



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

May 2023

Dear Constituent,

Thank you for your email about the Animal Welfare (Kept Animals) Bill.

We are a nation of animal lovers, I know that if anything were to happen to my own three dogs I would be distraught, so I fully appreciate the level of concern expressed by you on this issue.

The UK has long led the way on animal welfare. In 2021, the Government published the Action Plan for Animal Welfare, setting out a series of future reforms for this Parliament and beyond. Since the plan was published, the Government has passed 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 animal cruelty, increasing maximum sentences. The Ivory Act came into force in 2022 and has recently been extended to cover five more endangered species. In April, the Government made cat microchipping compulsory, helping to reunite pets with their owners.

The Kept Animals Bill, introduced in June 2021, was designed to implement several of the Government's ambitions for animal welfare. This included banning the live exports of animals, seeking to prevent pet theft, and new measures to tackle livestock worrying. I am aware that the Bill's multi-issue nature means that there has been considerable scope creep, and the Bill risks being extended far beyond the original commitments in the Conservative Manifesto that I was elected on and the Action Plan for Animal Welfare. Therefore, the Government will now be taking forward measures in the Kept Animals Bill individually during the remainder of the Parliament.

I want to assure you that the Government remains fully committed to delivering its manifesto commitments on animal welfare. Having left the EU, the Government is able to and will ban live exports for fattening and slaughter. There have been no live exports from Great Britain since 2020, but legislation will ensure this becomes permanent, and Ministers remain committed to delivering it.

Regarding puppy smuggling, I know that the Government will ban the imports of young, heavily pregnant or mutilated dogs and this will be achieved quicker with a single-issue Bill than the secondary legislation required under the Kept Animals Bill. Further, the keeping of primates as pets will be banned and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) will consult on primate-keeping standards.

Member of Parliament for Darlington

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Moreover, I know that the Government, like myself, is committed to maintaining its strong track record on animal welfare and to delivering continued improvements, both in the course of this Parliament and beyond.

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. If you would like to keep up to date with my activities as your Member of Parliament then please subscribe to my Darlington Matters newsletter using this link: www.petergibson.org/signup

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Peter Gibson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

PETER GIBSON MP