

14th October 2020

Dear Constituents,

Thank you for contacting me about animal sentience.

First and foremost, I believe animals are sentient beings who can feel pain and suffering, and I would like to reassure you that strong action is being taken to reduce their risk of harm.

The Government is committed to making any necessary changes to UK law in a rigorous and comprehensive way to ensure animal sentience is legally recognised after the transition period and legislation will be brought forward when Parliamentary time allows. This also includes ensuring the UK has an effective means of making sure animal sentience is reflected in future policy decisions. I understand that the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs is currently assessing how best to support Government departments in considering the welfare needs of sentient animals when they are developing and implementing Government policy, as well as continuing to engage closely with relevant organisations and authorities to enhance its policies on this issue further.

Encouraging action is being taken to improve animal welfare at home and abroad by increasing maximum sentences for animal cruelty, banning third party sales of puppies, and introducing one of the world's toughest bans on ivory sales. I believe these very welcome steps demonstrate exactly how seriously this Government takes animal welfare.

Having left the EU, I am pleased that the UK will now have the opportunity to do even more. A consultation will shortly be carried out on restricting live animal journeys, requiring approval for longer journeys and bringing forward welfare conditions for these journeys when they are necessary. The Government is also looking at proposals to ban the trade in pet primates, extending compulsory microchipping to cats and controlling the trade in hunting trophies from endangered animals.

We are a nation of animal lovers and I am pleased with the commitments to make Brexit work not just for citizens, but for the animals we love and cherish too.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



Alok Sharma MP