



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

9th December 2023

Dear Constance,

RE: ANIMAL WELFARE (KEPT ANIMALS) BILL

Thank you for your recent correspondence in respect of your concerns about the *Animal Welfare (Kept Animals) Bill*. I have read your comments with interest.

As the highest ranked G7 nation on World Animal Protection's 'Animal Protection Index', the UK is a world leader on animal welfare. In 2021, the Government's 'Action Plan for Animal Welfare' set out reforms for this parliament and beyond. Since then, the Government has enacted many of the reforms. This includes passing the *Animal Welfare (Sentience) Act*, recognising the sentience of vertebrate animals and some invertebrate animals. In addition, the *Animal Welfare (Sentencing) Act* introduced tougher sentences for cruelty, increasing maximum sentences. The *Ivory Act* came into force in 2022 and was recently extended to cover five more endangered species. In April, the Government made cat microchipping compulsory.

I am assured that the Government remains fully committed to delivering its manifesto commitments on animal welfare. I am aware that the *Animal Welfare (Kept Animals) Bill*, introduced in June 2021, faced the risk of scope-creep. In light of this, and the successful progress made so far with single-issue legislation in this Parliament, the Government will be taking forward the measures originally in the *Animal Welfare (Kept Animals) Bill* individually when parliamentary time allows. Ministers believe this to be the quickest and most effective way of achieving our aims and I will press for the earliest possible progress.

This approach has meant quicker action towards banning the keeping of primates as pets, as the Government has been able to consult on this without needing to wait for further legislation. I await the response to this consultation with interest. It is also why 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. This Bill will ensure that animals are slaughtered domestically in high welfare slaughterhouses in the UK, reinforcing the UK's position as a world leader on animal welfare.

Regarding puppy smuggling, I know that the Government will ban the imports of young, heavily pregnant, or mutilated, dogs, and it would be supportive of legislating to ban this through a single-issue Bill when parliamentary time allows. Similarly, while the theft of pets is already a crime, I know that the Government would also be supportive of legislation on pet abduction when parliamentary time allows. The Government would also support updated legislation on livestock worrying, recognising the distress that this can cause animals and their keepers, as well as the financial implications.



My ministerial colleagues in DEFRA are committed to animal welfare and to delivering continued improvements, both in this parliament and beyond.

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 'TP' or similar initials, with a horizontal line underneath.

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