

Alok Sharma, MP for Reading West

11th July 2017

Dear Constituents,

Thank you for contacting me about sentencing for offences of animal cruelty.

I am pleased that we have a robust legal framework in the Animal Welfare Act 2006 to tackle this vicious behaviour, which makes it an offence to cause unnecessary suffering to any animal.

The courts must decide what the penalty should be for each individual case, taking into account its circumstances and the guidelines laid down by the Sentencing Council. Currently, in addition to the maximum penalty of six months' imprisonment and/or an unlimited fine, the courts can also disqualify offenders from keeping animals for as long as they consider appropriate.

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs is in regular contact with the Ministry of Justice in relation to sentencing policy for animal welfare offences, but I would note that current sentencing practice does not suggest that the courts are finding current sentencing powers inadequate.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me about this important issue.

Yours sincerely,



Alok Sharma MP