

TOM PURSGLOVE MP
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

30th April 2023

Dear Catherine,

RE: HEN CAGING

Thank you for your recent correspondence in respect of your concerns about the use of cages for hens. I have read your comments with interest.

My ministerial colleagues and I take the welfare of all animals very seriously. As outlined in the 'Action Plan for Animal Welfare', the Government is committed to strengthening welfare standards and is examining the use of cages for laying hens. Ministers recognise the need to work carefully and sensitively with the poultry industry, which is currently facing significant challenges. Decisions on a future public consultation on this issue would need to be carefully considered due to these wider challenges.

Around 60 percent of our hens are now kept in free-range systems, and a number of major supermarkets have pledged to stop selling eggs from the remaining 40 percent of hens in colony cages by 2025. Ministers will continue to work with the poultry industry on improving feather cover and keel bone health, as well as reducing the practice of beak trimming.

Further, the 'Animal Health and Welfare Pathway' will prioritise areas for additional improvement in the health and welfare of pigs, cattle, sheep and poultry. On meat chickens, through the pathway, producers are being encouraged to implement the 'Better Chicken' commitment, which would require the use of slower growing breeds and lower stocking densities.

More broadly, Ministers are taking action to improve the health and wellbeing of farm animals through the *Animal Welfare (Kept Animals) Bill*, which will ban exports of livestock and equines for slaughter and fattening.

Of course, if you have specific concerns about the welfare of any animal, I recommend reporting these to the police or the RSPCA, in the usual way.

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