



ORNAMENTAL AQUATIC TRADE ASSOCIATION LTD

"The Voice of the UK Ornamental Fish Industry"

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Dear Ms Gougeon

We welcome your Ministerial Statement on Improving Animal Welfare made on Wednesday, particularly the proposed review of pet shop licensing.

For many years OATA has called for a common, coherent and consistent set of mandatory licensing standards for pet shops, properly enforced by well-trained and knowledgeable local authority inspectors. Our 2016 Freedom of Information report showed that in Scotland there were then 156 licensed pet shops of which 71.8% sold fish (112 shops), 57.1% sold small mammals, 44.2% sold reptiles, 41% sold birds, 4.5% sold cats (7 shops) and 3.2% sold dogs (5 shops), so whatever is proposed will most affect aquatic businesses which sell fish.

Ultimately we all want the same – to ensure the welfare of animals sold to their new owners. OATA already promotes high standards throughout our industry, through for example our Code of Conduct and the City & Guilds approved training programmes we offer for shop staff. We also provide a wide range of free customer care information for shops because we believe educating people to pick the right pet for their lifestyle and care for it properly is the key to happy and healthy pets.

Whilst we fully support these plans to strengthen the Scottish pet shop licensing regime, a good outcome depends on the detail of what is proposed. Care is needed to ensure changes are applied sensibly and proportionately and do not introduce excessive and unnecessary burdens on business that contribute little or nothing to improving animal welfare, which has been our experience of the review of Animal Activities Licensing Regulations in England.

We responded at length to MSP Jeremy Balfour's original consultation and would welcome the opportunity to talk directly to you or your officials and hope that you will actively engage us in discussions as your proposals develop. As we did for Mr Balfour, we would happily arrange a store visit so that you can see the passion and commitment of the people who run aquatics shops in Scotland.

Yours sincerely

Dominic Whitmee

Chief Executive

The Ornamental Aquatic Trade Association represents around 850 businesses within the UK home aquarium industry, including pet shops that sell fish. We are a Company Limited by Guarantee and Registered in England No 2738119 Registered Office as above.