

SHAHRAR ALI STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT TO ANIMAL WELFARE AND ANIMAL WELL-BEING

I am proud of our Party's stance on animal rights; I fully support our policies and I welcome the role Greens for Animal Protection plays in ensuring that we continue to develop and improve these policies. How humans treat the other animals with whom we share this planet is hugely important with regard both to the immediate suffering caused to others by our actions and to how humans' ill-treatment of animals contributes to the environmental crisis that threatens us all. In this brief statement, I shall pick out just a few key areas to mention:

Farming: I would strongly promote our Green Party policy on moving away from animal farming and towards plant-based food production. I strongly support the promotion of a vegan diet in public institutions, such as in schools, to have that as a substantial option in their canteens. This is both an animal rights issue and an environmental one. As long as animal farming remains, we must enforce the highest possible standards of animal care. Having received questions in this election campaign about whether we should ban the ritual slaughter of animals, I'd like to mention here that I believe we should promote dialogue with religious communities about this; where there is a conflict between animal rights and religious tradition, we must not be afraid to face that conflict. The proponents of ritual slaughter methods claim that these methods are humane, but more research must be done in this area. We should be more vocal in opposing the badger cull; measures should be put in place to vaccinate badgers and cattle and to improve the farming methods which are implicated in disease.

Intensive agriculture: The use of antibiotics and growth hormones in farm animals is a concern regarding animal welfare and also for human health and environmental impact. I left the biotechnology field out of a deep concern for exploitation of animals in intensive agriculture, including the manufacture of BST which fortunately did not get a product licence in the EU but I was no longer comfortable about being associated with its production. My work in the EU covered environmental protection and risk assessment including producing briefings to parliamentarians to help inform their debates and votes on maintaining a moratorium on GM organisms and GM food.

Fishing: this is another area of great concern, again, both regarding animal suffering and environmental harm. Whole ecosystems are damaged by modern fishing methods and untold suffering is inflicted on not only the target fish but also all those so callously dismissed as 'by-catch'. I would push hard for the sentience of decapod crustaceans to be recognised, and to ban the hideous boiling alive of crabs and lobsters.

Animal experiments: I strongly support animal-free research and endorse our Party's policies on ending animal experiments, including in the military. I have gone head-to-head with Colin Blakemore on a public platform and believe I was able to expose the flaws in his justifications for continued animal research.

Sports: the exploitation of animals for human entertainment is utterly unacceptable. The recent Animal Aid investigation into the slaughter of unwanted racehorses demonstrated the callousness of the horse racing industry; greyhound racing is a similarly vile industry, and I would like to see these sports banned. I would push for the Hunting Act to be enforced – as we all know, it is routinely ignored, with trail hunting merely a smokescreen for illegal hunting – and for the banning of all blood sports including shooting and fishing.

Public speaking and community relations: I believe in two main ways of championing animal rights: speaking out and leading by example or encouraging others to do so at community level. I take every opportunity I can to speak out. I have studied and taught ethics for many years and the

ethics of how we relate with our fellow animals is an important part of my work. (Here is a clip from me speaking on the BBC about animal sentience: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p05p2x7z>.) Regarding my setting an example for those contemplating a vegan diet, I'm not quite there yet but am moving in the right direction, especially when combining all the productive joys of seeding and harvesting vegetables from the allotment – which is already doing much to address this balance in my diet. However, we should avoid turning electors away for not doing enough; that's not a good motivational strategy. We have to start from where they are at, and provoke their thinking and raise their aspirations, gradually and collaboratively. I have had conversations with Islamic community leaders, for example, about the promotion of meat-free days, explicitly referencing the harm to the environment and climate change. They truly get this.

Centring animals: Respect and compassion for other species is inseparable from Green Party philosophy; however, I am aware that sometimes animal rights can get buried in environmental issues. Our animal policies should be firmly placed at the forefront of our debates. I think you will regularly hear me scope out from our anthropocentric ways in topical debates by mentioning the negative impact we are having on other animals. The preservation of species and habitats is different from protecting wildlife and individual wild animals. Anyone who has ever connected deeply with a non-human animal knows that the other is cognitively and emotionally a fully sentient being. This is of course a frightening realisation for humanity: so much of our advancement has been at the expense of our fellow beings, animal and other than animal. To acknowledge it will mean radically changing our ways. I believe we must find the courage, and the moral honesty, to do so. And what a different world that will be.

Promoted and Produced by Amelie Boleyn on behalf of Shahrar Ali as part of his campaign for election to the post of Leader. Not an official communication of Green Party and England and Wales.