

Green Party Animal Welfare Policy



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1. Key Points

- We pledge to adopt high welfare standards for all animals including adequate space and the opportunity to carry out natural behaviours and we will press for a specific budget under the CAP measure to be allocated to animal welfare measures in rural development.
- We will not support large industrial agro-businesses in which animal welfare is compromised.
- We are opposed to the export of live animals, and support other methods of adding value to beef production.
- All slaughterhouses will be required to conform to Temple Grandin principles of design to minimise stress.
- We are opposed to fur farming, and will ban fur farming of all species, implementing a fair compensation scheme for existing fur farmers.
- We will end badger-culling by snares and shooting, and support alternative measures such as oral TB vaccination.
- The Green Party is opposed to all blood sports, and will bring in legislation to end hare coursing, fox hunting, hare hunting and mink hunting.
- Measures will be introduced to control the breeding, supply, sale and care of all domestic and pet animals. All breeders will be subject to licensing and inspections. The sale and importation of animals bred in captivity will be strictly regulated. Pet shops and animal boarding facilities will be licensed, with regulated standards of welfare. All persons in charge of animals for sale will be required to have training in animal husbandry.
- The Green Party is opposed to the use of animals in experiments and supports alternative methods for testing and research for both medical and non-medical purposes. We will ban all non-medical animal experiments, including the use of animal experimentation for cosmetic botulinum toxic products.
- We will work for the conservation of our native and naturalised species and their natural habitats. Habitat protection will be given higher priority in farming policy, rural development schemes and development planning.
- Poison meat bats will be banned. Regulations will be introduced to promote the responsible use of rodenticides and pesticides so as to minimise their impact on wildlife.
- Additional resources will be allocated to enforcing the law on animal welfare and protection.

2. Policy

2.1. Vision Statement

Animals have the right as sentient beings to be protected from maltreatment and abuse at the hands of humans, and to live in accordance with their natural instincts and needs.

Exploitation of animals should be avoided as far as possible, and to the extent that it occurs, should be carried out humanely and with respect for animals' rights and needs.

Humans have a responsibility as the dominant species on earth to protect the diversity and habitats of other species.

Key to improving animal welfare are (i) appropriate legislation; (ii) adequate resources to enforce the legislation; and (iii) educating people to raise awareness and understanding of animal welfare.

2.2. Policy Details

2.2.1. Public Awareness and Education

The Green Party will foster public awareness of animal welfare issues and ensure consumers are able to make informed choices in support of the more humane exploitation of animals by:

- Making Animal Welfare a core theme in citizenship and environment programmes in schools
- Supporting public information campaigns for decent treatment of pets and livestock
- Requiring consumer products derived from animals to carry labels showing how they conform to specific animal welfare criteria
- Giving prominence to animal welfare considerations in policies and publications of state bodies

2.2.2. Enforcement

Much cruelty to animals goes unchecked because of the lack of resources allocated to enforcing the law. The Green Party would increase the number of officers authorised to enforce the law, and would provide additional resources to agencies, such as the ISPCA, whose inspectors have powers to investigate cruelty cases and initiate legal proceedings.

2.2.3. Farming

The Green Party is opposed to intensive farming operations in which animals are excessively confined and medicated. The Green Party pledges to:

- Adopt high welfare standards for all farmed animals, and to press for measures under the CAP which will focus on better quality production and incentivise farmers to implement higher welfare standards.
- Press for a specific budget under the CAP measures to be allocated to animal welfare measures in rural development.

Cattle, sheep and goats

The Green Party recognises and supports the generally extensive, grass-based nature of cattle, sheep and goat production in Ireland. The planned increase in meat and milk production under the revised CAP must be achieved without compromising the grass-based production system and animal welfare standards.

- Licenses will not be granted to large industrial agro-businesses in which animal welfare is compromised.
- Regulations will be introduced to control the use of animals genetically selected for high milk/meat yields, which is a major factor in causing poor welfare in cows.

Pigs

The pig industry in Ireland is highly intensive. While recent changes in EU law (*Directive 2008/120/EC*) have brought some improvements (e.g. banning the use of individual stalls for pregnant sows and gilts during a period starting from 4 weeks after service to 1 week before the expected time of farrowing, banning the use of tethers, and permanent access to materials for rooting for sows and gilts), the Green Party calls for stronger and more consistent enforcement of these rules. The Green Party will:

- Allocate sufficient resources to enforce welfare rules on pig production.
- Introduce measures requiring all pigs to be provided with adequate space, natural light, material for bedding and effective enrichment materials (rooting and manipulable materials).
- Support a ban on farrowing crates.

Poultry

The Green Party will introduce measures to ensure that:

- Poultry housing systems provide poultry with adequate space, natural light and opportunities to carry out their natural behaviours (e.g. foraging and pecking).

Laying hens

Although barren battery cages became illegal on 1st January 2012, a large percentage of laying hens remain housed in a new type of cage called an “enriched” cage. In this system, hens must have access to a nest, perches, and some form of scratching material. Usable space per bird must be at least 600cm² which combined with the nesting reaches 750 cm² per bird. The Green Party believes that so-called “enriched” cages are too small and prevent the birds' natural behaviours. The Green Party therefore:

- Supports a ban on all types of cages for laying hens.
- Will press for EU funding to incentivise cage egg producers to move to alternative systems.
- Supports an immediate ban on the import into the EU of eggs produced in non-EU countries by hens in barren battery cages.
- Will introduce compulsory and transparent labelling which indicates the production system for all imported eggs, including eggs used in processed food.

Broilers

The vast majority of broilers slaughtered in Ireland have been reared intensively on factory farms. Although *Directive 2007/43/EC* lays down minimum standards for the production of broilers (maximum stocking density, etc.), the Green Party believes that production units remain overcrowded and higher standards are needed for the welfare of broilers. The Green Party therefore:

- Supports an increased space allowance for broilers.
- Control in the use of birds genetically selected for fast-growing, as these are prone to skeletal disorders
- *Regulation (EC) No 543/2008* on labelling of poultry meat will be changed to show clearly how the meat is produced and how its production conforms to animal welfare criteria. Use of labels will be compulsory.

The Fur Trade

The Green Party is opposed to fur farming. Fur farming is prohibited in Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK, and in a growing number of European countries. The *Report of the Fur Farming Review Group (2012)* recommended that fur farming be permitted to continue, with the introduction of “codes of practice” to improve standards of animal husbandry (p. 19). The Green Party is not persuaded that voluntary codes of practice will materially improve the welfare of caged mink. The report does not set out improved standards of welfare, but makes reference only to the need to

comply with existing minimum space allowances. Mink are reared intensively in small cages which do not allow the animals to express natural behaviour.

In addition, the National Parks and Wildlife Service in their review on mink predation and control concluded that escapes from fur farms will continue to threaten Irish wildlife.

In view of the inherent cruelty of fur farming, the difficulty in ensuring high standards of welfare and the ongoing problem of escaped mink as an invasive species, the Green Party supports:

- Banning of fur farming of all species (mink, fox etc.).
- Fair compensation scheme for existing fur farmers.

Fish Farming

Intensive fish farming can have negative impacts on both farmed fish and wild fish stocks. High stocking densities can lead to disease outbreaks and transmission. The Green Party will only permit fish farms that meet the following criteria:

- Stocking densities must not affect fish welfare and water quality.
- Farms must not represent a risk to local wildlife through disease spreading to wild fish or “genetic pollution” from escapees breeding with wild fish. Cultivation of non-native species will be restricted to land-based tanks.
- Farms will not be permitted to use fish meal from unsustainable fisheries.
- Support measures to incentivise sustainable fish farming will be introduced.

Transport of Farm Animals

The Green Party does not support the export of live animals.

In order to limit farmers' dependence on live animal exports, the Green Party will support other methods of adding value to beef production. For example, finishing young bull beef and veal production at home can add value in the region of €300m. The Green Party believes pain and stress for animals during transport should be minimised, and will:

- Enforce transport legislation to ensure that animals are not in transit for more than 8 hours, and must have adequate space, food and drink.
- Ban the export of live animals to non-EU countries where animal welfare may not be protected.

Slaughter

The GP seeks to improve the conditions of slaughter by:

- Requiring all new slaughterhouses to conform to Temple Grandin principles of design.
- Working with existing slaughterhouses to improve their design along Temple Grandin principles so as to minimise stress.
- Requiring slaughterhouses to use independently monitored CCTV cameras in all areas where alive animals are kept (including during the stunning, shackling (in the case of poultry) and slaughter areas), to ensure humane treatment of animals.
- Clear labelling will be required for all Halal and Kosher produced meat, including such meat used in processed food.

2.2.4. Badger Culling

The Green Party will end badger culling by snares and shooting, and will support alternative measures to minimise the spread of TB, such as an oral TB vaccination programme for badgers.

2.2.5. Blood Sports

The Green Party will bring in legislation to end hare coursing, fox hunting, hare hunting and mink hunting for sport.

The Green Party will ensure that sufficient resources are made available to enforce existing laws against stag hunting, dog fighting, cock fighting and animal baiting.

Additional regulations will be introduced where necessary to strengthen existing legislation, to increase penalties, and to make fines subject to attachment orders.

2.2.6. Domestic Animals and Pets

Recognising that there is very little control of the breeding, supply and care of domestic and pet animals in Ireland, the Green Party supports the following measures:

- Funding will be provided to animal charities to support essential work such as neutering and spaying to control populations of feral cats, and to make neutering of domestic dogs, cats and other pets affordable for low-income pet-owners.
- Micro chipping for dogs will be mandatory.
- Dog breeding regulations under the *Dog Breeding Establishments Act, 2010* will be enforced, and inspections will take place without notification.

- Regulations will be introduced to govern the commercial breeding of other species, including cats, small exotics (including rats, rabbits, guinea pigs, hamsters and ferrets), reptiles, birds and fish. All such breeders will have to be licensed, and will have to comply with standards of animal welfare. Suppliers of animals to pet shops will have to produce certificates to show that they are licensed and have been inspected within the last six months.
- The importation of any animals captured in the wild to be sold or kept as pets will be prohibited. Effective anti-smuggling controls at airports and ports will be implemented, including the use of trained detector dogs.
- Release of invasive species, such as the Siberian chipmunk, the zander (fish) and the monk parakeet, represent a very serious threat to biodiversity. Therefore, the sale and importation of animals bred in captivity will be regulated to ensure that (i) only approved species (viz. species that cannot reproduce in the wild and are suitable as pets) of captive-bred animals will be allowed; and (ii) all such animals are sourced from reputable breeders in countries with animal welfare legislation.
- Dangerous animals will not be licensed for keeping as pets (e.g. cobras, pythons, wild cats).
- Tail and ear docking of dogs and other mutilating procedures performed on animals for cosmetic reasons will not be permitted under animal welfare legislation.
- Pet shops and animal boarding facilities will be licensed, with regulated standards of accommodation, welfare, hygiene and security for animals. All prospective pet owners must be provided with accurate information about the adult size, life expectancy and welfare needs of animals on sale. All persons in charge of animals for sale will be required to have training in animal husbandry.

2.2.7. Animal Experimentation

The Green Party is opposed to the use of animals in experiments and supports alternative methods for testing and research for both medical and non-medical purposes. We support an EU wide strategy to phase out animal experimentation and to invest in research which uses non-animal technologies, such as epidemiology and computer models. The Green Party will:

- Charge the Irish Medicines Board to strictly enforce the EU ban on the use of animals used in cosmetic research and production.
- Ban all non-medical animal experiments, including the use of toxicology experiments on animals for cosmetic botulinum toxin products.

- Regarding the use of animals in medical experiments; licence applicants will be required to demonstrate that there is no effective and reasonable alternative to using animals in their research. The government will fund the development of alternatives.
- Prohibit the use of painful procedures without anaesthesia; experiments which subject animals to “severe and prolonged pain” will no longer be permitted. Animals will not be subjected to further experimentation after recovery, and will be humanely euthanized or homed as pets.

2.2.8. Equine Welfare

Recognising the particular problem in Ireland regarding mistreated, unwanted and abandoned horses and other equines, the Green Party will:

- Ensure the passport system to track the ownership and movement of equines is implemented effectively, and that all equine fairs and markets are regulated.
- Support the development of equine welfare training and education courses both in the equine industry and in schools and communities.
- Foster a co-ordinated approach to equine rescue, surrender and re-homing across both voluntary and public sector agencies.
- Rigorously enforce the imposition of penalties imposed by the court, including attachment orders for securing payment of fines.

2.2.9. Circuses

The Green Party is opposed to animal acts in circuses and other entertainments and will support the re-homing of circus animals. Only circuses which do not use animal acts will be eligible for public funding.

2.2.10. Welfare of Greyhounds

The Green Party is committed to enforcing the *Welfare of Greyhounds Act, 2011*, by adequately resourcing local authorities and other responsible agencies charged with implementing its provisions.

It will not be permitted to export greyhounds to countries with inadequate animal protection legislation.

Bord na gCon will be charged with implementing the stronger animal welfare measures recommended in the *Indecon Report, 2014*.

The industry will be required to make a more substantial contribution to funding the Retired Greyhound Trust, which is charged with re-homing unwanted or abandoned greyhounds.

2.2.11. Biodiversity and Habitat

The Green Party will work for the conservation of our native and naturalised species and their natural habitats. Habitat creation and protection will be given higher priority in farming policy, rural environment schemes and development planning.

Regulations to ban the use of poison meat baits will be introduced, and other educational and regulatory measures to promote the responsible use of rodenticides and pesticides so as to minimise their impact on wildlife will be implemented.

2.2.12. Zoos

We acknowledge that zoos play an important role in education and in conservation. The Green Party will support zoos that fulfil this important education and conservation role, provided that they comply with the highest standards of animal husbandry and welfare.

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