

122

Spring 2026

Price £2 (free to members)



animalwatch

PUTTING ANIMALS ON THE AGENDA OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

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BISHOP LYNNE'S SERMON FROM
ANIMAL WELFARE SUNDAY

INTERVIEW WITH FARMKIND

REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY WRITE UP

ANIMALS IN HEAVEN



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Cover photo by Reverend Canon Lynn Hurry

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Please make a note of the events happening in the coming months. The diary will be updated in the next issue as we receive information about other events taking place.

2026

4th to 10th May

Hedgehog Awareness Week

information available from the British Hedgehog Preservation Society, <https://www.britishhedgehogs.org.uk/>

12th May

ASWA AGM - 7.00pm on Zoom

Attendees need to email the Secretary to register. You will then be sent a Zoom link via email.

4th October

Animal Welfare Sunday

Annual Service, details tba

8th November

ASWA Remembrance Service for Animals in War, The Animals' War Memorial, Brooke Gate, Park Lane, London, W1K 7QF, 3pm. Speaker: tba



HELLO AND WELCOME TO ANIMALWATCH

Welcome to *Animalwatch*. In this issue, we consider the theology of resurrection and new life and the place of animals within that theology.

We hope that you enjoy keeping up-to-date with news and information on our website. Do check regularly for resources and information about upcoming events. Please do make a note of the dates in the Diary, especially our Annual General Meeting.

Please send any items for consideration for *Animalwatch* to the Secretary, Revd Samantha Chandler, PO Box 7193, Hook, Hampshire, RG27 8GT. Email is even better – secretary@angsocwelanimals.net. Please note that, owing to space restrictions, it may not be possible to print all contributions. Please refer to the information about contributions to *Animalwatch* for further details and restrictions on submissions.

Samantha Chandler, Secretary and Acting Editor

The deadline for the Summer magazine is **Monday 18th May 2026**.

ASWA SPEAKERS AVAILABLE

If you have a group or service that would welcome an ASWA speaker, we would love to hear from you! We often travel a fair distance so please call to discuss it. We usually bring a stall and literature and always liaise with our hosts to ensure the talk is appropriate for their particular audience. Keep the invitations rolling in!

A WARM WELCOME

to our new members. We look forward to hearing from you.

We are pleased to welcome our new members who have joined since the publication of the Autumn issue.

To all our new members we extend a warm welcome and we would ask that you, along with our existing members, encourage others who share your concern for animal welfare to join. Introductory leaflets are available from the Secretary.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO ANIMALWATCH

We very much welcome contributions to *Animalwatch* from our readers. We are interested to hear about the positive things being done for animals in your churches and communities. We also welcome informed pieces on specific areas of animal welfare, such as items relating to animal welfare law, the history of animal welfare, and theology. Articles should be submitted to the Editor

either as typed manuscripts by post or by email as Word documents, with any accompanying photos sent as high-resolution jpg files. Items submitted as pdf files or email text cannot be accepted. Submissions must be the contributor's (sender's) own original work, and (unless otherwise agreed) not published elsewhere. Items may be edited for length, readability, and appropriateness

of content. Publication of submitted items is at the Editor's discretion. In submitting an article, the contributor assigns copyright for the piece to ASWA. For items submitted by email, please assume your item has been received unless you get a delivery failure notice. The Editor is unable to acknowledge receipt of individual submissions.

ASWA MERCHANDISE

Available from the ASWA website

ASWA literature: a range of literature on a variety of animal welfare subjects available.

PAWS for Prayer cards: paw shaped cards with a prayer for companion animals printed on one side. £0.20 each.

Egg Cards: egg shaped cards with a prayer printed on one side. £0.20 each.

ASWA bags: handy cotton shopping bag with the ASWA logo. £4 each.

ASWA badges: show your support for ASWA by wearing a lapel badge with the ASWA logo. £1.50 each.

Sticker sheets: Activity sheet with stickers (ravens or bees), £2.00 each.



GOOD NEWS

ASWA welcomes the UK Government's new Animal Welfare Strategy released in December 2025. We are cautiously optimistic and really hope that the Government delivers and that this new strategy will offer real change. The strategy includes greater protection for farm animals including a commitment to phase out the use of battery cages for laying hens and a move away from CO2 slaughter method for pigs. There is also a commitment to improve welfare for farmed fish and Crustacean Compassion are hopeful that the practice of boiling crabs and lobsters alive will cease. Further measures to tackle puppy smuggling and ban puppy farming entirely have also been mentioned. There are also plans to ban trail hunting in England and Wales which has been suspected by many to be a smokescreen for illegal hunting. See more detailed article in this issue.

Additionally in November 2025, the UK Government announced that animal testing in science would be phased out faster than previously planned. Not only is the government permitting, and even encouraging, the use of alternatives to animal testing, it has promised to invest £75 million to bring new alternatives to animal testing into use.

NEWS & NOTICES

Don't forget, you can follow ASWA on social media:

Facebook Anglican Society for the Welfare of Animals

Instagram angsocwelanimals.

You can also keep up with what's new via our website

www.aswa.org.uk

Check the website for the latest resources, including materials for children & youth.



Animal-friendly Church Awards

Is your church animal friendly? ASWA sponsors the Animal-friendly Church award to recognise those churches that take animal welfare seriously as part of their ministry and mission. Churches can apply at any time and those meeting the necessary criteria will be awarded animal-friendly church status. Information is available on the website or from the Secretary.

ASWA AGM

This year's ASWA Annual General Meeting will be on 12th May at 7pm on Zoom. Please contact the Secretary for the link to join the meeting. This is an opportunity for members to hear about and offer feedback on the activities and work of the charity, so please do join us if you can.

ASWA Annual Service

This year's annual service will be on Sunday 4th October, time and venue tba.

ASWA Remembrance Service

Our annual service of Remembrance for Animals in War will be on Sunday 8th November, 3pm, and the Animals' War Memorial, Park Lane, London. Please see the Diary for further details.

Keeping in Touch

Interested in keeping up-to-date with what ASWA is doing? Want to hear about campaigns and activities relating to animal welfare? If so, please make sure we've got your email address so that we can send you occasional updates on what's happening. To join our mailing list, please send your email address to aswamembership@btinternet.com.

ASWA NEWS

Animal Friendly Church

We are delighted to announce our winners for the Animal Friendly Church award 2025 (the competition is always judged in arrears). This year, the winner is a Benefice of three churches who are all animal friendly so all three will receive a brass plaque to hang on the wall and will join our list of Animal Friendly Church winners. The winning churches are:

St. Leonard's Church, Balderstone.

St. Leonard the Less Church, Samlesbury.

St. Mary the Virgin, Mellor.

The churches are located in the Diocese of Blackburn. Congratulations to the team and in particular to Revd Barbara Pack. We will feature an interview with Barbara in the Summer issue.

THE DEAN FARM TRUST

The Dean Farm Trust is an animal sanctuary and charity with a mission to give a home for life to unwanted, neglected and abused farm animals. It is situated just outside Chepstow and rescues animals such as donkeys, pigs, sheep, hens and cows. Recently the cost of hay, straw and winter feed has greatly increased and the Trust launched a special Winter Care appeal. ASWA was able to make a donation to assist. Pictured is Billy, a Mangalica pig, who is blind – rescued in 2017.



NEWS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

AUSTRALIA

Glimmers of Hope



Puppy Farms in New South Wales were banned from 1.12.25, following tireless campaigning by animal protection organisations. This is a step in the right direction, but disappointingly there are many disturbing loopholes in the legislation that would need to be tightened up if the ban is to be effective. More campaigning, I suppose! There is also the risk that large operators will move inter-state where the regulations are less stringent. The only answer to this is national legislation, which I suspect is a long way off.

Greyhound Racing. The animal welfare lobby has been concerned about the industry for many years, and with so many rescue greyhounds being out and about with their adoring owners, the general community has also become aware of the need to look closely into the industry. As a result of pressure, the NSW Government commissioned a report on the greyhound industry, to investigate

the governance, operations, animal welfare issues and track safety. This report was handed to the Racing Minister in July 2025. After widespread pressure it was released to the public at the beginning of December 2025. As expected, the Report highlighted extreme animal cruelty and "significant governance and operational failures". The Report made 65 recommendations but the Government response is weak and inadequate in light of the facts revealed, and indicates an inclination to support an industry rather than animal welfare. Fortunately, the "sport" is far less popular than it was, and tracks are closing.

Battery Hens At least five million hens are still imprisoned in this cruel and unnecessary system. The community is very much against it and most supermarkets sell predominantly free range eggs. However, eggs are used in the food industry – catering, food production, cafes. The national phase out of the battery system is set for 2036, which is a long way off.

I wish it were otherwise, but all I can take from Government action/

inaction in the above scenarios, is that Government prioritises industry profit over the welfare of animals.

Farm Transparency Project (FTP)

Members of ASWA may be aware of the work of this organisation. If you would like to learn the scope of their work in Australia please go to their website. They expose numerous examples of cruelty to animals across the board, and especially in slaughterhouses and intensive farms. This aspect of their work can lead to legal proceedings against them. I'll focus on one very important example. In December 2025 FTP was granted special leave by the High Court of Australia to appeal a decision by the full court of the Federal Court which had decided against FTP.

The High Court will be the final arbiters, with the outcome setting a binding precedent for future animal cruelty investigations in Australia. The case is expected to be heard in Canberra in 2026.

Olga Parkes

SWEDEN

In defence of "old grey-leg"



The wolf hunting season of 2025 (January and February) allowed for the killing of 30 wolves in the counties of Värmland, Västmanland, Västra Götaland and Örebro and 25 were shot. This was less than in 2024, when the authorities had decided that the wolf population needed to be severely culled.

The "wolf-issue" is a volatile and extremely sensitive subject in Sweden. If ever one feels inclined to start an argument over here "wolf" is the word that will get everyone going! The wolf holds a special position in Swedish folklore. They were never spoken of directly as they were considered to be 'familiar' of Satan. Instead, alternative names were used - "old

grey leg", "goldpaw", "the grey one" or "Tasse", i.e. tiptoe paw". Mentioning the wolf by name was considered bad luck as it might invite demonic presence into one's home and farm.

Superstition about the wolf is still very much alive and I believe this is one reason why the wolf-issue is such a sensitive subject. A paradox, as Swedes, in general, are not particularly "religious". Most Swedes however are environmentally aware.

There have been national campaigns, maintaining that "wolf-culling" is not acceptable and if necessary, should only be executed in moderation.

Therefore, extensive legal processes have been undertaken in preparation of 2026 in what the opposition calls a blood sport and not a "cull". The highest administrative legal board and court decided that there should

be "no killing" for 2026. This led to outrage and appeals from various county boards including the five mentioned above. These boards have defied the judgement. The situation has gained international recognition as the wolf is a protected species in Sweden, and may only be shot with special permission. The European Union has criticised Sweden and an article in the Guardian newspaper wrote on the dangers of shooting wolves as it conflicts with the European Union's directive on Biological Diversity and threatens the genetic banks of Swedish wolf populations.. Several environmental organisations have also voiced their concerns.

Sandra Kinley

ANIMALS IN HEAVEN

Will my dog/cat/goldfish/hamster be in heaven? You might think this is a child's question, but for years I've found it is often the first question on people's lips when they hear my theological specialty is on animals. It turns out that once we let these little creatures into our hearts, the question of their life after death matters to everyone.

The usual assumption is that animals are excluded from an afterlife because they "do not have a soul." This is a basic misunderstanding of a long-standing theological tradition. From early in the history of the church, there has been an alliance between Christian and Greek forms of thinking. In Greek thought, particularly in Aristotle, you could have more than one kind of soul at the same time.

All living things were thought to have a "vegetative soul"—this basic soul allowed growth and reproduction. A vegetative soul simply meant you were alive, and it was shared by people, animals, and plants. Layered on top of this, you could have an "animal soul". This allowed a creature to move around, to have emotions, desires, and instincts. Animals and humans both possessed this kind of soul. Finally, there was a top layer of a "rational soul". This is what allows humans to use logic, do maths, and to use complex language. Humans and angels were thought to have this kind of soul, but animals did not have them. So humans possessed a three-layered soul composed of the vegetative, animal, and rational soul. Animals only had the vegetative and animal souls.

When it came to the question of animals in heaven, the thought went something like this: because angels exist, we know that a rational soul does not need a physical body to exist. Vegetative and animal souls, however, do seem to need a physical body to exist. You cannot grow, reproduce, or move around without a body. Once there is no body, there is no expression of the soul, and thus no soul. The key question for people thinking about whether or not animals could be in heaven was not about whether or not animals had souls. It was about whether the kind of soul they had could survive the death of the body. Without a rational soul, it was thought that nothing was left over after death and so there was a common agreement that animals would not be in heaven.

In recent years, theologians have challenged this view of the soul. Instead of looking at Greek forms of thought, theologians have drawn upon Hebrew understandings of the body and soul. In the second chapter of Genesis, God creates a human in the Garden of Eden. This happens by God scooping together some dirt and breathing into it. The text says: "and the man became a living being" (Gen 2:7b, NRSV). The Hebrew words here translated "living being" (*nephesh hayat*) was translated as "living soul" by the King James Version, leading to the idea that only humans have souls.

However, the very same words are used in Genesis 1:21 and 1:24 to describe the living beings created in the seas and on land: fish and cattle. The same words are also used in

Genesis 9 in God's covenant with every living creature after the flood. This is not some special designation for humans alone, but is a common appellation for all animals. In Hebrew thought, humans are not so much a rational soul stuck in a body and set apart from every other creature, but an ensouled body the same as every other creature. It is being made in the image and likeness of God that sets humans apart from other creatures in the Genesis 1 narrative. In the end, because humans and other animals are all made in roughly the same way, there is no reason to think that humans would be included in the resurrection while animals would be excluded. They have just as much of a soul as we do, and the same kind. If we can survive death in some way, so can they. If we can be resurrected from the dead, so can they.

Next time you see your beloved pet and wonder if they can be in heaven, remember that no one has ever doubted they have a soul. For my own part, I think the answer is quite simple. The answer to "What will be redeemed in heaven?" is exactly the same as "What does God love?" If we can love other living creatures, we can be sure God does too. It is the love of God, more than any abstract speculation about souls, that is the bedrock for my faith in the afterlife of other animals.

Bethany Sollereeder

TALKING POINT

Will there be animals in heaven?

"Will my dog [cat, rabbit, guinea pig, goldfish,...] go to heaven?" is a question that we might assume is asked by children in naïve innocence. When a beloved pet dies, they want the comfort of knowing that animal is still somewhere safe where he or she will be happy. But is this really a childish question? If we believe that animals possess souls, and there is ample evidence that they do (animals, like humans, in the Bible are *nephesh*, souls; and they are sentient, with individual personalities, what we might call physical markers of a soul), then why would a loving God fail to include them in the life to come? Sadly, many in the Church would still argue that animals don't go to heaven, that heaven has a sign on the door saying 'humans only' – or maybe 'no dogs allowed'. But such a place would fail to be heavenly for many humans who have loved and mourned beloved animal members of their families. Do we have it in us to let go of our ideas of our own special status, and to trust in the God who sees even the fall of a single sparrow, believing that all God's beloved creatures will be present in the new (or renewed) creation, there to rejoice for ever before their shared Maker?

INTERVIEW WITH CO-FOUNDER OF FARMKIND

We interviewed Thom Norman, co-founder of FarmKind, a charity working to end factory farming. FarmKind wants to expand the menu of options for how to get involved in helping farmed animals. They celebrate anyone who wants to help, in whatever way works for them, even when that doesn't involve changing their diet.

We recognise that some of our members might feel that this doesn't go far enough but ASWA has always tried to be a 'broad' organisation recognising that concern for animals is a journey and that we are all at different stages. Many of us long to see a world free from any exploitation of animals but it is also important to acknowledge the important work being done by organisations who seek to reform farming practices.

Please note that this article is an interview with the founder of Farmkind. His views are not necessarily the same as those of all the ASWA Trustees.

To start with, tell me why factory farming is such a big problem

Factory farming sits at the intersection of many global challenges. For animals, the scientific evidence shows that factory farming is incredibly cruel and causes huge amounts of suffering. For example, many egg-laying hens are kept in cages where they can't stretch their wings, nest, or dust-bathe, which causes serious stress. Farmers often clip hens' beaks, which causes additional pain. Pigs are commonly kept in gestation and farrowing crates—spaces so small that mother pigs spend most of their lives unable to turn around and sometimes even unable to lie down properly. The UK has somewhat better welfare laws than many countries, but problems remain. Around 20% of egg-laying hens here are still kept in cages, and most meat chickens are fast-growing breeds whose bodies can't sustain their growth, leaving many unable to move properly.

Factory farming also harms the environment and human health. Depending on how it's measured, animal agriculture produces between

15% and 19% of global greenhouse gas emissions, including those driven by deforestation for animal feed. It creates huge amounts of waste that often ends up polluting land and water. And three-quarters of global antibiotics are fed to farmed animals, making factory farming a major driver of antibiotic-resistant diseases, which already kill hundreds of thousands of people annually and are expected to be the leading cause of death by 2050.

Whether we care about animals, the planet, or human health, we need to address factory farming.

How does your Christian faith play a role here? What can churches do about this issue?

Throughout the Bible, we're called to care about the suffering of others and to act where we can. A major part of Jesus' ministry was alleviating suffering. There's strong biblical support for the idea that God cares about animals, and that humans are called to steward creation, not exploit it through factory farming.

I'm also inspired by past Christian-led social justice movements—abolition, civil rights, the welfare state. I want Christians to be at the forefront of this moral effort to transform how we treat animals.

One thing church communities can do is talk openly about animal ethics, and discuss giving not only to causes helping humans but also to those helping animals. Many actions that help animals—like tackling factory farming—also benefit people.

What are the biggest misconceptions people have about helping animals?

One big issue is where we give. Ninety-five percent of donations to animal charities go to dogs, cats, and other companion animals. Those charities are great and we shouldn't ignore them, but there are around 80 billion land animals farmed each year, and they receive only about 3% of donations. So we're massively underfunding efforts to help the animals who suffer the most.

Another misconception is that helping animals requires changing your diet. We've estimated that an average person could do as much good as going completely vegan by donating roughly £20 a month. We should think less about what we eat and more about actions like donating or writing to MPs to push for better laws.

What is FarmKind working on, and how?

Most people agree that factory farming is morally wrong, but many don't know what to do about it. Some think their only option is to stop eating animal products; others think there's nothing they can do. FarmKind helps people who feel unsure how to act. The simplest and most impactful step is donating to organisations working effectively to improve the lives of farmed animals. We collaborate with experts who evaluate animal charities and recommend six high-impact organisations.

The charities we recommend help animals both in the short term and by working to transform the food system. Some run corporate campaigns—for example, persuading companies like McDonald's or supermarkets like Tesco to stop buying caged eggs. These campaigns are extremely effective: it costs around 83 cents (64 pence) to keep a hen out of a cage through this kind of advocacy.

Other charities provide research and coordination to advance plant-based foods and cultivated meat. These alternatives can dramatically reduce both suffering and environmental impact. So we support both near-term improvements and long-term system change.

We also provide a calculator showing how many animals a donation could help, and how much carbon emissions it could prevent. Our goal is to make it easy for people to make a meaningful difference. Learn more about Farmkind by visiting their website www.Farmkind and take a look at their their Compassion Calculator.

Jonathan Sutton

At ASWA we are supportive of others working in the field of animal welfare. Many are small groups staffed by volunteers and reliant entirely on donations. Below are two small organisations, both working abroad in countries where there are few animal welfare laws. ASWA is promoting these in good faith as we have heard good reports about the work they are doing.

HELPING THE STREET ANIMALS OF TUNISIA – A VOLUNTEER FROM RANA WRITES...



Rescue Animals of North Africa (RANA) is the only registered UK charity active in North Africa, primarily in Tunisia, focussing on rescuing, treating and finding homes for cats and dogs living on the streets. RANA was born in 2013 when founder Michaela, was living in Tunisia. She witnessed first-hand a levels of suffering that were hard to ignore. With no organisations

active across the country, the few local shelters are overwhelmed by the demand, and rescue often falls to individual animal lovers who quickly become inundated by sheer number of animals needing care.

RANA is a small, volunteer-based charity which relies solely on donations to support a few rescuers in Tunisia who, in their own homes, care for hundreds of cats and dogs saved from the streets.

RANA funds rescues, pays for veterinary care, has an active Trap Neuter Vaccinate Release programme (to sterilised and vaccinate against rabies) and facilitates the adoption of cats and dogs to adopters outside of Tunisia.

We might not be changing the world, but over the years we change the lives of many hundreds of animals, one animal at a time. But we can't do anything without your help.

To donate, please visit our website – www.ra-na.com/donate for more details. Please be assured that every penny goes towards saving lives.

You can also support us in other ways. You could adopt or foster a dog or cat, become a volunteer driver or join the RANA team and offer your time and skills.

If you are on social media – please look for us RANA.rescue and follow and like our posts.

A MESSAGE FROM HOME AND ABROAD ANIMAL WELFARE... A VOLUNTEER WRITES...



In late 2025, Sri Lanka faced its deadliest natural disaster since the 2004 tsunami. The devastation was primarily caused by Cyclone Ditwah, which made landfall on 28th November 2025, and brought unprecedented rainfall across all 25 districts. Nationally, at least 647 people lost their lives with hundreds more still missing across the country and over 2 million people have been displaced.

HAAW founder, Janice Down, is based in Kandy which was the hardest hit area of the whole country with many catastrophic landslides and flash floods. Kandy recorded the highest death toll in the country, with 237 confirmed deaths and at least 73 people missing as of late December.

Janice's house is built into a hillside so although she was safe from rising flood waters she was not safe from landslides which is exactly what happened. Janice woke to find the floor underwater with one of the dogs floating past still curled up in her dog bed! Luckily all 30 dogs at the house were safe plus the chickens and cow living further down the hill but there was a great deal of clearing up to be done.

Despite the danger, Janice travelled further up the hill to check on the people and animals living there. Fortunately, they were all safe despite the torrential rain. One man needed to relocate his chickens due to flooding.

Currently the government is still restricting the power and water

supplies and both are cut off every other day which is challenging. Many animals have also been displaced with sightings of crocodiles swimming down main roads. Janice has also reported cobras and vipers appearing on her property.

Essential work continues despite the difficulties with field hospitals offering spaying an neutering and vaccine. Donations much appreciated. Details below:

To donate using PayPal,

Log into your account
From the menu select "Send"
Type in haaw@live.com
Enter the amount you would like to donate.

Alternatively, bank transfer to:
Home and Abroad Animal Welfare,
Barclays Bank
A/C No: 60298301,
Sort Code: 20-97-60.

ANIMAL WELFARE SUNDAY ANNUAL SERVICE



In 2025 we returned to St James' Church, Piccadilly – one of our Animal Friendly Churches. This is the second time that they have hosted our annual service on Animal Welfare Sunday and we are always made to feel welcome in this wonderful inclusive church. St James' is welcoming to dogs on a Sunday morning and there were some canine guests present. Our Patron – Bishop Lynne Cullens preached for us and below is her excellent sermon. She took in good humour the jokes about her being the Bishop of Barking – so appropriate for an ASWA Patron!

Sermon

I was delighted to be invited, a couple of years ago, to become a Patron of the Anglican Society for the Welfare

of Animals. I've had a lifelong love of all things furry, feathered, scaly and hooved and I'm very pleased to be able to raise awareness of animal welfare via this role within the Church, and to highlight how we can be allies to the well-being of the various creatures with whom we share God's world.

A simple way for those of us who are parents, care-givers or educators of children and young people is to highlight our moral responsibility to see animals treated with kindness and to live lives free from suffering.

I'm pleased to have passed such a love for God's creatures onto my own three children, though this caused some problems when they were younger, as several times – after returning from play visits with their friends – I found

that one or more of their friends' unwanted pets had returned with them.

After some time and having gained – on top of our own chickens, bearded dragon, cats and dog – further unwarranted gifts of guinea pigs, stick insects and mice, I explained that we weren't fostering responsible pet ownership in others by acting as an informal rescue centre, and I declared our doors closed on the arrival of Snigger the giant African Land Snail, who took our pet total to fourteen.

Immanuel Kant wrote that one could know the quality of someone's heart from the way they treat animals, and I'd suggest adding the words 'or by looking into their supermarket trolley' to that quote. Being informed consumers is a key aspect of our care for God's creation – as we know, where we spend our money matters and eating plant-based, or finding out more about how your food is reared and farmed helps drive the food industry towards adopting more ethical standards.

And simply searching which household or personal care products are cruelty free as you come to renew your detergent, moisturiser or shampoo creates positive impact in the market and makes for guilt-free shopping.

And of course, there's also a host of great national and international ally organisations that we can support who promote animal protection, responsible legislation and who lobby for their rights, too.

I'm a member of several of these bodies and many of you may be too – from the stories which come to us on our various media channels, we see that cases of animal neglect and mistreatment are at an all-time high and so our volunteering, and our vocal and financial support for the great work of these groups is now needed more than ever...

But this morning – at the close of this season of Creation – I'm going to suggest it's important to join specifically with other Christians in advocating for the ethical treatment, farming and ownership of animals; and I say that because when I raise the issue of animal welfare in the Church, I'm sometimes met with a surprising

number of apathetic responses and even more surprisingly, a number of hostile objections.

Animal Welfare in the Church can be plagued by whataboutery, I've found... 'you're saying we should care about animals well what about various areas of conflict across the world, what about those people who are struggling to cope, what about the growing chasm between the haves and the have nots in this country' and so on, and so on.

So, this Animal Welfare Sunday let's assert that it's perfectly possible to care both about the welfare of animals and also, at the same time, be totally committed to challenging unjust structures, to advocating for the disenfranchised and displaced, and to condemning all acts of violence and intimidation.

Empathy ain't pie, nor is it binary.... extending compassionate empathy, caring for animals, and advocating for their rights in no way lessens the love and concern we have for our fellow humans and indeed, in my experience and going back to the quote from Kant, those who have a heart for animals

tend to be those who care deeply for their human neighbours too.

As Christians, our response to the stewardship of God's world and our care for the well-being of its creatures, should never be apathetic – we are called to be caretakers and guardians, of the world and all its creatures. In Genesis chapter 2, God places Adam in the Garden of Eden to work and to keep it – God has entrusted humankind, and us as his people, with the responsibility for the care filled stewardship of the whole created order.

And God's creatures very much need us to respond and step up to that calling, to leave behind apathy and whataboutery and to see the care of – and advocacy for – animals as intrinsic to our integrity as Christians.

Cruelty is all too prevalent and if we who are stewards of God's world, with a duty of care to all creatures, fail to be concerned about the welfare of animals, then I'd suggest that our base level of empathy as Christians has been eroded.

Animals provide us with so much and we should honour that. We should

also recognise our power to effect change. We can use our agency to ensure animals farmed for food are spared the cruel commodification of factory farming; we should become informed consumers and reject goods, products and cosmetics which are tested on animals; educate our children and young people in becoming a generation which can truly reclaim the honour of being called a nation of animal lovers.

In Paul's letter to Timothy, he reminds us of our calling to live a holy life and to guard what is entrusted to us... I pray we might embrace the many creatures of our world in our understanding of that calling.

This Animal Welfare Sunday, and in the shadow of the feast day of the great St Francis – patron saint of animals – may we who value respect for life as a God-given gift, pledge to join with our fellow Christians to be a source of blessing, a voice and a safe haven for the creatures of our world.

A DAY TO REMEMBER

The annual Animal Blessing at St.Martin's, Kensal Green, London took place on Saturday 4th.October, the feast day of St.Francis of Assisi, and was a great success.

It was the 20th.anniversary of the event and, despite the cold, blustery conditions, there was an excellent turn-out, the largest in the history of the event, with animals and their human escorts from across London and beyond making their way to Kensal Green.

Among those attending was the Mayor of the London Borough of Brent, Cllr.Ryan Hack, though he had to leave early.

The appearance of the officers from the Metropolitan Police Mounted Department with their horses was undoubtedly the highlight of the day. The horses, Zeus, Barbara and Bentley, made a great impression and I was stopped in the street by local residents in the days following the Animal Blessings who wanted to say how much the officers and the horses enhanced the occasion.

This surely was community engagement by the Metropolitan Police at its best.

The service was led by the vicar of St.Martin's, Rev'd Graham Noyce, whose support and encouragement has played a vital role in making the service the successful event it has become over the years. As the service progressed and everyone came together to celebrate the special relationship we have with the animals who share our lives, the animals were well-behaved, demonstrating exemplary peace and goodwill towards each other. As usual, dogs were in the majority but a few laid-back cats were also represented. There was a parakeet rescued from a local street after it had been struck by a car; parakeets are now seen in several London's parks as they have become acclimatised to the climate, helped no doubt by our warmer winters.

After the animals present had been blessed, the companion animals of those unable to attend the service were remembered in the prayers,

including those in places as far afield as Russia, Ukraine and France. An increasingly important feature of the Animal Blessing Service at St.Martin's has been the number of requests to pray for companion animals no longer with us.

St.Martin's has links with an Orthodox convent in Russia where the nuns have set up a sanctuary for abandoned animals, especially cats, and a photo display of their animal rescue work at the convent was on show during the service. A retiring collection was held at the end of the service to support them in this work.

NB. Sadly, we are unlikely to see the Mounted Team with Zeus, Barbara and Bentley at next year's Animal Blessing Service. There is a £260 million funding gap in the budget provided for the Metropolitan Police and plans are being discussed to reduce the size of the Mounted Team to nearly half by retiring up to 40 horses, cutting 69 officer posts and closing five of the force's seven stables.

REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY SERVICE 2025 – ANIMALS IN WAR MEMORIAL, LONDON

Once again we gathered on the afternoon of Remembrance Sunday at the Animals War Memorial in London to remember the animals who served alongside humans in both World Wars and who continue to serve in conflicts around the world. At ASWA, we always remember the words written on the Memorial 'They had no choice'. These were not willing volunteers but rather creatures used in the service of humans. There are many stories of great devotion shown by animals towards their human masters and mistresses which shows their great capacity for both loyalty and love. We have held this service for many years and the numbers attending continue to grow. As a Christian charity, we feel it is important to remember these animals before God and to pray for their protection and welfare. The service therefore is in the form of a Christian service with hymns and prayers and a Bible reading but everyone is welcome to attend of any faith or none. We were delighted to be joined this year by our new Patron – Bishop Lynne Cullens.

Below is the talk given by our speaker Drew Tootal MRCVS. Drew served as a veterinary surgeon with the Royal Army Veterinary Corps and has worked extensively with military working dogs including spending time in Iraq. He now works as a civilian vet at a referral practice in Leicestershire.

Good Afternoon

Thank you for gathering here today at the Animals in War Memorial—a place of quiet reflection, remembrance, and gratitude. It is a privilege to speak to you, not only as a civilian veterinary surgeon, but as someone who once served as a military veterinary officer.

On this solemn day, as we honour the human lives lost in conflict—those who made the ultimate sacrifice for our safety and freedoms—we also pause here to remember another group of comrades. Not to elevate them above the brave men and women we rightly honour across the country, but simply to acknowledge them—as companions in service, as silent partners in war, and as lives also given in the line of duty.

For centuries, animals have stood beside soldiers on battlefields across the world. They have carried, pulled, tracked, guarded, searched, comforted, and, often, died.

Horses, mules, and donkeys bore unimaginable loads through mud, snow, and shellfire. Dogs served as messengers, sentries, and life-saving detectors of mines and explosives. Pigeons delivered vital communications when all other systems had failed. Even elephants, camels, and canaries had their roles to play. None of them chose to serve. But all of them did so with quiet, unknowing bravery.

During the First World War alone, millions of horses and mules were used—many never returned. In later conflicts, dogs were parachuted into occupied territories, pigeons awarded medals for carrying messages that saved lives, and animals continued to serve, often unnoticed, but always essential.

As someone who has worked with military animals, I can attest to the bond between soldier and animal. It is a partnership built not on words, but on trust, loyalty, and courage. I have seen it in the eyes of handlers, and I have seen it in the steady resilience of the animals they work with. They are not mascots. They are not machines. They are comrades.

But let me be clear: in honouring these animals, we do not for a moment diminish the sacrifice of human lives. This is not about competition in grief, or hierarchy in loss. Human life must always take precedence in the values we hold. But today, we simply open a space—alongside the names etched in stone and the memories held in our hearts—to remember the animals who served, and those who did not return.

They did not volunteer. They did not understand the cause. And yet, they gave their strength, their skills, and, in many cases, their lives. It is right that we acknowledge them.

Today, in silence and reflection, we remember their courage. We honour their service. And we commit ourselves to ensuring that, though they had no voice in life, they are not forgotten in death.

Let this memorial, and our presence here, stand as a quiet promise: that those who stood beside us—no matter how many legs they had—will be remembered with the dignity they deserve.

Thank you.



ASWA COMMITTEE ELECTIONS

It's election time again! There is however, no postal voting form in this issue of Animalwatch because at the time of going to press, the number of candidates for committee places does not exceed the number of vacancies.

The candidates looking to stand for another three-year term are:

Revd Professor Helen Hall (Chair)

Helen lectures in Law at the University of Nottingham and is on the ministry team of St Peter's, Nottingham. She is a solicitor by background and is a member of the Association of Lawyers for Animal Welfare.

Dr Christopher Brown (Treasurer)

Chris is our longstanding Treasurer. He works in finance and shares his home with Jen (also an ASWA Trustee) and their rescue dog.

Janet Murphy

Janet has served on the ASWA Committee since 2008. She does much of our fundraising and promotional work. She and her husband share their home with rescue hens. Janet is also a garden historian.

Philip Petchey

Philip is a barrister specialising in ecclesiastical law. He is a member of the congregation of St Mary's, Woodford

We are delighted to report that all are willing to stand for another three-year term.

ASWA Committee members are trustees, which means they have legal duties and responsibilities. The tasks of the committee are to manage the day-to-day running of

ASWA, including the planning of ASWA services, commissioning and producing informational material, managing the budget, organising fund-raising events and the production of Animalwatch, to name but a few. At the time of going to press, we hope we have found a new Editor of Animalwatch to replace Revd Dr Jennifer Brown who has stepped back from the role as she has a new incumbency.

If you think you would like to serve on the ASWA Committee and can commit to attending the 3 Committee meetings per year plus the AGM (meetings are held on-line) then, please contact the Secretary – Revd Samantha Chandler. Committee members must be existing ASWA members and we will ask for a reference from the church you regularly attend.

BOOK REVIEWS



THE LIVES OF BATS: A NATURAL HISTORY

by DeeAnn M. Reeder

Princeton University Press
ISBN 978-0-691-25762-4
288pp
Hardback
Price £30

This is an amazing book. Beautifully presented and full of fascinating information, it is a cross between a popular science book and a coffee-table book. Set out over nine chapters, The lives of bats provides key information about the world's

bats and how they live, clearly demonstrating how amazing these creatures are.

Unique among mammals in being the only mammals that can truly fly, bats have evolved to fill ecological niches on every continent except Antarctica and make up 20% of all mammal species. Following a brief introduction (itself packed with interesting bat facts), the chapter 'defining bats' considers the anatomical and evolutionary characteristics of bats, as well as their nocturnal habits and habitats that make bats unique among mammals. In chapters on bat anatomy, echolocation, diet, thermoregulation, reproduction, and immunity, health & zoonosis, Reeder explores in depth the characteristics that make bats so special and able to survive in a wide range of habitats. Each chapter explores its topic by taking a broad look at different features, and then looking at specific species from different parts of the world.

Every page of *The Lives of Bats* contains interesting facts that are presented in an engaging and easy-to-read style. But it's true glory is the breathtaking photographs that fill page after page.

According to Reeder, nearly 1500 species of bat have been identified to date. This book will make you appreciate, and probably fall in love with, them all. I can highly recommend this book for anyone who is already interested in bats and anyone who doesn't know much about them but would like to learn. As well as a great source of information, it is a thing of beauty. I also heartily recommend it for churches that have bats (especially if those bats aren't terribly appreciated by the congregation).

Jennifer Brown

TRAIL HUNTING



The continuation of trail hunting following the banning of fox hunting gives rise to strong views on both sides of the argument. The Government is consulting on the implementation of a ban on trail hunting. We hope that members of the Society will respond to the consultation.

In March 2025 a man was convicted at Coventry Magistrates Court of an offence under the Hunting Act 2004 and fined £1,000. This led to a petition to the Diocese of Coventry that it should ban trail hunting on its land. It has now done so. The current position is as set out on its website:

The Church of England is committed to animal welfare and the protection of the environment. Compassion for animals and responsible stewardship of the earth are central to Christian teaching and form an integral part of our mission.

The use of dogs to pursue and to kill foxes is illegal and the Coventry Diocesan Board of Finance requires its tenants and occupiers to adhere to all such laws.

In addition, the Coventry Diocesan Board of Finance does not permit trail hunting on its land. We have instructed our tenants and occupiers to be vigilant in ensuring that neither fox hunting or trail hunting activity occurs on diocesan owned land.

The position of the Diocese of Coventry is the same as that of the National Trust and the Woodland Trust.

Trail hunting is the activity in which a dog is directed to find and follow an animal-based scent which has been laid for that purpose. As is well known, after fox hunting was banned, it did not lead to the dissolution of the organised hunts that maintained dogs to hunt foxes: rather than hunt foxes they engaged in trail hunting.

This was controversial. It was considered by many that either trail hunting was a cover for fox hunting or that risk it created of foxes ending up being killed by a trail hunt was not acceptable. Trail hunting is banned in Scotland. Accordingly, the Labour Party Manifesto contained the following simple statement:

We will ban trail hunting.

In December 2025, the Government published its Animal Welfare Strategy. It included the following:

Over 20 years after the 2004 Hunting Act was introduced, concerns persist around illegal hunting being carried out under the guise of trail hunting. Trail hunting, where an animal-based scent trail is laid for dogs to follow, is an activity that did not exist when the Hunting Act was enacted. The use of large packs of hounds can

put wild mammals, household pets and even members of the public at risk. In addition, the use of animal-based scents increases the risk of the scents of wild animals being picked up, as does the practice of lifting and dropping the trail, which means hounds must actively search. There is also a real risk trail hunting could be used to facilitate illegal hunting by being used as a smokescreen to obscure intention and enabling the inevitable chasing of animals.

The Government thus proposes to ban trail hunting and to consult on the implementation of such a ban this year.

Those who support trail hunting argue a lack of understanding of country pursuits and are also asking the question of what would become of the many foxhounds in the country with an estimated 170 packs. It is argued that foxhounds, who have lived life in a pack, would not be suitable to be rehomed as family pets. This argument is disputed by animal welfare organisations. We would be most interested to hear the views of our members. Do you live in an area where trail hunting takes place?

Philip Petchey and Sam Chandler

THE BIBLE AND...

New Life

This Bible study is designed to help an individual or small group to explore what the Bible says about the climate crisis.

Psalm 104.27–30; 2 Corinthians 5.17; Revelation 21.1–5

These all look to you to give them their food in due season; when you give to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are filled with good things. When you hide your face, they are dismayed; when you take away their breath, they die and return to their dust.

When you send forth your spirit, they are created; and you renew the face of the ground.

So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more,

for the first things have passed away.' And the one who was seated on the throne said, 'See, I am making all things new.' Also he said, 'Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true.'

How do we understand resurrection and the promise of new life? Is heaven a place away from earth to which we go when we die? If so, what happens to non-human creatures and the earth itself? The three passages above suggest that the resurrection life inaugurated by Jesus on the first Easter Day is for the whole of creation. But that doesn't mean that humanity doesn't have a special place or role within that. In fact, it could

be argued that the new creation, the resurrection life of creation, is mediated through humanity.

How can we be sure that resurrection is for all life and not just us? Psalm 104 points strongly in that direction. It acknowledges the reality of death for all living things when God "take[s] away their breath" but this is followed by, "When you send forth your spirit, they are created; and you renew the face of the ground." This could, of course, be the psalmist's reflection on the cycle of life: some creatures die, others are born; plants die back in winter and return in the spring – a very visible renewing of the face of the earth. But the order in which the psalmist discusses life and death is important. It isn't life followed by death, as we experience it in the physical world. It is death followed by life, as we will know it in the world to come. And it is non-human life about which the psalmist is speaking here.

The passage from Revelation, too, points us towards new life for the whole earth. Although some point to this as a passage that provides evidence that this world is not part of the new creation (and even as an argument against caring for creation or worshipping God as Creator). But I believe that is a mis-reading. In this passage, the faithful don't go to heaven – heaven comes to them! The new Jerusalem comes down from heaven to earth and God comes to dwell among mortals. The new creation is the joining of heaven and earth. So what of, "the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more."? We must remember that Revelation is highly symbolic in its language. The first heaven and first earth were separated, but in the new creation, they are joined. The old things – death and mourning and pain – are no more. Those were old earth things, not to be found in the renewed, resurrected world. And what of the sea? In the Bible, the sea is often used to represent chaos and as a representative place that humans can't live. In the (re)new(ed) creation, chaos and danger are also wiped away.

How is all this mediated by humanity? The second letter to the Corinthians

points us towards the answer. It is our participation in the ongoing life of Christ. "If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation," Paul writes. Many English translations phrase it to suggest that it is the person who is a new creation, but that isn't necessarily what is indicated in the original Greek. If we translated it literally, we would have, "If anyone is in Christ – New Creation!" Jesus initiated the new creation in his own resurrection. We, being part of Christ, help it to spread and grow, until the day when heaven comes to earth.

Questions for Groups:

Do you believe that the resurrection life is for all creation? Why might this matter to our faith and how we live out our faith?

Do you agree that humanity has a role in mediating the resurrection life for all creation? What do you understand this to mean?

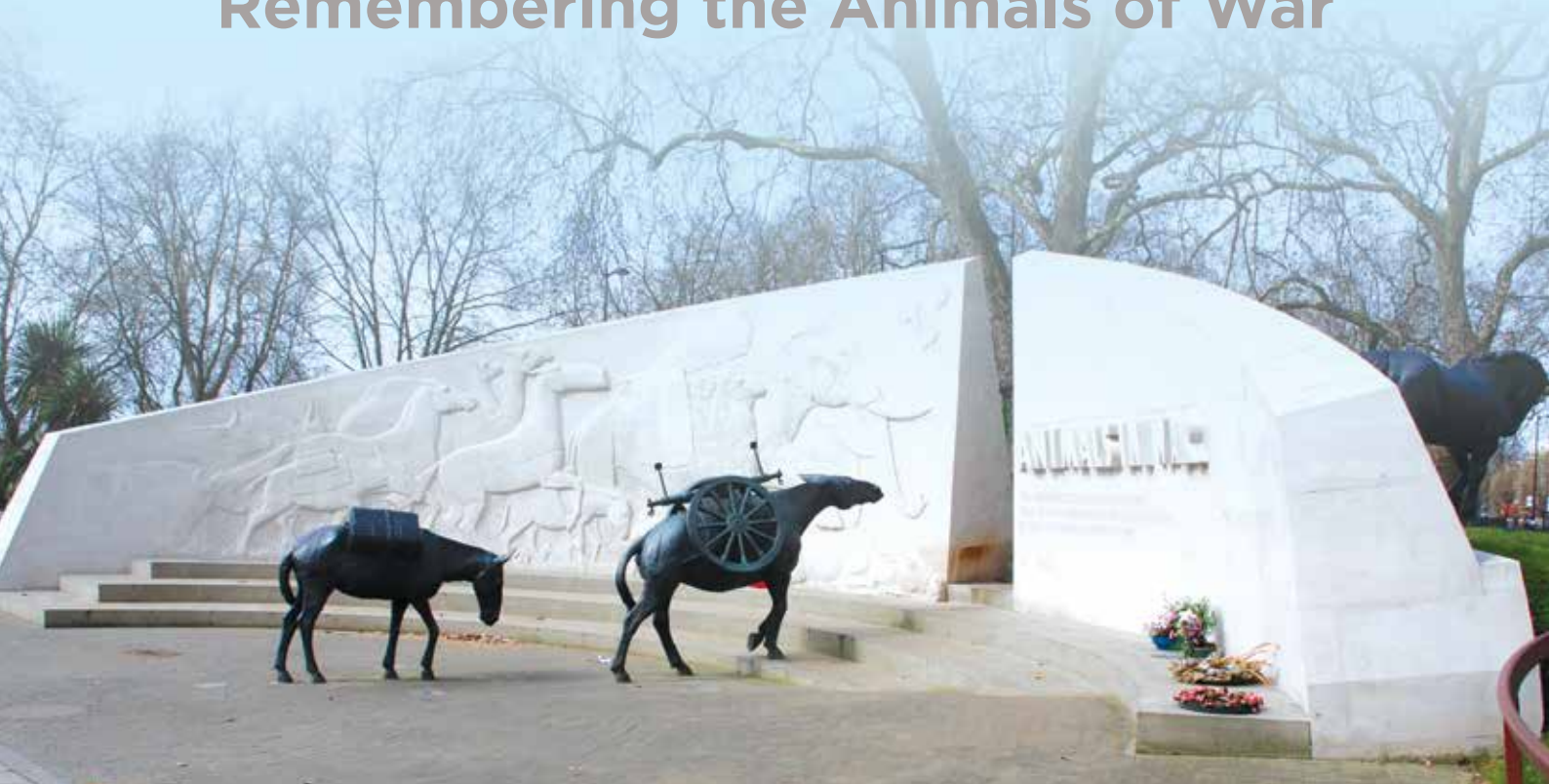
How do you understand the idea of the new heaven and the new earth? What does that mean for your understanding of our relationship to the rest of creation?

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THEY ALSO SERVED

Remembering the Animals of War



Join us at the Animals War Memorial,
Park Lane, London

Sunday 8th November 2026 – 3.00pm

Speaker to be confirmed

Further details:

Anglican Society for the Welfare of Animals

Email: secretary@angsocwelanimals.net

www.aswa.org.uk

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www.aswa.org.uk

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E: secretary@angsocwelanimals.net

ANGLICAN SOCIETY FOR THE WELFARE OF ANIMALS

PO Box 7193, Hook, Hampshire
RG27 8GT, UK. www.aswa.org.uk

Correspondance Secretary:

Revd Samantha Chandler

Email: secretary@angsocwelanimals.net

Treasurer: Dr Chris Brown

Editor: vacant

Email: Please contact the secretary

Membership Secretary:

Vacant

Email:

Please contact the secretary

Patrons:

Most Revd Stephen Cottrell
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