Written evidence submitted by Carol Harper

I am writing as a concerned member of the public, with regards to the Grey Squirrels mentioned in the Invasive Species Act.

While I, myself love the Grey Squirrels and see no reason they should be included in this ridiculous act, since they have been here over 100 years, and cause minimal damage, as has been proven in countless studies, this is not why I’m writing.

I can see that nothing has been put in place to protect the vets or wildlife rehabilitators from the effects of having to either turn animals away or euthanize them. There is already worry that the suicide rate in the veterinary profession is 4 times higher than the national average. What are the repercussions of this new act going to be on the people in the front lines, and what has been put in place by the government to protect these people from the abuse they will have to face, from members of the public that will be turned away or who will be told that the squirrel they are trying to rescue is going to be killed?

Most vets and wildlife rehabbers experience daily threats by emotional people who want their help. Sometimes things don’t have the best outcome and the vet or rehabber takes the brunt of the anger and disappointment. You have lumped grey squirrels in with Japanese Knotweed, but the people getting rid of the Knotweed are not going to be dealing with death threats and crying children or adults on a daily basis. There is a lot of support for the Grey Squirrels, especially in urban areas where they are sometimes the only joy people who aren’t allowed to keep pets have. This new law is going to affect the trust of the general public in their local vet practices and wildlife centres, and also the mental health of the people having to turn them away, or euthanize otherwise healthy, releasable animals.

I fear this is a badly thought out endeavour and that the mental health of the people who will have to implement this law have not been taken into account at all.

I hope that my concerns will be taken into account by the members of this enquiry.

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