



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

17<sup>th</sup> November 2023

*Dear Constitute,*

**RE: RSPCA CAMPAIGN - CAGES AND KEPT ANIMALS BILL**

Thank you for your recent correspondence in respect of animal welfare. I have read your comments with interest.

The Government is firmly committed to the UK's strong track record on animal welfare and to delivering continued improvements, both in this parliament and beyond.

I understand that the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) does not consider that the time is right to consult on cage reforms, considering the challenges facing the laying hen and pig sectors. However, I am aware that the market is already moving away from using cages for laying hen production. The proportion of eggs that come from caged hens has steadily decreased, from 47 percent of total throughput in Q4 of 2017, to 21 percent in Q1 of 2023.

Further, the UK is ahead of most other pig producing countries in terms of zero confinement farrowing, in that 40 percent of the national sow breeding herd farrow freely on outdoor pig units with no option of confinement. The Government's animal welfare priorities for its 'Animal Health and Welfare Pathway' include supporting producers to transition away from confinement systems.


Regarding labelling reforms for animal welfare, DEFRA ran a call for evidence in 2021 on the potential impacts of different types of labelling reform for animal welfare. Ministers will continue to work with the industry to explore how to harness the market to improve food information for consumers and raise animal welfare standards.

I am aware that the Government will take forward measures in the *Animal Welfare (Kept Animals) Bill* individually during the remainder of this parliament. In the King's Speech, the Government announced the *Animal Welfare (Livestock Exports) Bill*, which will ban the export of cattle, sheep, goats, pigs and horses for slaughter and fattening from Great Britain, stopping unnecessary stress, exhaustion and injury caused by exporting live animals.



Further, the abhorrent practice of non-exempted mutilations, such as cropping dogs' ears, 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* - however, the importation of dogs with non-exempted mutilations, such as cropped ears or docked tails, is still allowed under the current pet travel rules. I am aware that Ministers would support legislation to ban the import of dogs with mutilations as a single-issue Bill when parliamentary time allows.

Once again, thank you for taking 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**