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Battersea Dogs & Cats Home

General Election Manifesto 2017

Foreword from Claire Horton



Polls of voters across the country regularly demonstrate that animal welfare matters to our nation. Prior to the 2015 General Election, a YouGov poll showed that around 1 in 6 voters would determine their vote based on animal welfare issues, whilst 87% said they would be more likely to vote for a party with such priorities.

At Battersea, we have been looking after lost and abandoned animals for over a century and a half. As such we are very well placed to assess the changes needed to public policy and to society for our animals to enjoy a happier life.

This General Election takes place at a critical time for animal welfare – overdue reform of the breeding and sale of dogs and cats is ongoing. It is essential that the new Government finishes this work. As we prepare to leave the EU, we must tackle the issues of border protection and disease risk effectively. We must also address legal anomalies such as England and Wales ranking at the bottom of the developed world for sentencing on animal cruelty.

We have set out in this Manifesto some of the most pressing issues that will come before the new Parliament affecting dogs and cats. We look forward to working with new Ministers and MPs to resolve them.

**Claire Horton,
Chief Executive**



About Battersea Dogs & Cats Home

Established in 1860 to care for London's abandoned animals, and now with a footprint which extends across the UK, Battersea Dogs & Cats Home aims to never turn away a dog or cat in need of help. We reunite lost dogs and cats with their owners; when we can't do this we care for them until new owners can be found. We accept any breed of dog or cat, at any age, including those with serious medical and behavioural problems. There is no time limit on how long an animal stays with us until the perfect new owners are found.

General Election 2017

Battersea has been at the heart of companion animal welfare for over 150 years. We use our voice to influence the issues which affect such animals and the vital work we do.

Our Battersea Manifesto sets out 10 priorities in animal welfare for 2017 to help improve the lives of millions of animals across the UK.

For more information contact our Public Affairs team
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1. Five year maximum sentence for animal cruelty

The maximum prison sentence of six months for cruelty to animals in England and Wales is the lowest in Europe. This lags behind Germany at three years and Northern Ireland at five years. In Scotland it is a disappointing 12 months. Our report found that six months was the lowest custodial sentence in the 100 global jurisdictions studied.¹

Regularly, the Courts hear of crimes such as torturing, starving and brutally killing animals. These crimes shock the public, yet cannot be punished by more than six months in prison. This is neither a punishment nor a deterrent, especially compared to other lesser offences such as fly tipping and theft, which have maximum sentences of five and seven years respectively.

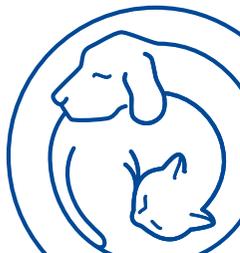
The maximum sentence for animal cruelty offences should be increased to five years, as it is in Northern Ireland.

To show your support for five year animal cruelty sentences please visit notfunny.battersea.org.uk and use the hashtag #NotFunny.

¹http://notfunny.battersea.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/BDCH_Sentencing_Report.pdf.

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2. Backstreet breeding and puppy farming

Backstreet breeding and puppy farming inflict misery on thousands of puppies and their exhausted, broken mothers every year. These puppies are born into unsafe and unhealthy conditions before being torn away from their mother, just weeks old.

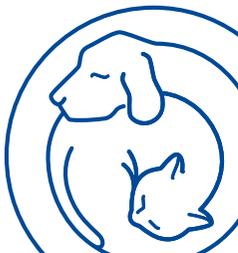
Battersea has campaigned to close the loopholes to stop the sale of puppies under eight weeks and to extend the scope of licensing to any breeder producing two or more litters per year. It is essential that such animal activities are inspected by qualified people, and that the cost of a licence is consistent across the country.

The new Government must continue with the ongoing work to regulate dog breeding effectively.

This must continue to address the welfare of dogs and cats at its heart, ensuring only properly trained inspectors are assessing the care of such animals.

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3. Pet sales

Battersea has long argued that puppies and kittens should not be sold in pet shops, and has campaigned against the practice.

We seek the closure of loopholes that allow for puppies under eight weeks to be sold to pet shops and “dealers”, as well as tighter regulation on breeding establishments. This is particularly important online, where an increasing number of pets are sold.

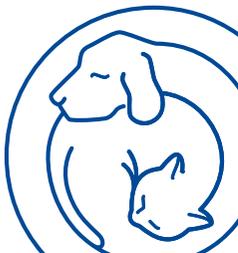
We have also called on the Government to investigate whether it is necessary and possible to ban the sales of dogs and cats from third parties such as pet shops and private sellers.

We made some progress with this issue, so the new Government must continue to move forward with plans to ensure all sellers of animals must show their licence number prior to sale, and provide information on caring for that animal.

A working group of campaigners, welfare groups and Government should be established to investigate a possible ban on third party sales.

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4. End Breed Specific Legislation

The Dangerous Dogs Act (1991) banned four types of dog because Parliament said they were inherently dangerous to people. This Act was meant to protect the public, and yet the number of dog attacks continues to rise. Between March 2005 and February 2015, the number of hospital admissions due to dog bites increased by 76%.²

In 2016 Battersea research found that 74% of behaviourists questioned believed that a dog's breed is of little or no relevance in determining whether it will go on to become aggressive.³

Assuming a dog is dangerous because of the way that it looks does not work, and is leading to hundreds of dogs being needlessly put down without a significant improvement in public safety. After 26 years, the time has come for the law to be reviewed.

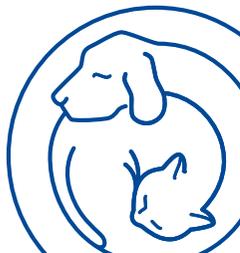
Breed Specific Legislation should be reviewed to establish a better way of assessing whether a dog is dangerous based on other factors.

²<http://content.digital.nhs.uk/catalogue/PUB17615/prov-mont-hes-admi-outp-ae-April%202014%20to%20February%202015-toi-rep.pdf>.

³<http://www.bdch.org.uk/files/Dog-bites-whats-breed-got-to-do-with-it.pdf>.

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5. Consolidation of dog legislation

There are too many different pieces of legislation that deal with dogs, some of which date back to the 19th century, leaving dog owners and enforcers confused.

Battersea would like to see these pieces of legislation brought together in one consolidated Act. This will help end confusion, support responsible dog ownership, safeguard public safety and protect canine welfare.

One consolidated Act will provide one clear statement of how dogs should be cared for and how enforcers should respond if these standards are not met.

Existing UK dog laws should be consolidated into one Act.

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6. Pet passports

Given the UK's impending withdrawal from the EU, new border controls for pets will be required. With the increased movement of puppies from mainland Europe we need to ensure that any potential successor to the Pet Travel Scheme is properly enforced.

Better enforcement of border control checks is vital to root out illegally sourced animals entering the UK, bringing significant potential disease risk to animals and people. There needs to be more vigorous checking at ports, stricter penalties and information sharing protocols across Europe.

To control infection, the post-vaccination wait period for dogs to travel to the UK should be extended to at least 8 weeks, in line with the incubation period of rabies so dogs cannot travel under 15 weeks of age. A requirement should also be added for dogs to be treated against ticks before entering the UK to help prevent the spread of diseases, some of which are not currently in the UK.

Border control checks need to be better for animals entering the UK.

Requirements for treatments against rabies and other diseases for animals entering the UK should be strengthened.

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7. Controlling cat numbers

The UK still has too many accidental litters and stray cats. Neutering can reduce the number of unwanted cats and is therefore a key part of responsible ownership. It is important that cats are neutered early and Battersea neuters kittens from 9 weeks old prior to rehoming. We also work to increase the understanding and awareness of pet owners about the benefits of early neutering.

In addition to preventing unwanted pregnancies, neutering also has considerable health benefits. Unneutered female cats are more likely to suffer from womb infections and both unneutered male and female cats are more likely to contract some life-threatening diseases.

Battersea calls on politicians to work with Local Authorities, animal welfare organisations, the veterinary profession and others, to support the neutering of cats and to promote the benefits of early neutering.

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8. Improving Greyhound welfare

Greyhounds make wonderful family pets, yet in the racing world they can be mistreated and left badly damaged. This is difficult to quantify as few statistics on Greyhound injuries and euthanasia have been revealed by the industry.

The Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee conducted a review of Greyhound welfare, which recommended many positive changes.⁴ These included plans to provide financial support from bookmakers for the welfare of Greyhounds.

Battersea seeks better welfare provision for Greyhounds for their whole lives, by improving standards at trainers' kennels and tracks, as well as rehoming.

Standards in Greyhound kennelling, feeding, socialisation as well as provision of accident and injury statistics need to be improved.

Bookmakers, both online and on the high street, should pay their fair share towards improving the welfare of animals in the sport.

⁴<https://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201516/cmselect/cmenvfru/478/47802.htm>.

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9. Ban shock and prong collars

Training a dog with 'negative reinforcement' methods such as electric shock and prong collars, enforces behaviour through fear and suffering.

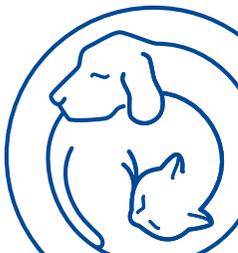
Battersea believes that delivering electric shocks or piercing the skin is never justified. Positive reinforcement techniques are both more caring and more effective at making long-term behaviour changes.

Battersea cares for many challenging dogs and achieves incredible and lasting results never using shock or prong collars.

Electric shock and piercing prong devices should be banned for good.

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10. Produce cat-safe antifreeze

Some common antifreezes contain ethylene glycol, a sweet tasting chemical that is very poisonous to cats and dogs. Even licking a tiny drop can cause excruciating pain and death in cats.

On average, 50 cats are killed a month from antifreeze poisoning.⁵ Often this is inadvertent, as it gets on to paws via run-off from vehicles.

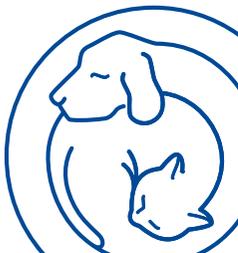
Yet these deaths can be avoided by using other products and Battersea is calling on manufacturers to make antifreeze without ethylene glycol, to prevent the unnecessary suffering of many thousands of animals.

Manufacturers should produce antifreeze without ethylene glycol, and everyone should ensure domestic chemicals are stored safely where cats will not accidentally ingest them.

⁵<http://www.cats.org.uk/northherts/news/the-danger-of-antifreeze>.

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