

KILL A SNAIL AND GO TO JAIL?

A new law has been announced in the UK that updates the Protection of Animals Act 1911. Under this law people who mistreat animals will face fines up to 20,000 pounds and year-long prison. RSPCA* inspectors will be given powers to enter places where animals are kept without the need of an official warrant*, even by using force, to rescue animals believed to be suffering or at risk of harm.

The legislation will also offer protection to creatures such as insects, slugs, worms, caterpillars and butterflies if scientific evidence proves that they suffer pain and distress. The penalties double the present maximum six-month sentence and substantially increase the 5,000 maximum fine. The hard line will be set out in a draft Bill* to be published by the minister in charge of animal welfare. It will be scrutinised by a parliamentary committee and then go before both Houses of Parliament.

Anyone owning a pet or an exotic animal will have a «duty of care» towards it and could face having it taken away and being banned* from looking after another. Unborn animals will receive the same protection. RSPCA inspectors will also have the right to enter without a warrant any lorry, ferry, plane or hovercraft carrying animals. This has been included after concern about livestock* on long journeys. But the right will not apply to private homes, where inspectors will need a magistrate's warrant or to be accompanied by the police. Local authorities will be given discretion to insist on registration of people who make money from animals, such as dog-walkers or pet-sitters, who care for animals when owners are away.

Animal welfare campaigners, however, will be angered that the draft Bill contains no reference to circus animals and fails to ban* the docking* of dogs' tails. The RSPCA said that it would continue to campaign for a ban on tail docking except when a vet orders it for therapeutic reasons. The charity is also unhappy about circus animals and hopes that this will be looked at again.

Other measures in the Bill include a ban on anyone under 16 owning a pet and on goldfish or other animals being given as prizes at fairgrounds* or in competitions. This new legal initiative follows years of pressure from the RSPCA and organisations such as the Kennel Club.

But the Countryside Alliance, a non-profit organization involved in the protection of the rural way of life, is worried about how the principle of «a duty of care» will be interpreted for animals used in sport and recreation. Even though the proposed changes are not intended to affect hunting, shooting or fishing, there is concern that people may attempt to use them to challenge the treatment of dogs in hunt kennels, racehorses in stables and pheasants reared for game shoots.

(From the press. Adapted)

RSPCA: societat protectora dels animals / sociedad protectora de los animales

warrant: autorització / autorización

banned (to ban): prohibir, prohibició / prohibir, prohibición

draft Bill: projecte de llei / proyecto de ley

livestock: bestiar, ramaderia / animales, ganado

docking: tallar la cua / cortar la cola

fairground: fira / feria

PART ONE: READING COMPREHENSION

Choose the best answer according to the text.

[0,5 points each correct answer] [Wrong answers will be penalized (-0,16)]

1. The laws in Britain...
 - a) had never cared about animal rights until now.
 - b) had banned the docking of dogs' tails a long time ago.
 - c) have always found collecting snails is a serious crime.
 - d) have cared about animal rights for nearly one hundred years.

2. RSPCA must probably stand for...
 - a) Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.
 - b) Royal Solicitors against the Punishment of Criminals to Animals.
 - c) Rank Supporters for Pets like Cats and Ants.
 - d) Rallies Supporting Pets and Circus Animals.

3. According to the text, small animals like caterpillars and butterflies...
 - a) are too small to suffer pain or distress.
 - b) may suffer pain and distress.
 - c) suffer only light pain and distress.
 - d) are still unborn creatures.

4. The new law that protects animals...
 - a) is much more severe than before.
 - b) has not been supported by the Kennel Club.
 - c) gives less power to RSPCA inspectors.
 - d) has ignored the transport of animals in lorries or planes.

5. If pet owners do not observe the «duty of care», they will...
 - a) have to adopt an abandoned pet.
 - b) be sentenced to welfare fines.
 - c) not be allowed to keep another pet in the future.
 - d) be penalized by the Countryside Alliance.

6. Dog-walkers and pet-sitters...
 - a) will get some extra money from the local authorities.
 - b) must be recorded on a list now.
 - c) will lose their jobs when the owners are away.
 - d) must have a licence in sport or recreation.

7. Circus animals like elephants or lions...
 - a) must feel supported by the new law.
 - b) are still not protected by the new law.
 - c) are not supported by the charity anymore.
 - d) will be destroyed when a vet orders it.

8. Under the new law, a young person under 16...
 - a) can take part in game shoots.
 - b) can only buy goldfish as a pet.
 - c) can't own a pet.
 - d) can challenge the changes on hunting, shooting or fishing.