



A political party for people and animals

Animals Count Winter 09/10 Newsletter

4 January 2010



Dear Supporter, another year has flown by and Animals Count has gone from strength to strength! We achieved a very respectable number of votes in the June 2009 European Parliament Elections, and have lobbied other political parties, to try to influence their policies. One of our achievements includes a policy idea being adopted by the Green Party. We have carried out research into contesting the General Elections in 2010, held a very successful Third Party Conference, and spread the concept of a political party for animals to other countries.

I am very heartened by the tremendous support you and other supporters have given to Animals Count during the past year, and I sincerely hope we can count on you again in 2010. Please consider making a donation to support our General Election campaign, which is vital for a successful outcome. Thank you in advance for your help.

Jasmijn de Boo

EVENTS

In the course of the summer and autumn we have held and attended several fun and informative events to raise funds for and awareness of Animals Count.

On the 25th of July, Tibits Restaurant in London provided a venue for a campaigning workshop. Jasmijn and Richard presented a review of the EU Elections campaign and fundraising, demonstrating that although fundraising efforts had been good, raising an admirable £8,500, more money would have been needed in order for us to reach all voters. All members were encouraged to get involved by organising events, stalls or even fundraising dinners for friends.

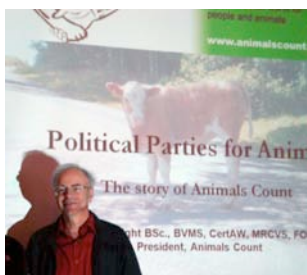
The Third Party Conference was held on the 19th of September. We discussed the EU manifesto, which resulted in a lively debate about whether we need to increase our emphasis on non-animal issues. Opinions were divided, with the majority, however, being in favour, to maximise our mainstream appeal.

Festivals and fairs, although enjoyable and excellent for profile-raising, have proved to be of variable value. The London Vegan Festival in September was very successful, whereas The Oxford Vegan Food Fair and the Hove Vegan Fair in August were of limited value, with few sales of merchandise and just one new member. It has been decided that in the future, AC will not have a stall at such events but may consider giving talks at the major, London-based events.

Jasmijn hosted an Events and Campaigns meeting in her flat on November 14th, attended by 10 members. Discussion revolved mainly around fundraising ideas and events, as well as strategies for the 2010 General Election Campaign. The following events were decided on:

- Animals Count stall at the Christmas Without Cruelty Fayre on 6th December. We recruited several new members and raised funds towards the 2010 election campaign.
- Speech in Ireland, at ARAN's 'March against animal cruelty' in Dublin on 6th December. Several animal protectionists were interested in the idea of an Irish Party for the Animals, as Ireland uses a proportional representation voting system. Watch this space...

- There are also developments in Australia inspired by Andrew Knight's talk about political parties for animals at the Minding Animals Conference held in Australia in July. Watch this space also...



Prof. Peter Singer, who endorsed Animals Count during the EU elections, was at the Minding Animals Conference

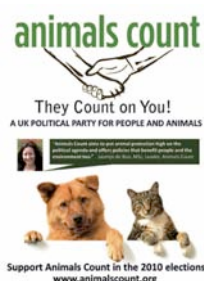
- Christmas Dinner on Sunday 13th December at the Peking Palace in London. A vegan set menu was offered for £20, and 21 people enjoyed a great meal and had a fantastic evening.
- Fundraising party in Balham, Southwest London, on 22nd January 2010. Live acts and a DJ will make this an unforgettable, fun evening. Tickets will be on sale soon and will also be available at the door.
- St. Valentine's Day Fundraising Dinner on 14th February. Location TBC.
- An animal costume race or another challenge in early/mid March. Date and location TBC.
- Fundraising and social walking weekend on South Downs to coincide with the Brighton Eco-Veggie show on 20th March.
- Free veterinary advice for dog owners in targeted constituency in April.
- Family fun day in targeted constituency, approximately 2 weeks before the elections.

Every fundraising effort and every opportunity to raise awareness of Animals Count helps. Planning and organising events takes a lot of our time, so please consider getting involved, or directly helping to fundraise for Animals Count. ***We are aiming to raise £10,000 to run a General Election campaign, by March 2010.***

COMMUNICATION AND MERCHANDISE

On 12th November we transferred the website, www.animalscount.org, to a content-management system which makes maintenance of the website easier, and which helps with the navigation of the website. We are still in the process of transferring some of the content. If anyone with web design skills can help us tidy up the loose ends, please get in touch with Nicola at: Secretary@animalscount.org.

Our network on Facebook is also growing rapidly. If you haven't already done so, join us to keep up to date.



At the end of November 10,000 copies of a new general Animals Count leaflet were printed, which will be distributed until March/April 2010, when we will develop an election-specific leaflet. We would like to thank Nicola, our new Secretary, for her hard work on the website, leaflet and other tasks. On 31st December the magazine Cook Vegetarian went on sale including 5,000 copies, which had an Animals Count leaflet inserted. We hope to reach a new audience and recruit new members, in addition to continuing our existing outreach methods.

If you would like to distribute leaflets in your area (e.g. in wholefood shops, libraries, at stalls, charity shops, etc.), please contact Nicola at: Secretary@animalscount.org

Enclosed is also a list of our **merchandise items** at Winter Sale prices. We hope you may be interested in supporting Animals Count by ordering T-shirts, bags, DVDs or other goodies!



ANIMALS COUNT THIRD PARTY CONFERENCE

The Animals Count Third Party Conference, held on September 19th in London, was a successful and enjoyable event, attended by 31 members. This was almost double the attendance of the Second Party Conference in May 2009. Full minutes are available to all paid up members — please contact us if you would like to receive them. In summary, we presented an overview of the EU electoral campaign and finances. This campaign was highly successful, and resulted in 13,201 votes for Animals Count in the Eastern Region. We discussed minor amendments to the Constitution and Standing Orders; whether, and if so, where to contest the 2010 elections; future events; and we re-assigned certain administrative responsibilities.

The National Party Officers were (re-)elected as follows:

- Jasmijn de Boo as Leader
- Richard Deboo as Deputy Leader (pictured right)
- Louise Cobham as Treasurer
- Fiona McNeill as Nominating Officer



Majority vote resulted in the following key decisions:

- We will contest in the General Election 2010, standing in one constituency
- We will not stand in the local elections, this not being financially viable for the time being

There was a lively discussion regarding the extent to which we should try to reach and attract potential new, more mainstream voters, whose primary concerns will inevitably revolve around social, rather than animal-based, issues. It was generally agreed that it is essential for the Party to include a social justice ideology, which is inextricably linked to animal welfare and ecological issues, in its Election campaign; although our primary focus will remain on animal issues.

Other agenda items included discussion of member involvement and fundraising ideas and events. The Conference ended with a particularly inspiring keynote speech from Richard Deboo, pictured left (text available).

The conference was followed by a delicious three-course vegan fundraising meal and auction, which raised approximately £1,400. Thanks to everyone who generously placed bids, and to the donors of these special items!

CONTESTING THE 2010 GENERAL ELECTIONS

During our preparations for the 2010 General Elections, we have conducted research, held in-depth discussions, and written to candidates in three constituencies to request a meeting regarding their stand on animal issues. While the first-past-the-post system used in General Elections is not conducive to smaller parties (even the fourth largest party nationally — the Greens — still do not have elected MPs), Animals Count members and the Committee of National Officers have decided to contest one constituency in London. Islington South and Finsbury Park is a marginal seat and we hope to influence the overall outcome in favour of animals.

Although the incumbent Labour MP, Emily Thornberry, has previously signed a couple of animal-related Early Day Motions (EDM's), and recently asked the Prime Minister to provide reassurance that the Hunting Act (2005) would remain in place, her overall record for animals is not brilliant. The gap between her and LibDems candidate Bridget Fox (who seems to be substantially more animal-friendly) is very small. The Tories do not stand a chance in that area.

Animals Count will be campaigning right in the heart of the political arena, with the aim of encouraging other political parties to become more animal-friendly. As long as animals are not protected adequately by existing UK political parties, a party dedicated to animal issues must take the lead. We will draw attention to the differences between candidates in the area and raise awareness of animal issues so that the other candidates can improve their animal (and environmental) policies.

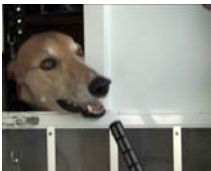
Deputy leader Richard Deboo has expressed willingness to contest the General Elections, and would be the best choice of candidate.

On 13th January we will have our next meeting where we will discuss plans for the Election campaign. Even if you do not live in London, you can still **help**, through raising awareness in the media (local and national radio and newspapers), on online forums, informing friends and family in London, and by helping to raise much-needed funds. We will provide further updates as our plans progress.

UK POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

In July, Animals Count responded to three consultations, including the proposal of a new EU Directive on animal experimentation (86/609/EC). Our stand is that all animal experimentation is morally objectionable and, in many cases, scientifically questionable. We are disappointed to see that the new Directive has missed many opportunities to improve the protection of animals used in research.

Our response to the consultation on badger culling in Wales concluded that culling is an inhumane and ineffective practice and should never take place. There is no scientific evidence that badgers are major carriers of bovine TB, and in England, this has already been recognised by the government. Animals Count advocates cattle-based measures to control bovine TB. Thanks to Animals Count Welsh contact, Lorraine from Cardiff, who has liaised with politicians and organisations on this issue.



We also provided a response to the consultation on the welfare of Greyhounds in racing. All details can be found at www.animalscount.org/policies and further details of our policies can be found in our EU Election Manifesto: http://www.animalscount.org/files/manifesto_2009.pdf.

The Copenhagen climate talks received admirable and thought-provoking coverage, although failed to adequately address the problem of the livestock industry, which is responsible for at least 18% of global greenhouse gas emissions. We would have welcomed an open discussion by world leaders on this major contributor to global warming.

A non-partisan alliance of animal protection groups has started a Vote Cruelty Free initiative aimed at the next General Elections. Their manifesto has been sent to all candidates standing in the 2010 elections, requesting them to pledge their support of animal protection issues. As the elections draw closer, we hope to see an increasing number of candidates joining the pledge.

Thank you again for your continued support. On behalf of the Animals Count Committee of National Officers, I would like to wish you a very happy and rewarding 2010! I hope the world will become a better place for every living being. Let's make that difference together!

With best wishes,

Jasmijn de Boo
Leader, Animals Count