

Alok Sharma, MP for Reading West

5th March 2019

Dear Constituents,

Thank you for contacting me about animal sentience and the #Betterdealforanimals campaign.

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 once the UK leaves the EU. This also includes ensuring the UK has an effective means of making sure that animal sentience is reflected in future policy decisions. I understand that the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs is currently engaging closely with relevant organisations and authorities to further enhance its policies on this issue.

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.

Once we have left the EU, we could do even more. The UK's current position of full harmonisation with EU rules on pet travel means the import of puppies under 6 months cannot be banned, and the cracking down on puppy smuggling is a challenge. This is because of the difficulty in accurately identifying underage puppies at the border. EU rules also restrict our ability to control live animal exports.

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

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