



**HOUSE OF COMMONS**

LONDON SW1A 0AA

3<sup>rd</sup> May 2024

*Jean Contreant*

**RE: PET SMUGGLING**

Thank you for your recent correspondence in respect of your concerns about pet smuggling. I have read your comments with interest.

I would like to assure you that Ministers are committed to cracking down on puppy smuggling and will ban the imports of young or heavily pregnant dogs, as well as dogs with mutilations, such as cropped ears or docked tails. Applying strengthened penalties will send a clear message that animal cruelty will not be tolerated and will enable our courts to take a firmer approach to cases where pets are illegally imported.

The UK has one of the most rigorous pet travel border checking regimes in the world and I am aware that every dog travelling into Great Britain on approved routes has its microchip and paperwork checked to make sure they are all properly vaccinated and are old enough to travel.

I am also clear that the practice of non-exempted mutilations, such as cropping dogs' ears, is abhorrent and has rightly been banned in the UK for 15 years. The cropping of a dog's ears is an offence under the *Animal Welfare Act 2006*. Since the *Animal Welfare (Sentencing) Act 2021* came into force, anyone convicted of such an offence faces being sent to prison for up to five years, or receiving an unlimited fine, or both.

However, I am aware that the importation of dogs with non-exempted mutilations, such as cropped ears or docked tails, is still allowed under the current pet travel rules. The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) ran a consultation on changes to the commercial and non-commercial movement of pets into Great Britain, which included a proposal to ban the import of dogs with cropped ears. The consultation also sought views on whether maintaining the existing requirements in relation to cats was the right approach. The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs has been carefully reviewing the feedback from this consultation and has also engaged more widely with animal welfare organisations, including Cats Protection. I look forward to reading a summary in due course.

Further, Ministers have taken action to tackle the practice of puppy farming. Following the introduction of 'Lucy's Law' in 2020, everyone must now buy directly from breeders or consider adopting from rescue centres, which is a major step in stopping the illegal pet trade. If an individual sells puppies or kittens without a licence, they could receive an unlimited fine or be sent to prison for up to six months.


As for suggestions that cats be included in any proposals related to pet smuggling, I am informed that criminal offences already exist for cats and kittens brought into this country in breach of current import requirements.



I am also assured that the Government remains fully committed to delivering its manifesto commitments on animal welfare. I am aware that the *Animal Welfare (Kept Animals) Bill*, introduced in June 2021, faced the risk of scope-creep. In light of this, and the successful progress made so far with single-issue legislation, the Government is supporting several Private Members' Bills which individually deliver on animal welfare measures originally contained in the *Animal Welfare (Kept Animals) Bill*. Ministers believe this to be the quickest and most effective way of achieving our aims.

Finally, I am aware that the *Animal Welfare (Import of Dogs, Cats and Ferrets) Bill*, sponsored by Selaine Saxby MP, seeks to tackle the unlawful dog, cat, and ferret smuggling trade. The Bill aims to introduce stringent measures to regulate the import of the titled pets, ensuring their health and safety during transportation and deterring illegal trade practices. I welcome the Government's support of the Bill during its Second Reading, and I will continue to support it when it returns to the House.

Once again, thank you for having taken the time to contact me and if I can ever be of any further assistance to you then please do not hesitate to contact me again.

*With best wishes,*  


**TOM PURSGLOVE MP  
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT  
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE**