

19th June 2007

UNANIMOUS VOTE - EU ANNOUNCES BAN ON CAT AND DOG FUR

Scots Tory MEP Struan Stevenson reacted triumphantly to the news that the European Parliament has today unanimously voted to support a complete ban on the import, export and trade in cat and dog fur across all 27 Member States.

Speaking in Strasbourg following the vote in the European Parliament Mr. Stevenson said:

“This truly is a brilliant decision. It’s been a long time in the making but finally to have secured a total ban on the import, export and trade in cat and dog fur is a real reflection of the strength of people power.

“Millions of citizens from Scotland and across Europe have sent emails, petitions and letters demanding this ban. But even more poignantly, the ban is a victory for the innocent victims, the millions of cats and dogs in China who will be saved from a horrible life and a grisly death.

“These animals were given a powerful voice by the citizens of Europe. Driving this trade from our doorsteps is sweet victory for cat and dog lovers across the EU. And given that the USA and Australia already have a similar ban in place, hopefully the EU’s landmark decision today will signify an end to the trade for good.

“None of this would have been possible without the hard work and dogged determination of Humane Society International (HSI) who uncovered this horrific trade. It is them and our celebrity supporters, Heather Mills, Rick Wakeman and Dennis Erdman to name but a few, as well as millions of members of the public, who sent a clear message to politicians to act in the interests of the 2 million animals needlessly slaughtered each year.

“Aside from the emotional attachment, this issue has seen unprecedented support from the Council of Ministers, the European Commission and the European Parliament. We have united to eradicate this practice. It has been unanimously voted through and will reach the statute books of all 27 Member States by the end of next year at the very latest. It is almost without precedent for a piece of legislation to go through the parliamentary process so quickly and is an indication of the huge support this initiative has had.

“Cat and dog fur products will become a thing of the past across Europe and for that we should all feel mighty proud in having played a part in this historic ruling.”

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Note to News Editors: Struan Stevenson is a Conservative MEP for Scotland. He is Vice President of the ruling EPP-ED Group of 277 MEPs in the European Parliament. Together with the Humane Society International, Mr. Stevenson has campaigned over the last eight years to secure a ban on the import, export and trade in cat and dog fur across Europe.

Chronology of the EU campaign

- Humane Society International's (HSI) campaign to ban cat & dog fur has been running for 8 years. It was launched in Europe with the support of Scottish MEP Struan Stevenson MEP in 1999.
- The campaign exposed not only the barbaric cruelty of the trade but also the potential danger of exposure to high levels of toxic chromium on cat & dog fur toys imported from China.
- The campaign highlighted the consumer fraud perpetrated on an unsuspecting public through false labeling using names like Gae Wolf, Sobaki and Asian Jackal and dyeing cat & dog fur to look like faux fur.
- The campaign also exposed widespread evidence of cat skins being sold in Belgium, Germany and Austria (and possibly other EU countries) as pseudo health aids (rheuma-bandages).
- Following a US ban and reacting to the HSI/Stevenson campaign, 5 EU countries unilaterally banned the trade – Italy, Denmark, France, Belgium, & Greece. Australia has also introduced a ban.
- The Shengen Accord means that countries where a unilateral ban has been introduced cannot stop the movement of cat & dog fur across their borders. HSI/Stevenson therefore concluded that only an EU-wide ban would be effective in sealing the external borders of Europe to this trade.
- However, there was strong resistance from the then Commissioner for Consumer Affairs David Byrne, who advised that there could be no legal basis for an EU wide ban on cat & dog fur.
- In December 2003, a majority of MEPs (346) signed a resolution tabled by Stevenson, calling for an EU-wide ban. This therefore became the formal position of the European Parliament.
- HSI commissioned a legal opinion from leading international legal experts - Matrix Chambers - which indicated how an EU-wide ban could be implemented under EU treaty law as well as outlining how it would be compatible with WTO rules.
- The Council of Agriculture Ministers three times debated the issue and each time an overwhelming majority of ministers called upon the Commission to act.
- The involvement of Heather Mills McCartney and Rick Wakeman gave a major boost to the already high profile international media campaign. Support from Sir Paul McCartney calling for a boycott on Chinese fur products also had a significant impact.

- Heather Mills McCartney collected over 250,000 signatures on an on-line petition on her web page, demanding an EU ban. This was one of dozens of petitions cumulatively gathering more than one million signatures across Europe.
- Dennis Erdman (Director of ‘Sex in the City’) persuaded several major Hollywood celebrities to write to the new Commissioner for Consumer Affairs, appointed in 2004 – Markos Kyprianou (Cyprus), supporting a ban.
- Struan Stevenson raised the issue in Beijing at a meeting at the State Forestry Administration who control animal welfare in China, where he met with Deputy Chairman – Zhao Xuemin – and five of his senior officials, including Secretary General of the China Wildlife Conservation Association – Chen Runsheng. They agreed that they would welcome an EU ban and regarded the trade as “barbaric”.
- Commissioner Kyprianou instructed his officials to draw up a draft Regulation proposing an EU-wide ban. It was published in December 2006.
- Struan Stevenson was appointed rapporteur for an Opinion from the Agriculture Committee and co-operated closely with the main rapporteur – Eva Britt Svensson (Consumer Affairs Committee) – on the writing of the report. In particular, Stevenson urged the removal of derogations from the draft Regulation which would have opened up a major loophole in the legislation.
- Successful ‘trialogue’ discussions between the Commission, the Council and the European Parliament, mean that the agreed report is likely to be approved at First Reading in the plenary session of the European Parliament in Strasbourg in June, becoming law in all 27 EU Member States at the latest by 31st December 2008.
- It is estimated that this ban will effectively save the lives of over two million cats and dogs each year, cruelly killed for their fur to supply the European market.