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Urgent steps required to avert crisis in registering animal trainers

Representatives of DEFRA, the Scottish Government and the Welsh Assembly met with representatives of the film, television and circus industries to discuss issues concerning the future of performing animals in UK. Each devolved area is dealing with this slightly differently but the Animal Welfare Act 2006 in its various incarnations will be revoking the old Performing Animals (Regulation) Act 1925 later this year.

The long awaited review of the use of wild animals in circus is certain to provoke a wider review of how animals are cared for and trained in various performances whether live on stage or in the big top, or in film and television – even down to advertising shoots.

Performing Animals Welfare Standards International (PAWSI) has been working closely with the various administrations and has their support for a proposed industry led scheme to replace the old act with a modern registration for animal suppliers, circuses and individual trainers. Unless this scheme is taken forward by industry then it is likely that regulators will step in and enforce a system through local authorities.

The PAWSI scheme has broad support of welfare organisations, plus Production Guild, PACT, BECTU, BIAZA, Equity and others, plus trainers and vets. PAWSI have already introduced a system of NVQ's with the help of Skillset, these have had an enthusiastic uptake at Sparsholt College in Hampshire.

PAWSI is seeking urgent funding to take the scheme through UKAS approval to get the final seal of government and would welcome the help of any of the major broadcasters. Make no mistake this is a clarion call for help, all use of animals in performance is under threat and action is needed now.

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