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Nearly three-quarters of people in Wales oppose the shooting of ‘game’ birds

A new poll shows the Welsh public is overwhelmingly opposed to shooting and killing ‘game’ birds for ‘sport’.

The YouGov poll, commissioned by Animal Aid and the League Against Cruel Sports, found 74 per cent of people in Wales thought that shooting birds should be made illegal. The poll has been published to coincide with a major consultation on whether to allow shooting on public land by the largest Welsh Government Sponsored Body, Natural Resources Wales (NRW).

The polling also found:

- **76 per cent of people oppose the shooting of game birds for sport on publically owned land in Wales after learning how chicks are bred for sport shooting**
- **82 per cent of respondents oppose the use of cages for breeding ‘game’ birds**
- **Only one per cent of people thought that pheasants and other birds bred for sport shooting should have lower standards of welfare than other birds, as is the case now**

The consultation closes on Wednesday, April 25 and both animal welfare organisations plan on presenting the polling evidence and a petition, which has been signed by more than 12,500 people, to the both Natural Resources Wales and the National Assembly for Wales’ Petitions Committee today.

Bethan Collins, League Against Cruel Sports Senior Public Affairs Officer (Wales), said:

“People are starting to understand the life of cruelty endured by these birds, and they are saying they want it to end.

“These poor birds – millions of them in Wales – are intensively bred in cages and released only so they can be slaughtered for fun. Many will die or be killed before they even make it to the shooting estate, others will be wounded painfully rather than killed outright, and any suggestion that they all end up on someone’s dinner table is false – many dead birds will be simply dumped.”

Fiona Pereira, Campaigns Manager, Animal Aid, said:

“I sincerely hope that NRW takes heed of these poll results which show the overwhelming opposition to the shooting of birds for sport on land in Wales. NRW manages the land on

behalf of the people of Wales, and the opinion of the people could not be clearer. It's time for the killing to stop."

The consultation itself is the culmination of a campaign initiated by Animal Aid. This found that NRW had not only inherited shooting agreements from its predecessor bodies but that it planned to expand them – without public consultation.

The new poll also found that 72% of respondents felt that pheasants and other captive bred birds used for sport shooting should have the same standards of welfare as other birds. At present, 'game' birds are protected only by a basic and limited code of practice on their welfare which is voluntary for breeders to comply with. Furthermore, the relevant government agency – the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) – does not inspect birds on 'game' farms unless a complaint has been made. This means that the birds are receiving a far lower level of scrutiny and protection even than other farmed animals.

Animal Aid's investigation of 'game' birds kept on NRW land found breaches of welfare and industry Codes. In 2017, 35-40 dead game birds were discovered inside a release pen on NRW-leased land. In addition, undercover visits to 'game' farms found breeding birds kept in entirely barren cages, again in breach of the welfare Code.

The League Against Cruel Sports has campaigned alongside Animal Aid and local opposition groups to persuade NRW to stop using its land for shooting and instead use it for positive projects that will benefit people, animals and the environment.

In 2015, League Against Cruel Sports professional investigators visited shooting estates in Wales and exposed the indiscriminate practice of snaring which is cruelly killing Welsh wildlife.

The video also contains footage of the appalling conditions 'game' birds are reared in:

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=TX0GylQZVW4>

In 2017 Animal Aid conducted an undercover investigation which found dead, trapped and suffering 'game' birds on NRW land <https://www.animalaid.org.uk/dead-trapped-birds-natural-resources-wales-land/>

Ends

Notes to Editors:

- All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 1006 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 5th - 9th April 2018. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all Welsh adults (aged 18+). The YouGov polling figures can be viewed here: https://d25d2506sfb94s.cloudfront.net/cumulus_uploads/document/1qaemiv24u/YG-Archive-230418-League%20AgainstCruelSports.pdf
- A petition, signed by more than 12,500 people calling for an end to shooting on public land in Wales will be handed into the Assembly of Wales on 24 April.