

TOM PURSGLOVE MP
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

11th July 2018

New Constituent,

RE: PET THEFT.

Thank you for contacting me recently about pet theft; your comments upon which I read with great interest.

To their owners, pets are cherished members of the family, so I entirely agree with you that to steal one from a loving home is a particularly vicious crime. To tackle it, I favour rigorously enforcing existing laws, and a number of offences can be used to prosecute cases of pet theft.

Where the offence charged is theft, the maximum penalty under the *Theft Act 1968* is seven years' imprisonment. In addition, while a stolen pet may not necessarily have been mistreated, where it has been, offences under the *Animal Welfare Act 2006* of animal cruelty or failure to meet an animal's basic needs, carry a maximum of six months imprisonment, or an unlimited fine, or both; legislation is being brought forward to increase punishments for the most horrific acts of animal cruelty to five years. Courts also have the power to ban an offender from keeping animals in the future.

It is for the courts to decide the right sentence in individual cases, and a new sentencing guideline on theft came into force at the beginning of February 2016. I appreciate you may be disappointed that it does not specifically mention pet theft. The body responsible did consider suggestions that there should be a separate guideline on pet theft, but concluded that aggravating factors, such as emotional distress caused to the victim, already enable the courts to impose appropriate sentences.

With regard to compulsorily scanning microchips, I have been assured that it is already considered the best practice for stray pets to be scanned when received by vets and rescue centres. Guidance from the British Veterinary Association also advises veterinarians to always scan animals brought into their surgeries for the first time.

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

TOM PURSGLOVE MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE