

Written evidence submitted by Dr Tom Lonsdale, Veterinarian, Raw Meaty Bones (PWA0069)

Call for Evidence: Pet welfare and abuse

1. Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission on ‘Pet welfare and abuse’. As a retired vet with over 50 years’ experience and 32 years as a campaigner I believe that I am qualified to provide evidence to the Committee.

Context

2. I believe that disregard for pet welfare and animal abuse is baked into the system such that it’s seen as an inescapable fact of life.

3. Pet ownership, more particularly dog ownership, was first popularised in the 1860s when Jack Spratt teamed up with Charles Cruft to market Spratt’s Meat Fibrine Dog Cakes. They hit on the idea to organise pedigree dog shows—for dogs (modified wolves) with assorted genetic mutations—as a means to boost their business.

4. Straightaway we see the stage was set for 150 years of cultural conditioning that has championed the more outlandish genetic variants fed, not on wolf food but, on baked biscuits made from wheat, beetroot and beef blood. Genetic mutation has ensured a lifetime of discomfort and susceptibility to disease for at least [182 different pedigree dog breeds suffering from one or more of 334 disease syndromes](#). When we add susceptibility to periodontal disease (gum disease) affecting around 80 percent of dogs over the age of three and an unknown percentage suffering mental health impairment, then we become aware of massive in-built problems.

5. However, it’s the insistence that the wolf descendants and now, in the modern-day modified desert predators, cats, should survive on ultra-processed junk that has cemented animal abuse as merely the way we do things in the ‘advanced’ western economies.

6. From the 1860s to the present the pet food industry formula remains the same: Promote dogs and cats, not as sentient creatures, but as variously cute/cuddly/amusing furry toys with little in the need for maintenance—except what is conveniently made available on the supermarket shelf.

7. Of course, it’s the consumers who pay. First, pay for the [expensive designer dog to suit their particular demographic](#); second pay for the ongoing ‘food’ and other accoutrements. Third, if and when things go wrong, there’s a vast army of vets standing at the ready to service the multiplicity of diseases, both chronic and acute, arising from a burgeoning population of junk food fed pets. Fourth, consumers pay for the municipal pound that deals with the discards. Fifth, for many pet owners, they continue to pay after death by leaving legacies to the pet ‘welfare’ charities. Sixth, built into the profit margin of the junk food business is a large chunk of money devoted to paying for the multi-level advertising and marketing—that’s to say pet owners finance their own life-long indoctrination. Seventh—in truth part of the propaganda-push but I mention it separately—pet owners pay immense sums to the transnational pet food companies which then divert the money to buy the silence of the veterinary schools, associations and animal charities.

8. Although I graduated as a vet in 1972, it was not until the late 1980s that I first understood the enormity of the junk pet food problem. It was a distressing realisation that prompted my 1991 article ‘Oral Disease in Cats and Dogs’. However, the rot ran deeper than perhaps I had realised. In 2011 at the [20-year anniversary I wrote](#):

At the time [in 1991, Dr Breck Muir and I] were optimistic that our appeal to the better nature and professional integrity of vets would strike a chord. Now, twenty years on, I believe we’ve seen some of the worst professional blindness, cruelty, incompetence and corruption that is possible to contemplate. Instead of investigating and addressing the massive junk pet-food fraud and the highest veterinary involvement in the scam, the global veterinary profession has aligned itself ever more closely with the mass pet poisoners.

9. By way of an easy introduction to the junk pet food problem I offer this 2007 article: [Junk Pet Food And The Damage Done](#).

10. For foundation material regarding the scientific and corruption issues, I offer the 2001 book *Raw Meaty Bones: Promote Health* as integral to this submission.

11. The 2005 book *Work Wonders: Feed Your Dog Raw Meaty Bones*, whilst not integral to this submission, nevertheless provides an easy reader practical guide for those wishing to avoid the junk pet food induced cruelty.

13. I offer the 2023 book *Multi-Billion-Dollar Pet Food Fraud: Hiding in Plain Sight* as an integral part of this submission.

The website www.ThePetFoodCon.com and [YouTube Channel](#) provide supporting information.

Terms of reference

Unscrupulous breeding and importation

1.) What risks to biosecurity and public health are posed by abhorrent practises such as

- **unscrupulous breeding, including “puppy mills”—which are characterised by poor conditions and rapid breeding—both here and those overseas from which dogs are then imported, often in large numbers in a single vehicle,**
- **the importation of dogs, including heavily pregnant bitches, and cats, and “rescue dogs” (some of whom are misrepresented as such);**

as well as similar practices for other species of companion animals? Is the occurrence of such activities changing?

Biosecurity and public health

14. Pressure on biosecurity and public health arise due to the relentless, unremitting junk pet food company promotion of pet ownership. The companies with single-minded determination work

around the clock, around the world. Regulators work a standard working week and have responsibility for a range of issues.

15. The safety and regulatory systems are pushed to bursting point. Talking about ‘abhorrent practices’ of a few misguided or unscrupulous people provides a convenient scapegoat. Indignation, however justified, serves to take the focus off the pet food/vet/animal welfare alliance.

16. Serious public health risks arise from the keeping of carnivorous animals as pets in an urban environment, without any requirement for public education and pet owner awareness. If teddy bears and other soft toys barked all night, attacked the postman and mutilated visiting toddlers, there would be uproar, removal from toy shop shelves and calls for government inquiries.

17. The ownership of dogs and cats comes with risks to owners and the wider community. It’s time to properly review those risks and decide on what can be left to chance and what should be regulated. Driving a car and owning a gun both require a licence. Maybe some sort of educational programme and licensing should be considered in our densely packed society—for the benefit of pets and people alike.

18. As can be repeatedly seen, delegation of important pet and community health issues to a self-serving veterinary profession and the animal welfare charities has not worked. Biosecurity and public health deserve better.

Activities changing

19. Yes, such breeding, importation and ‘rescue’ activities are changing. ‘Pet adoption’ and ‘pet rescue’ are now feel-good activities that are extensively promoted by the junk pet food industry. Every extra mouth is worth thousands of pounds to the companies. That entrepreneurs and the market find ever more creative ways to fulfil niche demands created by the pet food titans should not surprise us.

20. In a capitalist economy, fulfilling demand makes for legitimate business. But when the promotion of furry toys and the harmful ‘food’ deliberately downplays the downside with false and misleading advertising then huge problems loom. Those who provide add-on goods and services, whether unscrupulous or honourable, all contribute to the size of the problem.

21. Unfortunately, righteous indignation about ‘unscrupulous’ folks maintains a distraction and thus a protective cordon around the junk pet food companies—and the extensive range of vets, advertisers, journals, celebrity vet TV programmes, breeders and various niche marketers dependent on the junk pet food scam.

2.) What risks do unregulated and illegal Canine Fertility Clinics present to dog welfare, including the breeding of so-called “designer” dogs? What is the appropriate role and regulation of assisted breeding techniques in dog breeding?

22. Turning off the tap, regulating the illegal false and misleading pet food advertisements and exposing the deceptive celebrity vet and lifestyle programmes will have a dramatic knock-on effect in all areas of the pet breeding and supply market—far exceeding any actions against Fertility Clinics. The pejorative term “designer” dogs belongs to all breeds, not just the spoodles, groodles and Maltipoos. All breeds were ‘designed’ by man and many are prone to genetic diseases.

23. Dog welfare is already severely compromised and tinkering at the margin won't change things. A proper focus and proper resolve to look more carefully at the issues is what's now needed.

Abuse and mutilation

3.) Is the ban on mutilation—such as ear cropping (or docking) of dogs, and de-clawing of cats—under the Animal Welfare Act 2006 effective? How prevalent are practices such as illegal ear cropping, and the importation of dogs whose ears have been cropped overseas or cats that have been de-clawed (which remains legal)?

Mutilation

24. Emotions run high in this area. Ear cropping and tail docking remain legal in the USA and some European countries. These practices date back to bygone times and confirm the status-symbol, fashion-statement commodification of sentient creatures.

25. However, I believe some perspective is needed. Many domestic breeds need corrective surgery to a.) breathe better, or b.) walk better, or c.) see better. Owners knowingly buy dogs that need to be 'improved' by corrective surgery. That the conventional pet owning, veterinary view supports the corrective surgery serves to create a guiding set of principles.

26. That some people believe that dogs can be 'improved' to 'look better' when cropped and docked is part of the same cultural outlook. Modifying cats with de-clawing is part of the same general ethos. Couple the above with the desexing of pets under anaesthetic and we recognise that much that is done to pets is done for human convenience and current fashion.

27. When reviewing these matters, we need to be rational, constant and consistent. I believe that rather than vilifying the croppers and dockers a fuller discussion is warranted.

Abuse

28. We should be cognisant of the fact that whether for ear and tail mutilation or for neutering and corrective surgery the pain and discomfort (the abuse) are short lived.

29. However, in respect to the Animal Welfare Act 2006 constant unremitting abuse of animals is the norm across each of the categories referred to as the Five Animal Welfare Needs.

1. The need for a suitable environment

Many dogs are kept in solitary confinement for the duration of their lives.

2. The need for a suitable diet

Virtually all dogs and cats, in the modern day, do not receive a suitable diet as defined by nature.

3. The need to be able to exhibit normal behaviour patterns

Dogs are pack animals that should be able to exhibit normal pack behaviour, gnaw on a bone in comfort and run free. (The degrees of cruelty vary according to the age and breed of the animals.)

4. The need it has to be housed with, or apart from, other animals

The pack animal/solitary confinement issue arises once again.

5. The need to be protected from pain, suffering, injury and disease

Clearly feeding an unsuitable, unsafe diet to animals imposes lifelong suffering and disease.

30. In summary I suggest that it's junk pet food advertising that creates the conditions where chronic abuse in each of the five categories occurs as a standard aspect of pet dog (and some cat) ownership. However, I believe that category 2, the need for a suitable diet and category 5, the need to be free from pain, suffering and disease are the key animal abuse issues requiring Committee attention.

Ownership and animal welfare

4.) There was a marked increase in pet ownership during the pandemic. What is the situation for companion animals' welfare post-pandemic, especially given recent factors such as

- a. Adverse changes in the cost of living?**
- b. A decrease in home working?**

31. I cannot say to what degree social, economic and psychological factors played a part in the acquisition of pets during the COVID pandemic. I am aware that people in lockdown were more likely to watch the TV and spend inordinate time on social media—all mediums subject to a constant barrage of junk pet food advertisements glorifying pet ownership. It's small wonder that many people, regardless of their financial and other circumstances, succumbed to the barrage, believed the false promises and bolstered the profits of the junk pet food makers and their veterinary allies.

32. The welfare of the pets whether before, during and after the pandemic was always compromised and always of little or no concern to the companies.

33. Animal 'welfare' charities seek to work the surfeit-of-pets crisis for their benefit. The 'welfare' needs of animals receive lip service as vets and charities go about their business.

5.) What are the pressures currently facing those dealing with companion animal welfare including

- a.) The veterinary sector?**
- b.) The charitable animal welfare sector?**

34. For both sectors this is about peaks and troughs. In my view neither sector is much bothered by the 'welfare' needs of animals. Both profit from a steady stream of sick animals needing their attention. Discarded and unwanted animals is the stock in trade of the charities.

35. Similarly for the pet insurance industry, it needs plenty of sick pets and high-cost veterinary procedures to justify high pet insurance premiums.

36. Regarding the pressures on the veterinary sector, the Upper House of the New South Wales (NSW) Parliament is currently conducting an inquiry '[Veterinary workforce shortage in New South Wales](#)'. I propose to include my NSW submission, when available, as a supplementary submission to this Inquiry.

37. In regard to difficulties experienced by governments and local authorities in respect to companion animal welfare the Upper House of the New South Wales Parliament is currently conducting an inquiry '[Pounds in New South Wales](#)'. I propose to include my NSW submission, when available, as a supplementary submission to this Inquiry.

Current preventative measures

6.) Is the current regulatory and legal framework to both support the welfare and prevent the abuse of companion animals fit for purpose? Do the available penalties—and the probability of prosecution—act as a sufficient deterrent?

38. It's my belief that the current regulatory and legal framework is sufficient to support the welfare and prevent the abuse of companion animals.

39. Although I'm of the view much abuse of animals—such as is prosecuted—is due to poor education, social and mental impairment issues. Zealous and over-zealous prosecutions of animal welfare abusers makes for good media coverage, creates distractions from the main issues, further victimises victims and generally makes token efforts—all of which may act as some deterrent.

40. The big problem resides with the nearly zero probability of prosecution of the major offenders—the pet food industry and their vet and 'welfare' group enablers. They, the companies, vets and 'welfare' groups, enjoy almost complete immunity courtesy of their friends in high places and the hitherto almost complete rejection of the unpalatable truth about the pet food fraud.

41. The vet profession and animal welfare groups are self-regulating and with disastrous consequences for pets, people and the wider community.

42. There is much more information in *Multi-Billion-Dollar Pet Food Fraud*.

43. It's my hope that this current inquiry can serve to trigger a fuller debate leading to resolution of important issues.

7.) Will the Animal Welfare (Kept Animals) Bill (as currently drafted) take a significant step to tackling poor pet welfare and abuse, including those issues stated above?

The [Commons Library indicates](#) that the draft discontinued bill related to:

- Keeping primates as pets
- Dogs attacking or worrying livestock

- Export of livestock
- Importation of dogs, cats and ferrets
- Increasing the conservation focus of zoos

44. Possibly some disease and animal mutilation issues will be swept up in the proposed legislation. But in my view, that's an unwieldy way to go about things. Overall, from my reading, little or no improvement over and above existing legislation can be expected for the welfare of pets.

8.) What additional measures should the Government take to stop bad practices, improve overall domestic pet welfare, and assist those involved in supporting domestic pet welfare?

45. In the first instance I suggest that ministers responsible for DEFRA, education, science, health, law, communications, trade, finance and relevant others should take account of the evidence provided in the books *Raw Meaty Bones* and *Multi-Billion-Dollar Pet Food Fraud*. Acting on that evidence they should conduct internal departmental inquiries and institute appropriate remedial actions.

43. Recognising the magnitude of the pet food fraud, ministers should be at pains to exclude or minimise the further activities of fifth columnists.

47. A March 2023 '[Open Letter To Industrial Pet Food Companies And Their Enablers](#)' sets out what I believe to be the obligations of the companies and the veterinary leadership.

48. In the longer term I believe that a full commission of inquiry is needed to fully understand the complexities of educational, scientific and regulatory systems that have escaped democratic control and are now in the control of the transnational pet food industry and its enablers.

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