

**Written evidence submitted by The Self Help Group for Farmers, Pet Owners and Others  
(AAB0034)  
The SHG response to the Call for Evidence on the Animals Abroad Bill**

The Self Help Group for Farmers, Pet Owners and Others experiencing difficulties with the RSPCA (The SHG) was started over 30 years ago. We run a help line for people who have problems with the RSPCA and any animal welfare or animal related regulatory problems

The SHG believes that people should be able to live and work with the animals of their choice without government or vigilante animal rights interference. The way to change people's choices is by example and education as opposed to regulation to remove their rights and way of life.

## Will the Government's proposals on the export and import of hunting trophies effectively support the conservation of endangered species?

The premise starts from the wrong position. There is a limited space available for "wild" animals and this limits the numbers that can successfully exist without coming into conflict with humans or exhausting their available habitat to the extent that they starve to death.

Clearly numbers need to be controlled, both in terms of limiting the numbers of even those species that are classed as endangered in any particular habitat and of promoting increases in the numbers of those species whose numbers are falling.

The question for those countries fortunate enough to play host to such animals is whether that control will be regulated and used to generate income and jobs or whether it will cost scarce money and resources to do so.

Even in the relatively wealthy UK if deer can not be hunted for trophies then they will still need to be culled. Only that will become a cost to the landowner instead of an income. Why then would any landowner wish to encourage the nuisance factor of deer on his land?

All that a ban on the import and export of hunting trophies will achieve is to create a market for the storage of such trophies outside of this country. People will pose for photographs with their kill (as they already do) and they will then show them off to friends or on websites with impunity. If they can not bring their trophies home then their trophies will take the form of photos or videos and the more animals they can kill the better their photographic hoard. This will encourage the slaughter of animals by removing the limiting factor of processing and transporting the trophy.

Worse, if it does reduce the scope of businesses breeding such animals for hunting it will inevitably lead to a reduction in the gene pool of semi-captive animals meaning that the possibility of reintroducing strong and capable animals to the wild is diminished.

African countries will have no reason to preserve or care for animals that can be both a nuisance and dangerous if they can gain no income or benefit from their presence. They will have no incentive to fight poaching. No reason to campaign against bush meat.

Some commenters in countries that will be affected are already claiming that this is effectively racism and Western interference in their rights to self determination and to run their countries as they see fit.

Nowhere has it been said better than in this article by Emmanuel Koro in the Zimbabwe Independent. A couple of quotes below, but please read the article in full to understand why this is such a bad idea that will do nothing but damage the conservation of endangered species.

<https://www.theindependent.co.zw/2021/05/28/britain-plans-international-hunting-ban-as-zim-reveals-impressive-benefits/>

*Sadly, the British government as indicated by the Queen's speech this week seems not to acknowledge such benefits. Some of the benefits from hunting income include its use for the socioeconomic well being of African rural communities co-existing with wildlife. Therefore, the British are planning to go ahead with plans that will not only destroy African wildlife but also its habitat and the hopes of socioeconomic development in African communities coexisting with wildlife.*

[...]

*Meanwhile, wildlife producer and hunting communities from southern Africa say that the British Government's proposal to introduce an international hunting trophy imports ban "might cause more harm to African wildlife and people than did its colonial control and looting of the African continent."*

[...]

*Unfortunately, by introducing a trophy hunting imports ban the British government is unknowingly going to remove the impressive wildlife and habitat conservation efforts that hunting revenue continues to support in Africa, including wildlife-rich Zimbabwe.*

*The downside of banning hunting would be a wildlife and habitat conservation disaster. Why? Hunting communities throughout Africa are increasingly saying their last land-use option if hunting is banned would be to convert national parks as well as game reserves into crop fields.*

***Should there be different rules for the trade in animal trophies depending on the setting in which the animal was hunted?***

Ideally yes, but it is difficult to see how any such differences could be policed or enforced, especially if the host countries do not wish to be helpful. All such a scheme would achieve is the creation of a market for faked certification and smuggling.

What are the possible unintended consequences of the proposals, for example in relation to animal trophies that pre-date the legislation?

Very clearly people will lose family heirlooms unless some form of grandfathering in of trophies pre-dating the legislation is provided.

More importantly several African states are already considering pulling out of CITES in order to set up a rival organisation allowing the sale of ivory. Attempting to impose more restrictions on their right to self determination is likely to encourage such moves. How would that be in any way helpful?

<https://www.bloombergquint.com/business/southern-africa-nations-mull-cites-split-to-allow-ivory-trade>

How effective are current measures on the trade in trophies of hunting, including how they support conservation?

The CITES regulations are designed to protect vulnerable species and allowing trade where it can be shown that it has no detrimental impact on conservation or survival. The proper course of action would be to campaign for changes in those regulations if they can be demonstrated to be failing to protect any vulnerable species.

What will be the impact of the proposed domestic ban on advertising and offering for sale overseas attractions, activities or experiences that involve the unacceptable treatment of animals?

Who is to determine what is unacceptable treatment of animals? The legality of the treatment in the UK or the legality of the treatment in the country for which the advertisement is placed?

All that will happen is that such advertisements will be placed on websites in other countries or on the dark web. The UK will lose advertising and travel booking revenue.

Who should be responsible for ensuring attractions, activities or experiences overseas do not cause the unacceptable treatment

## of animals?

Who is going to decide what constitutes the unacceptable treatment of animals? The default position will be campaign after campaign by animal rights supporters demanding that activities or experiences are banned. There will be no science involved. No actual measure of suffering. Just pages of Pity Porn designed to activate their supporters and back successive governments into the corner of more bans.

We have already gone down the route of bans on ethical grounds in the ban on wild animals in circuses and now the animal rights people are demanding an end to the use of all animals in circuses. When that is done there will be no reason not to ban horse riding, gymkhanas, eventing and so on.

Realistically the common sense approach is to work through CITES to change the regulations involved if government disagrees with them, not to unilaterally attempt to control the policies and actions of other countries.

Finally, The SHG suspects that the targeting of trophy hunting by animal rights groups is more because it is a visible activity, like animals in circuses, than because it is genuinely harmful to conservation. We note that this is not a vegan or even a vegetarian country and that animals are killed for food or as pests so it would be hypocritical and unsustainable to campaign purely on the grounds that animals are being killed or their body parts are being used when we eat meat and wear leather.

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