

21st August 2017

Dear Constituents,

Thank you for contacting me about puppies being smuggled across borders.

I share your concern about this crime, and I am grateful to the Dogs Trust for highlighting the issue. Responsibility for stopping illegal movement begins in the country where puppies are born, so in response to a previous report the Chief Veterinary Officer wrote to the authorities in the highlighted countries to remind them of their duties.

An EU pet travel regulation introduced in 2014 brought further measures to strengthen enforcement. The new-style passport is harder to forge, new rules apply when more than five animals are moved together and all EU countries must carry out compliance checks. A 12-week minimum age for rabies vaccination assists compliance checking and restricts the movement of very young animals. As the UK withdraws from the EU, there will be opportunities to re-evaluate the rules.

There is a robust checking regime for pets travelling here. Every pet travelling with its owner on an approved route is checked for compliance with the travel regime and the UK Border Force carries out a wide range of checks on vehicles arriving in the UK.

It is important to recognise that we cannot expect the Government to defeat this problem by itself. As individuals, we need to take care not to fuel demand for these animals by providing a market for the unscrupulous people who exploit them. Government advice is very clear: people who buy a pet are responsible for knowing where it comes from and, if it is found to have been imported illegally, will be held responsible for any necessary quarantine and veterinary fees.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



Alok Sharma MP