



Media Release

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Europe pledges to protect seals yet Scotland continues to slaughter them

Today, in an historic vote for animal welfare the European Parliament voted to ban trade in all seal products derived from commercial slaughter. The ban will help save the lives of hundreds of thousands of seals each year that are brutally clubbed, shot and often skinned alive each year in Canada and around the world.

Scottish charity the Seal Protection Action Group (SPAG) welcomed the ban saying it now pointed the way for a comprehensive ban on seal killing in Scotland. Under proposed Marine Bill guidelines announced last week, seal killing will continue under license rather than be banned outright.

“The European ban is a massive blow to the seal killers that profit from horrific cruelty to defenceless animals”, said Andy Ottaway, Campaign Director of SPAG, “However, seals are still being persecuted all over the world including here in Scotland and we will continue to actively campaign to provide them with the full protection they deserve.”

SPAG estimates that thousands of seals are killed each year by the Scottish salmon industry with scientists recently reporting a ‘frightening decline’ in common seals around the UK coast. The Scottish Government has recently suggested that the decline may be due to competition with grey seals or even predation by orcas (killer whales) however SPAG believe these statements lack scientific credibility.

On 30th April the Scottish Government launched its draft Marine Bill announcing a licensing system for killing seals for salmon farms, salmon netmen and sea fisheries will be able to apply for a license to shoot seals. Whilst campaigners have welcomed stronger legislation to protect Scotland’s marine environment they do not believe that a licensing system for killing seals is desirable, realistic or enforceable.

“European nations have voted by public demand to protect seals from cruelty yet Scotland continues to persecute these wonderful marine mammals”, said Andy Ottaway, “Whilst the Government continues to allow seal killing it leaves an indelible stain on the international image of both Scotland and Scottish salmon products.”

SPAG is calling on members of the public to avoid Scottish salmon unless their retailer can guarantee that producers do not shoot seals.

-ENDS-

For interviews, further information or photographs, please contact Andy Ottaway of the Seal Protection Action Group on 01273 471403 or mobile 07855 666069.

Notes to Editors

- The Seal Protection Action Group (SPAG), registered charity (SC017447), is dedicated to the protection of seals and their environment worldwide www.sealaction.org
- The Canadian seal hunt is the world's largest slaughter of marine mammals with 338,000 young seals to be clubbed and shot this year. Evidence suggests some seals may be skinned alive. Large scale seal hunts also take place in countries such as Namibia, Norway and Greenland.
- Just the threat of an EU ban was enough to drive this year's price for seal fur down to \$15 (CAD) per skin—a decline of 86 percent since 2006.
- The threat of the ban has meant fewer than 60,000 seals have been killed to date. By the regulated closing date of the seal hunt—May 15—it is likely more than a quarter of a million baby seals will have been spared a horrible fate.
- In the UK, scientists from the Sea Mammals Research Unit (SMRU) have reported a “frightening” decline in common seals in the UK. http://www.smru.st-andrews.ac.uk/documents/SCOS_2008_v1.pdf
- On 30th April the Scottish Government launched its draft Marine Bill <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/s3/bills/25-MarineScot/b25s3-introd.pdf> which proposes introducing a licensing scheme, rather than a ban, on seal killing
- A public opinion poll dated January 2008 found that 75% of the Scottish public supports MAKING the killing of seals illegal in Scottish waters. (The poll was conducted in Jan 2008 by TNS System Three.)
- SPAG is calling on the UK and Scottish Government to provide seals with the full protection they deserve. SPAG is also calling on major UK high street retailers such as Tesco and Waitrose to insist their Scottish salmon suppliers stop killing seals. www.sealaction.org/campaigns/scotland

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Scottish Reg. Charity No: SC017447

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