



YOUR TEAM IS GOING TO RESEARCH

Whether animal welfare ‘sanctuaries’ require regulation and speak **for and against** licensing animal sanctuaries in animal welfare law

.....

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 public debate.

- Pets, farm animals and wildlife are regularly rescued and rehabilitated by animal welfare charities and organisations across the country. There are no government facilities that do this type of work, so animals in need are often left at the mercy of these organisations.
- Sanctuaries are not currently required to have a licence to operate and they are not inspected by their local council or any other official body.
- There have been calls to reintroduce the need for such establishments to have a licence which is awarded following an inspection of the premises and the animals. Inspections could be done on a risk-basis - so those establishments that have high standards might go up to three years in between inspections whereas those struggling to protect and provide for the animals in their care would face more regular visits.
- A Welsh Government project between 2008 and 2011 found there were in excess of 80 sanctuaries operating in Wales but since that time there has been no accurate data on how many there are or what species and numbers of animals they look after. This means that there are no central records and no-one is sure where these animals are being taken, or how they are being kept and treated.



FOR

Here are some points **in favour** of licensing animal sanctuaries – what other points can you find?

- We know that many animals are sentient beings that have specific needs which often require certain skills to meet/provide for/treat. Without licensing there are currently no means to ensure sanctuaries have the necessary expertise to look after the animals in their care – such as ensuring an appropriate quality of life.
- Animal welfare organisations who care for animals have called for themselves to be licensed to help tackle those with poor standards and to give the public confidence in those with good standards.
- Animals that end up in sanctuaries are already vulnerable and potentially suffering from the actions of people – there is, therefore, a moral responsibility to ensure sanctuaries are doing a good job of looking after them.

AGAINST

Here are some reasons why it is **not necessary** – can you find any more?

- Animal sanctuaries are only charities which may struggle to get the funds to look after society's animals - licensing would just bring unnecessary 'red tape' and may hinder their good work.

Many sanctuaries are open to the public and so if conditions for the animals were very poor those visitors would report it to the relevant authority.

The Animal Welfare Act (2006) already protects the animals in sanctuaries. The police, local authorities and RSPCA can take action where there is sufficient evidence of poor animal welfare and where circumstances allow.

Information you may want to find out

- What problems exist in some animal sanctuaries and can these be tackled another way?
- What impact upon animal welfare could regulating/licensing animal sanctuaries have upon the animals?
- Do any other countries have laws to mean animal sanctuaries must be inspected regularly for a licence to operate?

Potential sources of information

- RSPCA website: www.rspca.cymru
- Political Animal website: www.politicalanimal.wales
- RSPCA facts and figures: <http://media.rspca.org.uk/media/facts>
- <https://www.gov.je/Industry/FarmingFishing/AnimalWelfare/Pages/WelfareSanctuaries.aspx>
- <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/uk-wales-38295907/creature-comforts-animal-sanctuary-investigation>
- <https://www.rspca.org.uk/getinvolved/campaign/sanctuaries>
- https://www.bva.co.uk/uploadedFiles/Content/News_campaigns_and_policies/Get_involved/Consultation_archive/BVA%20Scottish%20Branch%20-%20Regulating%20animal%20sanctuaries%20and%20rehomeing%20centres%20FINAL.pdf
- <http://www.awnwales.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/AWE-report-final.pdf> & <http://www.awnwales.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Addendum-to-AWE-report-February-2016.pdf>

