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c/o Scottish Animal Welfare Commission Secretariat  
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5 April 2024

Dear Minister

## **PINIONING OF ORNAMENTAL BIRDS**

In November 2023 I wrote on behalf of SAWC to Gillian Martin MSP, who previously held the animal welfare portfolio in her role as Minister for Energy and the Environment.

We were grateful to Ms Martin for considering our letter on pinioning of ornamental birds and for asking us for further information on the practice of pinioning in Scotland, its prevalence, categories of persons undertaking it, and the proportion of pinionings where it was chosen to use anaesthesia.

In response we would like to draw your attention to the Captive Animals' Protection Society's (CAPS) report of 2013 referenced below (Redmond, 2013). In this report, zoo-licensed premises were questioned and of these 2/20 pinioned all of their birds. An additional 8/20 zoos had an average pinioning rate of 67.5% of birds held. A separate publication in 2014 suggested that of zoo-licensed premises surveyed around 5650 birds held at that time were pinioned, although clearly many had been pinioned in the years prior to the report, but were still being held (Tyson, 2014).

The CAPS report referred to (Redmond, 2013 and Tyson, 2014) only assessed captive birds in England, but no comparable data are publicly available for captive birds in Scotland either then or now. Data on pinioning of privately owned birds as opposed to zoo-licensed premises are also not held on a database anywhere as the procedure is not currently regulated in that way. This unfortunately makes it almost impossible to assess the extent of pinioning in Scotland at the present time. However, we assert that the process is in our opinion an unnecessary mutilation, causing harm and suffering and an anomaly from a legal perspective in the current Scottish welfare legislation.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Cathy Dwyer'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name 'Cathy' written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name 'Dwyer'.

Professor Cathy Dwyer  
Chair  
Scottish Animal Welfare Commission

*References*

Redmond, C. (2013) Birds in Zoos in England: An Assessment of Welfare, Conservation and Education in 2013, *Captive Animals' Protection Society* 152pp.

Tyson, E. (2014) For an End to Pinioning: The Case Against the Legal Mutilation of Birds in Captivity *Journal of Animal Ethics* 4(1):1-4.