

## ***Foxhunting: past, present, future?***

### ***Transcript of interview extract for Jim Barrington***

#### **Jim Barrington**

Consultant for the All Party Parliamentary Middleway Group

#### **Interview date**

14.08.2006

#### **Brief description**

Talks about distinction between animal welfare and animal rights and focus of the Middleway Group on licensing.

#### **Duration**

3mins 32secs

#### **Interview extract**

Jim Barrington: ... We look at it from a welfare point of view. Now if you want to explain, I would explain it like this. At one time I felt strongly about animal rights. I don't, I don't think animals do have rights. I mean rights are a human concept and they, they're balanced with responsibilities, of course not in every case because there will be some people who don't and can't have responsibilities, but in the main they are, there're two sides of the coin, same coin. Animals can't have rights because what do you say about a rabbit's right when it's taken by a fox, you know, has it lost its right, should that fox be prosecuted? I mean it's a silly concept. We have a duty to have a welfare side to, to the way we treat animals and more so the domestic animals obviously, but, but also I think to wild animals, who, given that they're wild, you know, should not be treated and caused unnecessary suffering. In the domestic world the 1911 Protection of Animals Act uses, defines the phrase "cruelty" as the infliction of unnecessary suffering. So in other words it's not what you do to the animal, you can even kill the animal, but it's when you

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cause them unnecessary suffering and we think that that principal should apply to, to wild mammals as well. Why should anyone be allowed to cause undue suffering to any wild mammal? They will cause them suffering, of course they will, and they will kill them, but why should anyone be allowed to cause undue suffering, so what we were, what we were looking at is putting a safety net under the whole activity where man comes into contact with, with wild mammals, not just in hunting, not just in shooting, not just in gamekeeping, anything that, that involves a wild mammal, and we also took the view that licensing of hunting was actually a better way forward as well, em, partly because it would again keep standards high. It would mean that hunts would be keen not to lose their licence as well and in that you have a self policing aspect. If you impose on a group of people, especially a group of people in the countryside, operating in the countryside, you don't want this. It's very hard to sort of make sure that they abide by it. I mean countryside law is difficult in any case, but to say to this group of people "Right you will have this law whether you like it or not" em, some of them would just shrug their shoulders and say "So what, make your law in Westminster, it doesn't affect us in the Welsh hills or in, you know, north of England, or whatever" em, but if you have something which they would support, and in a better atmosphere, they will, if you like, self police. You've got, you've got the makings of a much more workable law and that's what I would like to see the hunting world do, and I believe it is doing it in fact. They, they are saying "we are not going to have unruly people or people causing all sorts of, er, activities

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that are against their, their code of practice because we don't want to lose our, our position, now if we had a licence then, you know, we don't want to lose that either". So I think, I think it would be a much better way forward for them to aspire to keeping this licence, thereby keeping standards high.

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