The Liberal Democrats focus the majority of their animal-related policy on their pledge to introduce a “Nature Act”, but their manifesto also directly addresses a few other issues.

“*The Liberal Democrats are the only leading party that takes seriously the responsibility of protecting our natural environment.*” – Liberal Democrat Manifesto 2015
BANNING OF CIRCUS ANIMALS

While the issue wasn’t directly addressed in their manifesto, the Lib Dems have vociferously supported a ban on wild animals in circuses. What’s more, in a letter sent to Animal Aid in 2014, the party’s Policy Development Manager outlined their stance on several animal welfare issues. This included the party’s belief that all animals should be banned from use in circuses except for domestic dogs and horses.

THE HUNTING ACT

The Liberal Democrats blocked plans by the Conservatives to relax hunting laws. The amendment would have allowed hunters to use up to 40 dogs in order to flush foxes, but the Lib Dems barred the proposal. Under a Lib Dem government it is likely the Hunting Act would go untouched.

THE DANGEROUS DOGS ACT

Under the Coalition, the Dangerous Dogs Act was partially amended to allow for better protection of those who are attacked on private land.

MICROCHIP SCANNING

The Lib Dems were involved in the introduction of mandatory microchipping for dogs, which is hoped to help control abandonment of dogs following its introduction in 2016.

ANIMAL ABUSE LEGISLATION

The Lib Dems claim involvement in the enforcement of caged hen welfare standards across the EU as well as the banning of foie gras in the UK. While this isn’t strictly a stance on animal abuse it is progress for prohibiting animal cruelty on an industrial level. The party also want to establish an autonomous Animal Protection Commission which would act as a regulatory, advisory body over animal welfare.
FARMED ANIMAL WELFARE

Their manifesto promises a review on caged hen welfare standards, promoting the use of enriched cages where hens are able to exhibit natural behaviours. They also wish to review the standardised use of antibiotics.

COMMERCIAL PET BREEDING

The party are committed to a review of the sale of pets in order to promote responsible and ethical breeding practices.

PET ABANDONMENT

This issue has not been directly addressed by the Liberal Democrats, though they may expect a knock-on impact following their review of the sale of pets.

BADGER CULLING

The Liberal Democrats have taken a somewhat measured approach to this issue by saying that they will continue the cull only if it is found to be safe, humane and effective. Given that studies so far have proven otherwise, this could well mean that the cull would be stopped under a Lib Dem government.

OTHER MATTERS OF NOTE

Within their proposed Nature Act there are numerous provisions made for wildlife, not least the planting of a tree for every child born (around 750,000 per year) and legal protection for bumblebee nests.

The party have also committed to combatting climate change, and air and water pollution.