

animals count



Animal political power conquers

For the first time, Dutch voters have elected two representatives of a political party formed exclusively to represent animals.

The PvdD (Partijvoordedieren – Party for the Animals) movement has also spread to the United Kingdom, where the Animals Count Party was launched before 200 delegates at London's Kensington Town Hall on December 3, 2006, and in Wales a week later.

Animals Count Party founder Jasmijn de Boo, who was a PvdD candidate in the 2004 European Parliament elections, says: "With half of the European Community budget going on unnecessary livestock subsidies, there's never been a better time to re-examine taxpayers' money spent on unsustainable farming methods that are associated with poor animal welfare and human health."

The PvdD won two seats in the Dutch Parliament on November 22, 2006. Its MPs, party leader Marianne Thieme and Esther Ouwehand, attended the Animals Count launch in London.

Animals Count is the first UK political party to put animals at the top of its agenda. Its mission is to "establish a voice for the animals through a dedicated political party that focuses on respect and compassion for all living beings". Supporters believe it will encourage other political parties to be more aware about animal welfare matters.

Public support for animal welfare is growing fast in Britain. More than three million people actively support animal charities, with annual donations totalling more than £500 million.

Due to public pressure, fox hunting,

fur farming and testing on animals for cosmetics have already been banned in the UK. This was followed by the enactment of the new UK and Scottish Animal Welfare Act of November 2006 that includes a statutory duty to care for animals, as well as imposing higher penalties for animal abuse.

Says Jasmijn: "The new Animal Welfare Act is a step in the right direction but millions of animals continue to be exploited every day for food, consumer products, so-called 'sports' or other forms of entertainment, and in experiments for human disease.

"They suffer throughout their lives, crammed in cages without space to perform normal behaviours, become distressed during transport and are frequently cruelly killed."

Jasmijn says Animals Count intends to field candidates for the May 3, 2007, Welsh Assembly elections. The party manifesto issues for its campaign include these aims:

- To phase out farming systems that have poor welfare consequences for animals.
- To end long-distance transportation of live animals.
- To establish an independent scientific inquiry to thoroughly review the ethical, scientific and economic implications of animal research.
- To ban all hunting.
- To establish a basic national animal health care system comparable to Britain's National Health Service.

To find out more, check out the Animals Count website at www.animalscount.org or email info@animalscount.org



Animals Count founder Jasmijn de Boo



PvdD leader Marianne Thieme