published.

[Snaring Review](#) – 9 December 2022

SAWC produced a position paper on the live trapping of terrestrial wild animals using snares for lethal control in Scotland.

[Beavers Report](#) – 13 December 2022

SAWC produced a report on the welfare of beavers in Scotland.

6. Consultation responses

The Scottish Animal Welfare Commission responded to four consultations.

- **Consultation on Commercial and Non-Commercial Movements of Pets into Great Britain – October 2021**

SAWC's response to this DEFRA consultation will be made available to the public in due course at [this page on the DEFRA consultation](#).

- **Consultation on the Use of Dogs to Control Foxes and Other Wild Mammals in Scotland – December 2021**

SAWC's response to this consultation will be made available to the public in due course [on the Scottish Government consultations web page](#).

- **Consultation on the Hunting with Dogs (Scotland) Bill – May/November 2022**

SAWC's response to this consultation is now available to view [on the Scottish Parliament website](#). SAWC responded to an additional call for views on the Bill on 9 November 2022, and the response can be viewed [on the Scottish Parliament website](#).

- **Consultation on the Wildlife Management (Grouse) (Scotland) Bill – December 2022**

SAWC's response to this consultation will be made available to the public in due course at [Scottish Government's consultations web page](#).

RAINE Committee Meetings

- SAWC was represented at a [RAINE Committee meeting on 10 November 2021](#). The evidence session covered a wide range of issues, including sentience, aquaculture, local and mobile abattoirs, Programme for Government commitments on welfare, export and import of animals, the UK Animal Welfare Sentience Bill, the impact of EU exit, potential for a Scottish Animal Welfare Resource Centre, and dog grooming/training/walking.
- SAWC was represented at a [RAINE Committee meeting on 15 June 2022](#). SAWC provided its views on the Hunting with Dogs (Scotland) Bill.
- SAWC [wrote](#) to the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands on 13 July 2022, seeking formal approval to attend other future parliamentary committee meetings. [Approval](#) was granted by the Cabinet Secretary on 14 July.

7. Conclusions and Forward Look

In its second year, SAWC has built on its initial work in establishing procedures and ways of working, further developed its relationships with relevant bodies across Europe and published key recommendations on a number of areas relating to wildlife welfare. It has also set up a number of working groups, which are gathering evidence and providing opinions on a range of wildlife and companion animal issues. SAWC continues to provide expertise in addressing specific welfare-related consultations, and to provide information to the Scottish Ministers and Committees on important welfare issues.

As the work of SAWC develops, the welfare issues being tackled are complex and may be contested where the welfare of more than one sentient species may be in conflict, or where welfare issues conflict with other concerns. Welfare issues and recommendations to improve welfare may also challenge established norms of behaviour or animal use. However, as SAWC considers these areas, now and in the future, it will rely on the strength of evidence, and take into consideration the experiences and expertise of those who work in the relevant sectors. SAWC strives to remain independent with animal welfare at the forefront of its decision-making at all times.

Appendix I – Membership of the Scottish Animal Welfare Commission

The Scottish Animal Welfare Commission Members are:

- Professor Cathy Dwyer from Scotland's Rural College and the University of Edinburgh (Chair)
- Dr Harvey Carruthers, veterinary surgeon
- Mike Radford, lawyer specialising in Animal Welfare
- Paula Boyden, Veterinary Director at Dogs Trust
- Professor Marie Haskell, Professor in Animal Welfare Science at Scotland's Rural College
- Dr James Yeates, Chief Executive Officer of World Federation for Animals
- Libby Anderson, policy advisor to OneKind
- Professor Simon Girling, Head of Veterinary Services, Royal Zoological Society of Scotland
- Mike Flynn, Chief Superintendent at the Scottish SPCA
- Dr Pete Goddard, veterinary surgeon
- Dr Andrew Kitchener, Principal Curator of Vertebrates at the National Museum of Scotland
- Dr Ellie Wigham, Lecturer in Veterinary Public Health, University of Glasgow

Full biographies are available at [this link](#).

Appendix II – Register of Interests

Name	Employer	Previous employers (last 5 years)	Research funder(s)	Consultancy (all unremunerated unless stated)	Other (all unremunerated unless stated)
Cathy Dwyer (chair)	Scotland’s Rural College (SRUC) 0.6 FTE, seconded to Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies (0.4 FTE)	n/a	Scottish Government; EU – DG-SANCO Open Philanthropy Project; Hong Kong Jockey Club; Defra	Waitrose Good Life Partnership; Global Animal Partnership (honorarium)	Scientific Advisory Board member: VetMedUni, Vienna; Grants and Awards Committee: Animal Welfare Foundation (BVA); Grants Committee: The Horse Trust; Scientific advisor, Dogs Trust; Member, British Horse Society; Member, International Society for Applied Ethology, British Society for Animal Science, Association for the Study of Animal Behaviour, UFAW; Director, British Horseback Archery Association

Mike Radford	University of Aberdeen	n/a	n/a	Involved in discussions and the provision of advice to a range of politicians, officials, public bodies, NGOs, and professional bodies on an ad hoc basis as required.	Member of governing council, Dogs Trust; Deputy Chair, Universities Federation for Animal Welfare; Deputy Chair, Humane Slaughter Association; Trustee, Association of Lawyers for Animal Welfare/UK Centre for Animal Law; Chair, ALAW Scottish Steering Committee; Member, Scottish SPCA; Member, Animal Welfare Science, Ethics, and Law Veterinary Association; Member, National Trust for Scotland; Registered supporter of RSPCA, CIWF, The Brooke All the official positions above are unremunerated.
Mike Flynn	Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to	n/a	n/a	Involved in discussions with all other major UK organisations with regard to policy and legislation	Edinburgh Zoo welfare and ethics committee member. Charles Rivers Animal Welfare and Ethics

	Animals (Scottish SPCA)				committee, external member Links group member. Licensed Firearms holder (for emergency humane destruction only). BVA honorary associate RCVS honorary associate.
Marie Haskell	Scotland's Rural College (SRUC)	n/a	Scottish Government, InnovateUK (UKRI), Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board Dog's Trust Zoetis	None	International Committee for Animal Recording; Registered Supporter of Scottish Wildlife Trust, Cat Protection League, International Society for Applied Ethology; Member, EFSA working group on Dairy Cow Welfare
Andrew Kitchener	National Museums Scotland	n/a	BBSRC The Wellcome Trust AHRC National Science Foundation	None.	Board member and member Animal Welfare Group and Conservation Advisory Group, Royal Zoological Society of Scotland;

			SeaWorld and Busch Gardens Conservation Fund		Chair of People's Trust for Endangered Species; Council member and member of the Animal Welfare Committee of the Zoological Society of London; Member of the IUCN Cat Specialist Group and leader of the Cat Classification Task Force; Member of the IUCN Equid Specialist Group; Chair of the Scottish Wildcat Conservation Action Plan Steering Group; Member of the Scottish Marine Animal Strandings Scheme Steering Group
Libby Anderson	Retired	n/a	n/a	Up to June 2020 held a consultancy position as Policy Advisor to OneKind animal welfare charity. Expect to continue to be involved in discussions and the provision of advice to a range of politicians, officials,	Secretary, Wild Animal Welfare Committee; Member, UK Centre for Animal Law Scottish Steering Committee; Member, Edinburgh Children's Panel. All voluntary positions.

				and NGOs on an ad hoc basis as required.	
James Yeates	World Federation for Animals	Cats Protection; RSPCA	n/a	None	Member of AWC (Defra) Member of BVA and RCVS
Pete Goddard	Retired	n/a	n/a		Trustee and Chairman: Wild Animal Welfare Committee; Member: BVA; AWSELVA; Veterinary Deer Society
Paula Boyden	Dogs Trust	n/a	n/a	Defra Rabies Core Group; RSPCA Prosecutions Oversight Panel; Wales Animal Health and Welfare Framework Group (remunerated)	Chair, the Links Group; Chair, Pet Advertising Advisory Group; Vice Chair, Canine and Feline Sector Group; Treasurer, Blue Dog Trust; Member, BVA, BSAVA, AWSELVA, SPVS, RCVS
Harvey Carruthers	Tay Valley Veterinary Centre	n/a	n/a	None	Member of BSAVA; Member of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons Trustee, Dog Aid Society of Scotland
Simon Girling	Royal Zoological Society of Scotland	n/a	AAZV Wild Animal Health Fund	Veterinary Advisor to the British and Irish Association	Chair, DEFRA's Zoo Experts Committee;

			<p>RSPB EU Life Fund</p>	<p>of Zoos and Aquaria (Hoofstock and Bird working group); Veterinary Advisor to the European Association of Zoos and Aquaria (EAZA) European Endangered Species Programmes for the Pallas' cat (<i>Otocolobus manul</i>) and Red fronted macaw (<i>Ara rubrogenys</i>); EAZA Veterinary Advisor for the Scottish wildcat; G&F Training and Consultancy Ltd (veterinary professional post-graduate training course provider-remunerated)</p>	<p>Immediate Past-President and Executive Committee member of the European College of Zoological Medicine; Honorary Clinical Associate Professor, Glasgow University Veterinary School; Fellow of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons and of the Royal Society of Biology; Diplomate and full member of the European College of Zoological Medicine and European Board of Veterinary Specialists. Member of the: British Veterinary Zoological Society; European Association of Zoo and Wildlife Veterinarians; American Association of Zoo Veterinarians; Association of Avian Veterinarians; Association of Reptile and Amphibian Veterinarians</p>
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					University of the Highlands and Islands (Visiting Professor)
Ellie Wigham	University of Glasgow	n/a	n/a	Involved in discussions and provide advice to HSA, 3DVSL, various meat processors	Resident ECAWBM (AWSEL); Committee Member of AWSELVA, University of Glasgow Vet School Ethics Committee; Members RCVS

Appendix III – Contact Details

The Commission is contactable through the Scottish Government's Secretariat Support:

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