

YOUR TEAM IS GOING TO RESEARCH

Penalties for animal cruelty

and speak **for and against** should they be increased

This brief has been produced as part of the *RSPCA's Animal Welfare: The Great Debate* and is a starting point for the research you will need to do into the subject in order to ensure a successful debate. The points for or against a subject may not be RSPCA policy and represent some of the wider thinking around the subject.

- The Animal Welfare Act 2006 sets out different penalties for people who are convicted of animal cruelty offences under the Act.
- Currently the maximum penalty is six months in prison and an unlimited fine. However, there are plans by the UK Government to increase this.
- Offenders can also be banned from keeping animals under Section 34 of the Act. These bans can cover a specific species or all animals and range from a fixed amount of time to life.

FOR

Here are some points **in favour of** increased sentences – what other points can you find?

- Animals are sentient beings that are capable of feeling pain and can suffer – offenders should be punished further.
- People think that animal cruelty has increased in the last 10 years – the current deterrent is not working.
- There is research to show that people who harm animals can go on to harm humans – these people need to be stopped from the start.

AGAINST

Here are some reasons why sentences **should not** be increased – can you find any more?

- Currently magistrates rarely give out the maximum sentence, so why would they give out tougher sentences?
- Higher sentences would need to go to the Crown Court – stopping more serious non-animal offences from being heard sooner.
- Better education of owners is needed – why should someone go to prison for not understanding what their pet needs.

Information you may want to find out

- How many people have been prosecuted for animal cruelty? Is this number increasing or decreasing?
- What other punishments could be given out? What is an Animal Offender Register?
- Do prison sentences deter offenders?

Potential sources of information

- RSPCA website: www.rspca.org.uk
- Political Animal website: www.politicalanimal.org.uk
- RSPCA facts and figures: <http://media.rspca.org.uk/media/facts>
- The Sentencing Council for England and Wales: www.sentencingcouncil.org.uk

