

Animal Welfare (Sentience) Bill
Written Evidence to Commons General Committee on behalf of Conservative Animal Welfare Foundation

Executive Summary

- The Conservative Animal Welfare Foundation is supportive of the Animal Welfare (Sentience) Bill, which delivers on Government commitments that there would be no loss of legal protections for animals following the UK's departure from the EU.
- The Conservative Animal Welfare Foundation is part of the Better Deal for Animals Coalition who have submitted written evidence to Commons in relation to this consultation. The Conservative Animal Welfare Foundation supports the evidence submitted by the Better Deal for Animals Coalition and the summary points made in their submission. Thus, this evidence raises only additional, supplementary points to those included in the joint submission by the Better Deal for Animals Coalition.
- The Conservative Animal Welfare Foundation welcomes the full recognition of a wide base of existing evidence, including that commissioned by Defra, regarding the sentience of those animals covered in Section 5 (Interpretation). In particular we are pleased to see the rightful recognition of any vertebrate other than homo sapiens (therefore including aquatic vertebrate animals), any cephalopod mollusc, and any decapod crustacean. The Conservative Animal Welfare Foundation would like to emphasise that it is critical that there is no weakening of this scope of Interpretation.

Introduction

1. The Conservative Animal Welfare Foundation¹ was established in 2016 to raise awareness on the lives of billions of animals reared on intensive farms around the world and how this impacts upon animal welfare, the environment and people's health. The organisation wishes to highlight the action people can take to help advance farm animal welfare.
2. Animal welfare is an increasing concern amongst the public, who frequently look to Government to take the lead in both maintaining and improving standards and the Conservative Animal Welfare Foundation believes it is highly important that the welfare of farm animals is placed at the forefront of the Governments plan for food and farming along with its focus on productivity, competitiveness, and technology.
3. The Conservative Animal Welfare Foundation has released reports and briefings specifically on animal sentience, including on Crustacean and Cephalopod Sentience² and Fish Sentience³.
4. The Better Deal for Animals is a coalition of over 50 animal protection groups in the UK⁴, who have joined forces to campaign for a strong law that recognises animal sentience. Core

¹ <https://www.conservativeanimalwelfarefoundation.org/>

² <https://www.conservativeanimalwelfarefoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/CAWF-Crustacean-and-Cephalopod-Sentience-Report.pdf>

³ <https://www.conservativeanimalwelfarefoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/CAWF-Briefing-on-Fish-Sentience.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.wcl.org.uk/better-deal-for-animals.asp>

members of the group include the UK Centre for Animal Law, Conservative Animal Welfare Foundation, Compassion in World Farming, FOUR PAWS UK, Humane Society International UK, RSPCA and Wildlife & Countryside Link.

The Conservative Animal Welfare Foundation wishes to raise the following points in addition to those raised in the Better Deal for Animals Coalition's submitted response:

5. The Conservative Animal Welfare Foundation would like to address the importance of the effective selection by the Secretary of State of Members of the Animal Sentience Committee, and the criteria for their eligibility.
6. The Conservative Animal Welfare Foundation would like to express the importance of using a wide range of leading animal sentience experts in the formation and membership of the Sentience Committee and the importance of a clear and transparent register of interests, which should include NGO affiliations, amongst other affiliations. Current, previous or planned affiliations to NGOs or similar should not eliminate the ability of an animal sentience expert to serve in the Animal Sentience Committee.

Conclusion

7. The Animal Sentience Bill has the Conservative Animal Welfare Foundation's support and is viewed by the organisation as a solid commitment to the Government's continued focus on animal welfare. We hope that that this piece of animal welfare legislation progresses to Royal Assent with minimal delay, enshrining the recognition of animal sentience into UK law again, and delivering on a manifesto commitment.

For questions or further information please contact:

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4th February 2022