

1st November 2016

Dear Constituents,

Thank you for contacting me about the breeding and sale of kittens.

Britain is a nation of animal lovers and it is vital that we maintain the highest standards of animal welfare. Ministers are serious about improving welfare in breeding establishments and at the point of sale, so are reviewing the laws that regulate dog breeding and pet sales, including of cats.

One proposal would apply specific welfare conditions to pet vendors, which they must meet to obtain a licence. These include a requirement that animals are not sold too young. For mammals, this is before they are or should have been weaned, which for cats is likely to be at or below eight weeks. Another would remove the licence exemption for those in the business of selling kittens bred from the family's pet pedigree cat.

Cat breeding does not, however, require the same level of control as dog breeding, which can lead to issues relating to public safety and nuisance. This is generally not the case with cats. There can of course be unscrupulous people who exploit the desire for pets, but all captive animals are protected by the Animal Welfare Act 2006.

This makes it a serious criminal offence to cause unnecessary suffering to any animal, or fail to provide for its welfare. Accompanying it, the Government has published a Code of Practice for the Welfare of Cats which, if breached, can be used to supply evidence supporting a prosecution.

I would therefore encourage anyone who believes that kittens are being treated poorly by a pet shop to report their concerns to the local authority or the police, which have the power to take action to safeguard their welfare.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



Alok Sharma MP