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Convenor
Rural Affairs, Islands and Natural Environment
Committee
c/o Clerk to the Committee
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
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Reply to rural.committee@parliament.scot

16 May 2022

Dear Finlay,

PETITION PE1758: END GREYHOUND RACING IN SCOTLAND

Thank you for your letter of 29 April 2022 seeking information from the Scottish Government in relation to the above petition to the Scottish Parliament.

I share the committee's concerns about greyhound racing. The evidence provided in the report from SAGE was troubling and I can assure you that the Scottish Government fully sympathises with the concerns raised.

It was stated in Parliament on 3 March 2022, that the Scottish Government considers that the provisions of the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006, as amended, are sufficient to ensure that action can be taken if the welfare of greyhounds, whether still racing or retired, is not being met. The provisions of Part 2 of the Act apply to all people responsible for animals, including breeders, trainers and owners of racing greyhounds.

These provisions include making it an offence to cause or permit unnecessary suffering; to administer a poisonous or injurious drug or substance; and for a person not to take such steps as are reasonable in the circumstances to ensure that the needs of an animal for which the person is responsible are met to the extent required by good practice.

Other provisions include powers for inspectors to gather evidence, to issue care notices if an animal's welfare needs are not being met and to take animals into possession to protect their welfare if they are suffering or likely to suffer if their circumstances do not change.

It is also worth noting that as a result of the Scottish Government's introduction of the Animals and Wildlife (Penalties, Protections and Powers) (Scotland) Act 2020 a person convicted of the offence of causing an animal unnecessary suffering can currently be sentenced for a period of up to 5 years in prison and/or an unlimited fine.

Scottish Ministers, special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See www.lobbying.scot



The detailed wording of the provisions can be found at: [Animal Health and Welfare \(Scotland\) Act 2006 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/16)

The Scottish Government has also issued a Code of Practice for the Welfare of Dogs and much of the advice in this Code is appropriate for racing or retired greyhounds. This Code can be viewed on the Scottish Government's website via this link: <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/Doc/304660/0095599.pdf>

However as with any legislation that creates offences and provides powers to allow prosecutions to be pursued or other action to be taken, enforcement authorities need to have evidence of wrongdoing to be able to take action. I understand it may be the practical difficulties in gathering sufficient evidence of possible offences associated with greyhound racing, particularly on tracks not regulated by GBGB, that is the main concern for the Scottish SPCA, rather than any inadequacy of the provisions of the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006 as such.

As greyhound racing is included in the workplan of the Scottish Animal Welfare Commission as an issue to be considered in the medium term, the Scottish Government will carefully consider any recommendations from the Committee and the Scottish Animal Welfare Commission for possible licensing or other regulation of greyhound racing in Scotland in due course.

I hope this reply is helpful to the Committee.

Yours sincerely,



MAIRI GOUGEON