

Labour

The following is taken directly from the Labour Party's manifesto. This is the only mention of policies concerning animals, and interestingly the Animal Welfare Act they introduced is not even mentioned.

'We have banned foxhunting and animal testing for cosmetics and tobacco, and we will bring forward further animal welfare measures. We will campaign internationally to end illegal trading in ivory and to protect species such as polar bears, seals and bluefin tuna, as well as for an EU-wide ban on illegally logged timber, banning it domestically if this does not succeed.'

Conservative

The Conservative Party talk a lot more about animal welfare in their manifesto, extracts from which are shown below. Of course, it is well known that the Conservatives intend to offer MPs a free vote on whether to repeal the Hunting Act, and they make no secret of this in their manifesto:

'The hunting act has proved unworkable. A Conservative government will give Parliament the opportunity to repeal the hunting act on a free vote, with a government bill in government time.'

The fact that it would be a government bill, as opposed to a Private Member's bill, shows how determined the party is on this issue – although MPs will not be whipped to vote along party lines.

The Conservative Party also intend to implement a badger cull if they get into power:

'The most pressing animal health problem in the UK today is bovine tuberculosis (bTB), which has led to the slaughter of over 250,000 cattle since 1997. As part of a package of measures, we will introduce a carefully-managed and science-led policy of badger control in areas with high and persistent levels of bTB.'

The other policies mentioned regarding animal welfare are quite vague, but worth a mention:

'Too many animals remain at risk of extinction, and climate change will put even more pressure on endangered species and precious habitats. We will support the strongest protection for endangered species and work to protect vital habitats from destruction. We will tackle the smuggling and illegal trade in wildlife through our new border Police force.'

'We will fight for wholesale reform of the Common fisheries Policy to encourage sustainable practices, give communities a greater say over the future of their fishing industries, and bring an end to the scandal of fish discards. We will take forward the marine and Coastal access act and ensure that its conservation measures are implemented effectively, including the

creation of marine Conservation Zones.'

'We will be equally vigilant in ensuring the welfare of animals. We will promote the highest standards of farm animal welfare. We will work to reduce the use of animals in scientific research. We will promote responsible pet ownership by introducing effective codes of practice under the animal Welfare act, and target irresponsible owners of dangerous dogs.'

'To give wildlife greater protection, we will:

- firmly oppose any resumption of commercial whaling and do all we can to ensure that the international moratorium stays in place;*
 - press for a total ban on ivory sales and the destruction of existing stockpiles;*
- and,*
- promote new green spaces and wildlife corridors to help animals adapt and thrive in the face of climate change.'*

Liberal Democrats

The Liberal Democrats have a small section in their manifesto titled 'Enhanced protection for animals', which contains the following policies:

'Liberal Democrats believe that ownership and use of animals is a responsibility that should not be abused.

We will:

- Merge existing quangos to establish an Animal Protection Commission to investigate abuses, educate the public and enforce the law; it will also be able to publish reports on its own initiative.*
- End testing of household products on animals.*
- Work for the proper enforcement of regulations for the transportation of live animals across all EU member states.'*

Although it is not mentioned in their manifesto, the Liberal Democrat agriculture spokesman Tim Farron is reported in Farmers Guardian as affirming the party's commitment to a badger cull to tackle bovine TB.

All three parties devote relatively little space to policies concerning animal welfare.