

TOM PURSGLOVE MP
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

17th July 2017

Jew Constituent

RE: PLEDGE TO PROTECT ANIMALS.

Thank you for your recent correspondence in respect of animal protection.

You ask that I defend animal protection laws and regulations, and to strengthen them where appropriate.

Like you, I support the *Animal Welfare Act*, the *Wildlife and Countryside Act*, and the *Welfare of Farmed Animals Regulations* and will always speak up for animal welfare.

I appreciate the strong feelings many people have on the issue of hunting and I share your concern for ensuring the welfare of animals. However, there are no plans to bring forward a free vote on the *Hunting Act* in this session.

Bovine TB is a serious disease, so I support the Government's commitment to use all available means to address it through a comprehensive strategy for England to be TB free by 2038.

Cattle movement controls and testing are being strengthened to stop infection spreading between herds, and herd owners are being encouraged to improve their own biosecurity. Nevertheless, as lessons have shown from countries such as Australia, New Zealand and Ireland, where there is a reservoir of disease in wildlife this must be tackled through culling. Leading vets have supported this approach and improvements to humaneness and effectiveness are being made following the first trial year based on recommendations from the Independent Expert Panel.

With regards to animal cruelty sentencing, we have a robust legal framework to tackle this vicious behaviour in the *Animal Welfare Act 2006*, which makes it an offence to cause unnecessary suffering to any animal.

The courts must decide what the penalty should be for each individual case, taking into account its circumstances and the guidelines laid down by the Sentencing Council. Currently, in addition to the maximum penalty of 6 months' imprisonment and/or an unlimited fine, the courts can also disqualify offenders from keeping animals for as long as they consider appropriate.

I understand that the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs is in regular contact with the Ministry of Justice in relation to sentencing policy for animal welfare offences, but I would note that current sentencing practice does not suggest that the courts are finding current sentencing powers inadequate.

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.



Tom

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