

BVA Scottish Branch response to the Scottish Parliament Criminal Justice Committee call for evidence on the Fireworks and Pyrotechnic Articles (Scotland) Bill

Introduction

1. BVA is the national representative body for the veterinary profession in the United Kingdom and has over 19,000 members. Our primary aim is to represent, support and champion the interests of the veterinary profession in this country, and we therefore take a keen interest in all issues affecting the profession, including animal health and welfare, public health, regulatory issues and employment matters.
2. divisions, government, academic institutions and research organisations in Scotland. The Branch advises BVA on the consensus view of Scottish members on Scottish and United Kingdom issues.

Overall views

3. types of fireworks and pyrotechnic articles in Scotland, as set out in the Bill. We consider that current controls on the use, sale and purchase of fireworks, as well as controls to mitigate noise levels, do not go far enough to adequately safeguard the health and welfare of animals in the UK. We are calling for:
 - < Tighter restrictions on the private use, sale and purchase of fireworks (including restricting the use and sale of fireworks around agreed traditional dates);
 - < Licensing of all public displays and organised events;
 - <

Types of fireworks covered by licensing system

4. We understand that the Bill proposes to establish a new licensing system for members of the public who wish to buy and use CAT F2 and CAT F3 fireworks in Scotland. This would require members of the public to undertake an online training course and pay between £30 and £50 for a licence, before they could buy or use CAT F2 and CAT F3 fireworks.
5. We strongly support the introduction of a fireworks licensing system for the sale and purchase of fireworks in Scotland. Buyer and end-users should be educated to ensure the safe and appropriate use of fireworks and to mitigate the potential negative impacts of fireworks on animal health and welfare. Licensing should apply to all adults over the age of 18, including members of community organisations and groups organising a public display, and should cover purchase, possession, and use of fireworks.
6. To complement the proposed licensing system the maximum permitted noise levels of fireworks that individuals are able to purchase for private use should be restricted. At present, the 120 decibels noise limit on Category F1, F2, and F3 fireworks set out in legislation is specified to align with the human pain threshold for audible sound. This does not pay sufficient regard for the impact of noise level and frequency of fireworks on animals. In the absence of accurate evidence regarding the specific welfare impact of loud noise levels on animals, we support a reduction in the maximum permitted noise of fireworks intended for public sale to a threshold of 97 decibels with a 15-metre safety distance. Fireworks should also be clearly labelled to indicate their noise level to the consumer eg.
risk to animal
to exercise an informed choice as to the types of firework they are buying if they wish to minimise the potential negative noise impact of fireworks on animal health and welfare.
7. A

to members of the public on 37 days a year, on the following specified dates, which are inclusive:

- < 7 April to 14 April (an eight-day period)
- < 27 October to 10 November (a 15-day period)
- < 26 December to 31 December (a six-day period)
- <

restrictions on use around Bonfire Night and other traditional dates ie. by restricting use to 5 November and the closest weekend.

Criminal offences

Restrictions at certain designated places or events and the use of pyrotechnic devices

- 25.** We understand that the Bill will give the Scottish Government new powers to make regulations to control the possession or use of any fireworks or distress and signal flares at certain locations (such as sports grounds) or at certain events (such as pubain 4(S)4(co)s gr(as