



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

19th March 2024

Dear Contribute,

RE: DOG EAR CROPPING

Thank you for your recent correspondence in respect of dog ear cropping. 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, many of which the Government has since enacted. 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 scope of the *Animal Welfare (Kept Animals) Bill*, introduced in June 2021, was becoming increasingly broad. In light of this, and the successful progress made so far with single-issue legislation in this Parliament, the Government is supporting several Private Members' Bills which individually deliver on animal welfare measures in the *Animal Welfare (Kept Animals) Bill*. Ministers believe this to be the quickest and most effective way of achieving our aims.

Turning specifically to your comments about dog ear cropping, the practice of non-exempted mutilations, such as cropping dogs' ears, is abhorrent, and 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*. Since the *Animal Welfare (Sentencing) Act 2021* came into force, anyone convicted of such an offence faces being sent to prison for up to five years, or receiving an unlimited fine, or both.

However, I am aware that the importation of dogs with non-exempted mutilations, such as cropped ears or docked tails, is still allowed under the current pet travel rules. The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) ran a consultation on changes to the commercial and non-commercial movement of pets into Great Britain, which included a proposal to ban the import of dogs with cropped ears. DEFRA is carefully reviewing the feedback gathered from the consultation and I look forward to reading the Government's response in due course.



I am aware that the *Animal Welfare (Import of Dogs, Cats and Ferrets) Bill*, sponsored by Selaine Saxby MP, seeks to tackle the import of dogs with cropped ears. The Bill aims to introduce stringent measures to regulate the import of the titled pets, ensuring their health and safety during transportation and deterring illegal trade practices. I welcome the Government's support of the Bill during its Second Reading, and I will continue to support this Bill when it returns to the House.

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 'Tom Pursglove', written over a horizontal line.

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