



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

16th November 2022

Dear Constituent,

RE: GENE EDITING AND ANIMAL WELFARE

Thank you for your recent correspondence in respect of your concerns regarding gene editing and animal welfare. I have read your comments on this issue with interest.

The Government is working to encourage agricultural and scientific innovation in the UK. The *Genetic Technology (Precision Breeding) Bill* will enable the development and marketing of precision bred plants and animals, which will drive economic growth and position the UK as the leading country in which to invest in agri-food innovation.

While I appreciate you have strong opinions about the Bill, I closely followed the debate for the Bill's Remaining Stages and listened to the Minister's response to tabled amendments relating to animals and their welfare. I would like to assure you that Ministers recognise that there is a need to safeguard animal welfare. As such, the Government is introducing proportionate regulatory measures to ensure that the health and welfare of animals produced through these technologies is protected in line with animal welfare legislation. I am assured that no changes will be made to the regulation of animals under the genetically modified organism (GMO) regime, until the regulatory system outlined in the Bill is developed to safeguard animal welfare.

Further, I am aware that before marketing precision bred animals, developers will need to provide assurances to confirm that the welfare of the animal (and its offspring) will not be adversely affected by any trait resulting from precision breeding. This will be in the form of an animal welfare declaration, with accompanying evidence. The Environment Secretary will need to be satisfied with the declaration before issuing a precision bred (PB) animal marketing authorisation, after which point a PB animal can be marketed. This process will also involve an independent scientific assessment of the declaration.

There are potential benefits in enabling precision breeding in animals to improve the health, welfare and resilience of those animals, and the UK has the opportunity to harness the great research that is taking place in our country. Ensuring that these technologies are used responsibly without compromising animal health and welfare is vital, which is why the Government is taking a stepwise approach in implementing this Bill.

Finally, all animals are protected by comprehensive and robust animal health and welfare legislation. The *Animal Welfare Act 2006* makes it an offence to cause any unnecessary suffering to an animal, or to fail to provide for its welfare. The *Animal Welfare (Sentience) Act 2022* supports ministerial accountability to Parliament in relation to all Government decisions that might affect the welfare of animals, including those set out in the *Genetic Technology (Precision Breeding) Bill*.



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,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Tom Pursglove', with a horizontal line underneath.

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