Animal welfare groups urge new Welsh Government to deliver ambitious agenda for animals at celebration in the Senedd

Thursday 1 October, 2026

Leading animal welfare organisations gathered at the Senedd on Wednesday 30 September 2026 to call on the newly elected Welsh Government to strengthen protections for animals across Wales.

Celebrating Animal Welfare in Wales, organised by Naturewatch Foundation, Hope Rescue and RSPCA Cymru, brought together newly elected Members of the Senedd, animal welfare charities, local authority enforcement officers and Welsh Government officials ahead of World Animal Day on 4 October.

Sponsored by Vikki Howells MS, the annual event featured an address from the Cabinet Minister for Rural Resilience and Sustainability, Llyr Gruffydd MS, who holds responsibility for animal welfare within the Welsh Government.

During his speech, the Minister reaffirmed the Welsh Government's commitment to developing a new Animal Health and Welfare Plan for Wales and outlined several plans to improve welfare standards for companion, farmed and wild animals. He also praised the work of Animal Licensing Wales and highlighted the important community and prevention work undertaken by the animal welfare sector.

A Welsh Government consultation on proposals to introduce a close season for hares and create new offences relating to seal disturbance is currently open until 19 October 2026.

Calls for stronger protections for dogs and puppies

Opening the event, Sarah Carr, CEO of Naturewatch Foundation and Coordinator of World Animal Day, welcomed guests and congratulated newly elected Members of the Senedd. She urged the Welsh Government to prioritise tougher protections for breeding dogs and puppies and to take decisive action against puppy farming.

Recently published figures from Naturewatch Foundation suggest that fewer than 15% of puppies sold across the UK are bred by breeders subject to local authority inspections and minimum standards, underlining the need for stronger oversight of the puppy trade. The new Welsh Government was elected on a manifesto commitment to promote responsible dog breeding and ownership.

Vanessa Waddon, CEO of Hope Rescue and a World Animal Day Ambassador, highlighted the growing pressures facing animal rescue organisations, noting that Hope Rescue cared for 794 dogs in 2025 alone.

She praised the work of Animal Licensing Wales while calling for improved enforcement of animal welfare standards. In particular, she urged the Welsh Government to address lengthy rehoming periods affecting dogs seized in cruelty and neglect cases. Dogs, and other animals seized on welfare grounds, can remain in rescue care for months, and sometimes years, while court proceedings conclude. These delays place significant financial pressures on charities and prevent dogs from moving on to forever homes.

Vanessa, who founded Hope Rescue in honour of an abandoned racing greyhound and has campaigned for more than two decades to end greyhound racing in Wales, also called for the swift implementation of the Welsh Government's greyhound racing ban.

Senedd members reaffirm commitment to animal welfare

Event sponsor Vikki Howells MS, a member of the Climate Change, Environment, Sustainability and Rural Affairs Committee, said animal welfare would be a key priority in the Committee's future work. She reflected on previous achievements, including campaigning for the introduction of Lucy's Law in Wales and a ban on snares, and stressed the importance of continued support for Animal Licensing Wales.

Sioned Nikolic, Public Affairs Advisor at RSPCA Cymru, highlighted the need to strengthen regulation of animal welfare establishments that rescue, rehabilitate and rehome vulnerable animals. While recognising the vital role these organisations play, she warned that welfare concerns can arise when rescues become overwhelmed, something regulation could help address. She also reiterated calls to

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modernise Wales' dog breeding regulations.

Following the speeches, Members of the Senedd and guests met with exhibiting organisations, including Naturewatch Foundation, Hope Rescue, RSPCA Cymru, Blue Cross, Greyhound Rescue Wales and Animal Licensing Wales.

Greyhound Rescue Wales also brought along several greyhounds to meet Members of the Senedd and celebrate several individuals who had been integral to the passage of the greyhound racing ban.

Sarah Carr, CEO of Naturewatch Foundation, said:

"We are incredibly grateful to our colleagues from across the animal welfare sector for joining us to celebrate progress for animals in Wales and to highlight the work still to be done.

"We would also like to thank the Cabinet Minister, Vikki Howells MS and all the Members of the Senedd who attended the event.

"The Senedd has a crucial role to play in shaping a future where all animals enjoy a good life. We look forward to working with Members and the Welsh Government throughout this Senedd term to strengthen protections and drive further progress for animal welfare."

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