

animals count



a political party to help
create a better world for
people and animals

www.animalscount.org



Manifesto

In London
animals count



too

Greater London Assembly Elections
1st May 2008

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Introduction

"MP's receive more letters about animal issues than any others," says Jasmijn de Boo, Leader of Animals Count, a new political party for people and animals. "However, most other political parties barely mention animals in their manifestos. The main parties simply ignore the issues or pay lip service to animal welfare."

Animals Count's main aims for the 2008 London elections include:

- **Establishing a basic animal health care system comparable to the NHS, including the provision of subsidised veterinary treatment and emergency care**
- **Providing healthy food within schools, hospitals, care homes, and council premises, by promoting plant-based diets and banning products from intensively farmed animals**
- **Preservation and expansion of parks and green corridors, facilitating green recreation and wildlife protection**

Jasmijn, who has a master's degree in animal welfare, has worked in the field of humane education for eight years. Before making south London her home in 2004, she was a European Parliament election candidate for the Dutch political Party for the Animals, Europe's fastest growing political party, which now has two MP's and one senator in the Dutch parliament.

"Prior to the success of the Party for the Animals in the Netherlands," she continues, "bigger parties scrambled to be seen to support new laws to protect animals from cruel treatment. Animals are now high on the Dutch political agenda, where they should be, reflecting their importance to millions of voters."

Seeing the need for a similar party in the UK, the greatest nation of animal lovers in the world, Jasmijn and a core group of supporters launched Animals Count just over a year ago on BBC TV. Similar political parties for animals also now exist in Spain, Germany, France and Canada.

In London Animals Count Too

With over eight million inhabitants, London is one of the largest cities in Western Europe, and has the largest population of companion animals within the UK. For over 3.5 million London households, companion animals are virtually part of the family, yet many struggle with the costs of veterinary care. Millions of voters consider the poor treatment of farm animals and animal experimentation to be important issues, which the government tries to ignore. Habitat destruction, through human encroachment, environmental fragmentation, pollution and global warming, results in a struggle for survival, for many wild animals within greater London.

We believe that London should take the lead on animal protection within the UK, and indeed, worldwide.

To halt the destruction of the environment and the violation of rights of other sentient beings, we drastically need to change our civilisation, similar to previous social movements which fought for the abolition of oppression of women, children and slaves. Treating people, animals, and the environment with respect, is our key message.

Animals Count's London manifesto includes four approaches to animal issues:

1. Implementing direct animal welfare improvements
2. Reducing harmful animal use
3. Encouraging sustainable development activities that benefit the environment, animals and people
4. Supporting socially progressive policies on non-animal related issues

1. General London Assembly policies

Millions of animals are exploited every day and their interests are violated continuously. The least all animals deserve is appropriate species-specific husbandry and care, based on the Five Freedoms¹.

The existing 'Mayor's Animal Welfare Framework' focuses on the following seven areas:

- 1 promoting responsible pet ownership in London
- 2 potential human/wildlife conflicts
- 3 enforcement and the role of local authorities
- 4 improving animal welfare practices in agriculture
- 5 international commercial trade in wildlife
- 6 illegal international trade in wildlife
- 7 hunting of animals for sport.

In this manifesto, our objectives are indicated in **blue**.

General London Assembly objectives:

- **Developing an Animal Protection Unit within the London Assembly 'Policy and Partnerships' Directorate, which would be responsible for policy, research and animal welfare education, at all levels**
- **Strengthening the current Mayor's Animal Welfare Framework policies and expediting their implementation**
- **Introducing Animal Protection (inspection) Officers within each London Borough**

¹ 1. Freedom from hunger, thirst and malnutrition; 2. Freedom from discomfort; 3. Freedom from pain, injury and disease; 4. Freedom from fear and distress and 5. Freedom to display natural behaviour.

2. Companion animals

Although most companion animals are well looked after, neglect and abuse of dogs and cats (and some other species) is a hidden cruelty. Most of this occurs as a result of ignorance and lack of responsible pet ownership. Hence Animals Counts wants the government to increase public educational programmes concerning responsible companion animal care and related topics.

- To over three and a half million London households, companion animals matter. Some people, for example elderly people, may have reduced social networks, and their companion animal is extremely important to them. Yet sadly, many social housing corporations and care homes do not allow companion animals. This should change.
- In addition, many people on lower incomes struggle to pay for veterinary care and although some charities provide basic veterinary care for a fraction of the real cost (or for a donation), this system does not reach all animals. As a result, veterinarians are frequently faced with (terminally) ill patients for whom the clients can't afford treatment. Euthanasia, or signing over to the veterinary clinic are some of the least desirable options, both for the veterinarian and the owner. Even more frequently, veterinarians come across animals that have not been spayed/neutered, de-wormed or animals that have not been given the required vaccinations.

Animals Count believes that social support, in the form of a basic animal health care system comparable to the NHS, could fill that void. This is similar to providing accessible transport, for example, to people on lower incomes. The basic animal health care system would seek to utilise existing private veterinary clinics and hospitals as well as charities such as the RSPCA, PDSA, Blue Cross and Celia Hammond Trust. It would substantially increase governmental funding of these charities. In addition, rescue centres, rehabilitation and re-homing facilities for domestic and wild animals should receive subsidies.

- In order to reduce the number of animals that end up on the street, Animals Count seeks a mandatory Identification & Registration (I&R) system for all animals, which is part of a wider pet ownership licensing system. Successful completion of a responsible animal care certificate, appropriate to the species in question, would be a mandatory requirement of a pet ownership licence. Annual maintenance of the licence would require annual veterinary checkups and mandatory neutering by sexual maturity or earlier, other than in special circumstances.
- Although the Animal Welfare Act now includes a 'duty to care,' animal neglect and abuse still occurs at a large scale; thousands of neglected or abused animals are confiscated by the authorities each year. Animal charities alone should not be made to foot the bill; local councils should be fully equipped to take in abandoned animals, and each Borough should have at least one Animal Protection Officer who can follow up on complaints and have powers of seizure, if necessary. Penalties for offenders should be increased; completion of a responsible animal care course appropriate to the species in question would become a mandatory additional penalty, regardless of possible prior certification.
- There is evidence of a link between domestic violence and cruelty to animals. Scientific studies show that where there is cruelty to animals there may also be violence towards humans. It may be that a person who is cruel to animals in childhood may progress to being violent to people as an adult. A home in which animal cruelty exists may also be hiding domestic violence or child abuse. Recognition of such a connection is of use to those such as social workers who are trying to protect children and adults from other violent individuals. In acting promptly on cases of animal abuse, by children or adults, it may be possible to prevent further acts of violence aimed at people. Those that work in animal protection also use this link to argue that animal abuse should be taken more seriously as a crime. Several

educational programmes addressing this issue have been used successfully worldwide, include the 'First Strike' programme, which should be piloted in London as well.

- The commercial breeding of animals for profit should be phased out. 'Puppy farms' are breeding establishments where the bitch produces puppies continuously, which impairs her health. Living conditions and preventive health measures are often very poor at these establishments. Tight governmental regulations and control measures need to be in place. Furthermore, breeding of companion animals to meet breed standards or for other purposes that result in hereditary anatomical, physiological or other impairments potentially contrary to animal welfare needs to be banned.
- Keeping exotic animals as pets is undesirable. These animals are usually not suitable to be kept as pets. Catching them from the wild, transport and trade and the poor husbandry conditions at markets and or in pet shops causes massive numbers of animals to die prematurely, get diseased and suffer major health and welfare problems. The trade also contributes to the extinction of many birds, mammals, reptiles and (ornamental) fish. In accordance with the new Animal Welfare Act, which stipulates a duty to care, Animals Count wants the government to establish a list of animals that are suitable to be kept as companion animals, based on their biological needs. The keeping of unlisted animals as pets by members of the public would be prohibited. The list should be more stringent than the list of species for which licenses can currently be obtained under the Dangerous Wild Animals Act.
- The Mayor's Animal Framework's model standards for pet shop license conditions are just guidelines and simply suggestions for offer of good practice to enable local authorities to promote higher standards of animal welfare. Animals Count believes there should be mandatory pet shop regulations.

Key objectives:

- **Encouraging social housing corporations and private owners to allow pets within rental properties**
- **Establishing an animal health care system comparable to the NHS (pilot in London)**
- **Cracking down on dog fighting and related offences**

Other objectives:

- **Establishing a pet ownership licensing system, including mandatory Identification and Registration, completion of a 'responsible animal care' educational certificate, annual veterinary checkups and mandatory neutering**
- **Strengthening legislation and regulations against animal neglect and abuse through increased police powers and penalties for offenders**
- **Phasing out the commercial breeding of animals for profit**
- **Establishing of a list of animal species that are suitable to be kept as companion animals, based on their biological needs**
- **Establishing mandatory regulations and tighter inspections of pet shops. Compliance failure should result in (depending on severity of breach): higher penalties, revoked licenses, bans from operating pet shops, and prison sentences.**

3. Zoos, circuses, other 'entertainment' and luxury items

Harmful animal use for entertainment or non-essential luxuries is morally bankrupt and should be banned. The use of animals for fur, in zoos, circuses and in other 'entertainment' such as greyhound or horse racing, is not only conveniently not mentioned, the Mayor actively promotes children to visit the London Zoo. Animals Count believes the use of animals for these purposes often causes suffering and death and is not ethical. For example:

- Animals used for racing events can suffer and often will die premature deaths, due to injury or are being disposed of due to disappointing performance. A driving force behind this cruelty is betting. Betting on racing animals leads to unethical practices and should be banned.
- Hunting and angling are also not ethically justifiable, and as measures to control populations at least questionable.
- Although breeding animals for fur is prohibited in the UK, fur trimmings and fur clothes are on the rise again.
- The use of (exotic) animals in circuses is an example of where suffering is widespread due to cruel training techniques, inadequate husbandry methods and unsuitable transport conditions.
- The outdated idea of displaying animals in zoos, in often unnatural, cramped and unsuitable conditions, doesn't teach respect for life. Existing zoos should not expand and new zoos should not be built. The worst zoos have to close immediately and remaining animals either being placed in life-time sanctuaries or sent to zoos with higher welfare standards. The higher standard zoos need to gradually change towards non-animal zoos.

The EU Zoo Directive (although a very slight improvement on the UK Zoo Licensing Act 1981 - but a vast improvement for some other countries' zoo standards) doesn't go far enough in protecting animals in zoos. Zoos still take animals from the wild. For example, throughout the 1990s, over 1,000 elephants were taken from the wild and sold to zoos: over 70% of elephants in European zoos today were wild-caught.

The implicit educational message of animals kept in zoos and circuses is that training (wild) animals, keeping them in small, inadequate enclosures, sometimes without conspecifics (other animals of their own kind), is justified just to entertain us.

Learning about wild animals can be achieved without seeing live animals in unnatural enclosures. Documentaries, wildlife magazines, the internet and other sources provide excellent learning materials that are not ethically problematic.

Key objectives:

- **No expansion of London zoos and aquaria and gradual phasing out of 'entertainment' facilities which have animals on display**
- **Developing the first state-of-the-art non-animal zoo in London**
- **Banning the use of animals in circuses (including 'domestic' animals)**
- **Closing down certain enclosures unfit for captive wild animals**
- **Improving existing enclosures to ensure compliance with the highest welfare standards**

Other objectives:

- **Banning deliberate breeding of species kept in zoos that are not included in conservation or reintroduction programmes**
- **Facilitating a budget for UK conservation programmes *in-situ* (i.e. in natural habitats; not captivity) to offset urban environmental impact on the Greater London area**
- **No wild animals in other types of art, fashion, cultural exhibition or entertainment**
- **A betting ban on racing animals**
- **Banning the import of all fur**

4. Animal experimentation

Animals are used in scientific research as models for human disease, in toxicity testing, for the development of human and veterinary medical products and in education. Scientific studies conducted at a large scale demonstrate that the predictive value of animal models in toxicity studies is low; that the contribution of chimpanzees in biomedical research in developing therapeutic or diagnostic methods is minimal and that harmful animal use in higher education (including veterinary science) is not necessary, since superior learning methods exist.

- Animals Count seeks a ban on all harmful use of animals in scientific research, toxicity testing and education starting with an immediate ban on the use of all non-human primates in experiments. Until such a complete ban is in place, laboratory animals should be kept in suitable species-specific conditions aiming at high animal welfare standards. Animals Count is in favour of the 4th R, 'rehabilitation'; when animals are no longer used at the end of experiments they need to be re-homed with suitable new owners, as long as their physical and mental health allows.
- The interests of animals used in laboratories are denied to a great extent, despite the existence of 'strict' regulations and ethical review committees. Ethical assessments usually result in the supposed interests for human medical progress or other scientific interests outweighing the harm caused to animals.
- The lack of transparency is of great concern to millions of people. Animals Count would like to see the establishment of a dedicated website where full details of past, present and future UK animal research protocols are publicly available, and linked to contact details for institutional or Home Office animal ethics committees, facilitating the submission of alternative research protocols well prior to the commencement of experiments.
- Animals Count further wants to facilitate increased governmental funding for the development, validation and implementation of non-animal alternatives, such as quantitative structure-activity relationship (QSAR) expert systems (which predict biological activities such as toxicity based on chemical structure), modernized *in vitro* (cell culture) assays, the use of cDNA microarrays to detect genetic expression changes, improved human clinical trials and epidemiological research. The pharmaceutical industry will need to contribute a substantial amount of funding too.
- There should be increased compulsory training in searching for and the use of non-animal alternatives by researchers seeking to use animals, and members of animal ethics committees. In addition, quantitative targets for reductions in UK laboratory animal use should be established, with the aim of eventually replacing all harmful animal use with non-harmful or non-animal alternatives.
- Animals Count is asking the government to conduct an independent, transparent, public inquiry into the scientific validity of animal experimentation for predicting human toxicological and medical outcomes, and into the use of animal experimentation and dissection in biomedical education at all levels, compared to the use of non-harmful or non-animal methods. Animal welfare, ecological, bioethical and economic implications should also be thoroughly examined.
- Genetic manipulation of animals has steadily increased in the past several years bringing the total number of animals used in experiments to just over 3 million. Genetic manipulation should be banned on ethical grounds as it interferes with the animal's integrity and can have adverse welfare effects, and on scientific grounds; it is wasteful as most animals created do not display the desired genetic traits. Genetic manipulation and cloning may lead to even further unacceptable manipulation of animals.

Key objectives:

- **A freeze on the granting of animal research licenses within London laboratories; critical scrutiny of the costs and benefits of existing animal research**
- **Making London a leader for state-of-the-art non-animal research methods**

Other objectives:

- **Extending the existing UK policy ban on Great Ape (chimpanzees, gorillas and orang-utans) experimentation to all primate species**
- **Active introduction of non-animal methods in research, testing and education; the NC3Rs centre to invest more in replacement methods**
- **Providing a budget increase for the development, validation and implementation of non-animal research and testing methods**
- **Improving transparency in animal research carried out at establishments**
- **Independent scientific inquiry into validity of animals used within research, testing and education**

5. Farm animals

The use of farm animals and fish for food consumption has drastically increased around the world. With a growing human population, there is a huge increase in livestock production. Yet, understanding of agricultural issues can be low, especially in children who may not know 'where their food comes from'. To counter this, an educational activity was developed by the Mayor, which, in our opinion, falls short of many issues, including the lack of mentioning animal welfare.

Intensive breeding programmes, concentrated feed and drugs such as antibiotics and growth hormone promoters have been responsible for the unnatural fast growth of animals or their speed of production. Genetically manipulated broiler chickens reach their 'ideal slaughter' body weight in 40-42 days. They grow so fast that after 4-6 weeks their legs are unable to carry their body weight. Heart failure is very common in broilers too. Cows now produce five times more milk (up to 30 litres a day) compared to the old days and laying hens are pushed to produce more eggs.

The costs of animal products are kept low for consumers due to subsidies to farmers and hence an egg costs the same as it did 60 years ago. Animals and farmers are victims of an unethical system that promotes even further intensification and cost reduction so that agribusinesses and retailers can make more profit. For the sake of animals, farmers and consumers it is important that we reform agriculture into a high quality sector with realistic prices. Compared to 1970 when we spent about 30% of our income on food, we now only spend about 12%. If we were to switch to a sustainable diet based on organic agriculture, we would need to spend 16% of our income on food. This would result in a better life for animals, a realistic price for food production and better incomes for farmers. Economically viable farms with high animal welfare standards are rapidly developing in the UK and abroad.

Livestock markets where animals are sold and wet markets where they are slaughtered are a threat to animal and human health, as it increases the chances of epidemic diseases. Epidemic outbreaks are the result of factory farming where animals live in intensive conditions and their immunity is compromised. It is only a matter of time before bird flu (the highly pathogenic H5N1 strain or a mutation thereof) or another zoonotic disease will be responsible for killing millions of people worldwide.

Livestock farming should be reformed in accordance with ecological principles and should be regionally-bound.

Animal welfare: every year over 800 million UK farm animals are kept in cruel systems and killed prematurely. Animals are crammed into cages, kept in the dark or artificial lighting, unable to turn around, stretch their wings, perform natural behaviours, and are mutilated, have their beaks cut off, are castrated without anaesthesia, roughly handled, transported for hours or days, shackled, hoisted upside down and killed, sometimes in cruel ways. Overcrowded farms and cages are barren and cause many animals to be distressed, bored and to develop abnormal behaviours such as cannibalism.

Many policy-makers have pointed out that systems need to suit the animal and not the other way around. If animals cannot be kept in large numbers due to aggression, cannibalism or increased health risks, they should simply not be kept in large numbers. The mutilation of body parts to prevent (possible) harm caused to other animals in their pens or cages as a remedy is unacceptable.

Scientists have indicated that commercially caught fish probably suffer the cruellest catching and killing methods. Over 90 million tonnes, or, several billion fish are caught worldwide. A further 45 million tonnes of fish are kept in intensive fish farms. Welfare of fish is not considered, not even the welfare of 'fish from sustainable sources'.

Many Londoners are concerned about the welfare of farm animals; the organic niche market is growing fast, and vegetarian and vegan restaurants and cafes are booming.

Human health: over-consumption of subsidised meat and dairy is a major cause of heart disease, which kills one in four people in Britain prematurely. In January 2007 cheese was labelled a 'junk food' by the UK Food Standards Agency. Why are these foods subsidised and promoted by our government? Animals Count wants to tackle the cruelty and waste of human and animal life resulting from illogical government food policies. The UK government is starting to take obesity and human health risks related to over-consumption of meat and dairy seriously, but ought to do more.

Environment: the government has even acknowledged that animal products do more harm to the environment than previously thought:

- 18% of all greenhouse gases are caused by rearing animals for meat and their products; 9% of all CO₂ emissions, 37% of methane, 65% of nitrous oxide and 64% of ammonia (which contributes to acid rain) are originating in the livestock industry².
- Factory farming negatively affects developing countries and the environment. Animal farming is responsible for half of water pollution. At least 25,000 people die every day on a planet with a food surplus, while 40% of grain and 80% of soya is wasted as animal feed when humans could eat it directly, which is more efficient. To produce one kilo of meat, 5 to 10 kilos of grains are necessary, making meat production an inefficient method of producing food for humans. Transporting live animals causes tremendous unnecessary animal suffering and shipping animal feed and products all over the world is wasteful. This should drastically be reduced.
- Tropical forests are being felled for beef cattle and growing animal feed (often genetically modified soya beans); Animals Counts would like to see a reduction in the demand for importing animal feed and thus the demand for beef.
- The environmental impact of the dairy industry is very damaging. Animals Count seeks to replace free 'school milk' with healthy non-dairy alternatives. Animals Count further wants the governments of importing animal feed countries (and those that import tropical hard wood) to pay for a 'rainforest tax' and invest in tree-planting schemes.
- The consumption of fish exceeds the sustainability level for seas and oceans and as a consequence many fish species and other sea life are at the brink of extinction. Many are caught by the use of trawlers that completely damage the ocean floor and all forms of life.

For these reasons, Animals Count promotes plant-based diets for the benefit of animals, human health and the protection of the environment.

City farms: there are a number of city farms in London where children can learn more about farm animals. They can play an important role in learning respect for and kindness towards all animals, yet many could improve. Animals should receive adequate care and treatment from skilled workers and be supervised at all times when visitors interact with the animals. Deliberate breeding of animals for display purposes should not be allowed. The city farms should develop into 'sanctuary' schemes where animals are not sent to slaughterhouses. Education should improve and become the main focus of city farms.

Those who have hobby farms in their backyard need to be aware about the relevant legislation and health and safety procedures for people and animals. In concordance with our companion animal objectives, people who keep farm animals should also have a license.

² Food and Agricultural Organisation to the United Nations. 2006. *Livestock's Long Shadow*. Agriculture and Consumer Protection. Rome, Italy.

Key objectives:

- Provision of healthy food in schools, hospitals, care homes, council premises, City Hall and other relevant public places, by promoting plant-based diets and banning products from intensively farmed animals
- Aiming for a foie gras free London (banning the product from council premises and City Hall and encouraging restaurants and caterers to leave it off the menu)
- Encouraging import of locally produced, organic and free range animal products and discouraging import of products from factory farmed animals
- A comprehensive strategy for implementing best welfare standards within London city farms

Other objectives:

- Phasing out of farming systems with poor welfare consequences
- Encouraging best practice as the norm, rather than regarding 'free range' or 'organic' as a small niche in the market. This will not only directly benefit animal welfare, but will also end the market advantages that many intensive farming systems currently have due to unfair and unsustainable subsidies
- Husbandry standards for farm animals should be raised to at least the level of organic farming standards. A range of practical measures should be implemented
- Introducing regulations that reduce pain and distress in fish, and a reduction in the number of fish caught and bred due to the unsustainable nature of fish farming and the environmental impact on marine ecosystems.

6. Wild animals

The destruction of wild animal habitats should be halted. Further fragmentation, loss of suitable land and extinction of key species should end. UK coastal areas and marine reserves are receiving more attention, which is a good start, but this should be extended to all areas of ecological importance. Nature restoration and promoting biodiversity are vital in order to facilitate animals returning to their original habitats. Survival of animals living in the wild ought to be a high priority and extinction of plant and animal species should be halted, where possible.

In London green spaces and places are isolated patches scattered across boroughs. A smart ecological plan, linking these patches via 'corridors', should be developed in order to facilitate movements of wild animals. Adequate rubbish disposal is of utmost importance to keep the number of certain (unwanted) wild animal species down, and to prevent birds and other animals from getting tangled up in plastic and other rubbish. These measures will enhance the living environment for everyone.

In case of human-animal conflicts, animals should be able to live their lives as freely as possible and animal-friendly deterrents should be used. Animals that cause excessive damage need to be dealt with humanely and never be hunted by people who enjoy killing animals.

Certain 'countryside activities' such as hunting affect Londoners too. Millions of people believe hunting is cruel, and despite the passing of the Hunting Act, the law is constantly broken every day by a handful of people who think they are above the law, and who use exemption clauses for dubious reasons. Hundreds of thousands people can easily obtain a licence to stalk and kill deer and hunt other species. Deriving pleasure from such activities has no place in a civilised society. Certain organisations that promote the use of guns to school children (including in London schools) should be banned.

The previously mentioned 'violence link' is sometimes seen in children and adults who hunt and kill animals for fun; these people may be desensitised to all forms of life and display more aggressive behaviour towards other people (e.g. peaceful hunt monitors).

In addition, more and more companion animals become victims of shooting accidents (or even deliberate cruelty), and occasionally, people get shot accidentally, too. Therefore, Animals Count seeks a ban on all hunting 'for sport'.

The corrupt and lucrative trade in live exotic animals or their products should be monitored stricter and penalties for offenders should increase. London's Wildlife Crime Unit ought to be expanded.

Rescue centres and sanctuaries for both domestic and wild (exotic) animals deserve to be supported financially by the government.

Key objectives:

- **Preservation and expansion of parks and green corridors, facilitating green recreation and wildlife protection**
- **Facilitating a budget for UK conservation programmes *in-situ* (i.e. in natural habitats; not captivity) to offset urban environmental impact on the Greater London area (see Chapter 3. Zoos)**
- **Expansion of London's Wildlife Crime Unit**