

**P-05-743 End the Exotic Pet Trade in Wales, Correspondence – Petitioner to Committee, 28.06.19**

Thank you for your invitation to address the correspondence dated 19 June, 2019, between Ms Janet Finch-Saunders AM, Chair-Petitions Committee and Ms Lesley Griffiths AC/AM, Minister for Environment, Energy and Rural Affairs, re the trade in and sale of exotic pets in Wales, specifically, in this instance, that of primates.

It will be of interest to you that I have replied directly to Ms Finch-Saunders on this matter, and that I intend to further petition Ms Griffiths.

For the present purpose of information pertinent to the next meeting of the Petition Committee, July 9, I would like to put on record my gratitude for the committee's continuing concerns for the welfare of exotic pets imported, bred, sold and kept in Wales. I am further indebted to the committee for providing me with the very latest information concerning discussions related to said exotic pets.

I was pleased to read that officials from the Department of Environment, Energy and Rural Affairs are scheduled to meet with Animal Welfare Network Wales in July to discuss the development of a code of practice for the keeping of primates as pets. Further, it was of great interest to me that Ms Griffiths intimated that future discussions could include the revision or creation of welfare codes pertinent to exotic pets, even though one has to be guarded about this as any such discussion would be conditioned by the perceived "priorities" at the time of their advent.

As interested parties in this growing debate, I thought to include for the Committee's consideration the following links. The first two are RSPCA pages about the keeping of primates as pets from which you will clearly deduce the organisation's absolute disavowal of the practice. Indeed, the following statement is unequivocal: We (RSPCA) are "calling for a ban on the keeping and trade of primates as pets." Further, the text continues:

"Primates should not be considered as pets in the accepted sense of the word. They are wild undomesticated animals that cannot be house-trained or fully tamed."

Indeed, many of the arguments thereafter made in the document are identical to those used to contest the keeping of other exotic pets, such as reptiles, birds, certain species of fish and insects, that being wild it is cruel and inhumane to remove them from and deny them their natural habitats.

The second link is another RSPCA page referring to current and upcoming legislation (Third Party Sales of Pets' Bill)

and the public petition the charity ran in England for a ban on the keeping of primates as pets. It is to be noted that events are picking up speed in England, but that it is in Wales that matters could be more quickly acted upon and legislated for. It is to be hoped that Cardiff will not await developments in London.

Finally, the third link is from the Born Free Foundation, an organisation that exists to inform us of the situations of captive animals in the UK and elsewhere, whether they be confined in circuses, zoos or domestic properties. You will see that conditions in pet shops are a great concern, as many traders and sellers have no other ulterior motive for the welfare of an animal other than its sale. In many instances, the charity's research has uncovered great suffering at these point of sale. It is my contention that pet shops which offer exotic pets and primates for sale are not in keeping with progressive thinking.

Given the above, I would take this opportunity to hope that as a matter of urgency members of the committee convey to Ms Lesley Griffiths their concerns ahead of the meeting between her officials and members of Animal Welfare Network Wales.

I am certain that you will agree with me, that should Wales make a statement by banning the keeping of all primates as pets then it would reflect very positively upon those responsible for such a moral and progressive decision.

<https://www.rspca.org.uk/adviceandwelfare/pets/other/primates>

<https://www.rspca.org.uk/getinvolved/campaign/primates>

<https://www.bornfree.org.uk/pet-primates>

Many thanks for your valuable time and consideration, and thank you for your open-mindedness.

Best regards

David Sedley