YOUR TEAM IS GOING TO RESEARCH

Penalties for animal cruelty
and speak for and against should they be increased

This brief has been produced as part of the RSPCA's Animal Welfare: The Great Debate and is a starting point for the research you will need to do into the subject in order to ensure a successful debate. The points for or against a subject may not be RSPCA policy and represent some of the wider thinking around the subject.

- The Animal Welfare Act 2006 sets out different penalties for people who are convicted of animal cruelty offences under the Act.
- Currently the maximum penalty is six months in prison and an unlimited fine. However, there are plans by the UK Government to increase this.
- Offenders can also be banned from keeping animals under Section 34 of the Act. These bans can cover a specific species or all animals and range from a fixed amount of time to life.

FOR

Here are some points in favour of increased sentences – what other points can you find?

- Animals are sentient beings that are capable of feeling pain and can suffer – offenders should be punished further.
- People think that animal cruelty has increased in the last 10 years – the current deterrent is not working.
- There is research to show that people who harm animals can go on to harm humans – these people need to be stopped from the start.

AGAINST

Here are some reasons why sentences should not be increased – can you find any more?

- Currently magistrates rarely give out the maximum sentence, so why would they give out tougher sentences?
- Higher sentences would need to go to the Crown Court – stopping more serious non-animal offences from being heard sooner.
- Better education of owners is needed – why should someone go to prison for not understanding what their pet needs.

Information you may want to find out

- How many people have been prosecuted for animal cruelty? Is this number increasing or decreasing?
- What other punishments could be given out? What is an Animal Offender Register?
- Do prison sentences deter offenders?

Potential sources of information

- RSPCA website: www.rspca.org.uk
- Political Animal website: www.politicalanimal.org.uk
- RSPCA facts and figures: http://media.rspca.org.uk/media/facts
- The Sentencing Council for England and Wales: www.sentencingcouncil.org.uk