



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

(For official use only)
PUBLIC PETITION NO.

PE1309

1. Name of petitioner
Farquhar Macbeath
2. Petition title
Protection of vulnerable livestock
3. Petition text
Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to amend relevant legislation to remove the protection given to sea eagles and other predators such as foxes, badgers, and ravens in order to allow farmers and crofters, in certain situations, to kill such predators so as to protect their livestock from injury and death incurred by attack.
4. Action taken to resolve issues of concern before submitting the petition
<p>I have contacted local councillors and MSPs, John Farquhar Munro and Jamie McGrigor.</p> <p>The Scottish Executive Environment and Rural Affairs Directorate (SEERAD) took a statement of puma sightings by three members of my family and myself. We received no feedback.</p> <p>On 5/3/03 we had a sheep inspection by SEERAD. It examined a sheep clawed from the hind quarter to the midriff which was still living and one dead sheep that had a bite taken out from the wind pipe. At the time I also had one with its throat bitten out that was still alive. SEERAD prepared a written report but no action was taken.</p> <p>A 3 month study of eagle damage in the area was carried out by SEERAD. This found that within 36 hours 6 lambs were killed by an eagle. The study also quashed the myth that eagles only targeted weak lambs.</p> <p>John Farquhar Munro MSP wrote to Mike Russell on 18/9/08. Mr Russell replied on 21/10/08 making it clear that the authorities can impose a £5,000 fine or a 6 month jail sentence for the interference with wildlife. He also said he would request information from SNH about sea eagle diet. I received no further response apart from his press release welcoming the release of another flock of vultures.</p> <p>Jamie McGrigor MSP wrote to Roseanna Cunningham whose reply was misleading and inaccurate. She suggested I contact Scottish Agricultural Science Agency. Its advice was to tag the lambs as they did in the Gairloch, but £100,000 for 60 lambs is a bit beyond my budget. (Tagging enables farmers to keep track of sheep numbers accurately and allows for the sheep</p>

to be traced once missing. In Gairloch radio transmitters were attached to 60 lambs. Each death was mapped and the carcass traced and recovered to allow post mortem tests to ascertain the exact cause of death.)

I have photos of badger, fox, puma, and eagle kills along with papers to substantiate my losses. My lamb sales dropped from 200 and up to 31.

5. Petition background information

The reasons why I believe action is justified on this issue are twofold.

Firstly, there is the basic threat posed to livestock and farmer's livelihoods by the uncontrolled attacks from sea eagles. (Indeed compensation has been paid to owners of livestock on Mull and elsewhere.) In Mull and Wester Ross compensation has been paid to farmers and crofters for lambs lost to sea eagles. Secondly, changes to legislation have been made previously to control predatory species, and I feel it is only right that other threats to livestock be given similar consideration.

I would refer to the amendments made earlier this year to the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 - legislation formerly protecting ravens.

In this case the Scottish Government took into account representation from the National Farmer's Union of Scotland, attesting to the very real threat posed by ravens to livestock during the vulnerable lambing season. Changes were made to allow SNH to take into account local circumstances. Licenses can now be issued allowing farmers to shoot a designated number of animals, according to the level of predation. The Scottish Government has also agreed to take into consideration the use of decoys to scare ravens away from lambing areas.

While sea-eagles are subject to far stricter protection than many other raptor species - I believe that sufficient evidence exists to warrant a similar change in legislation. As in the case of the raven, the threat sea-eagles pose to livestock are widely recognised.

In conclusion, I would ask the Public Petitions Committee to seek a change to the laws protecting sea eagles and other predators on the grounds that the threat these predators pose is both very real and widely recognised; furthermore, following recent changes to legislation I believe that suitable frameworks are in place that could be applied to this situation.

As noted above, the NFU rejected adding some raptor species to the list of those protected from harassment on the grounds that they 'enjoy significant levels of legal protection' as the law stands. I would therefore suggest a similar scheme as that controlling ravens be extended to include other raptor species. While still being protected under the law, local SNH offices would be able to take local circumstances into account. If necessary, in areas where sea eagle and other predator attacks are particularly common or severe, the local SNH office could issue a licence allowing the control of rogue predators. Licensed sea eagle control could be monitored and carried out in a way causing minimal pain and distress to the target species.

Provision must exist to allow farmers and crofters to secure their livelihood and protect their livestock from injury and death.

6. Do you wish your petition to be hosted on the Parliament's website as an e-petition?
NO
7. Closing date for e-petition
8. Comments to stimulate on-line discussion