

15th September 2020

Dear Constituents,

Thank you for contacting me about animal welfare standards and the UK's trade policy.

All animals deserve to be respected and cared for throughout their lives, so I welcome the Government's clear commitment that future trade agreements will uphold our country's high animal welfare standards. These standards will not be watered down in pursuit of any trade deal.

Four public consultations were launched in 2018, providing people with the opportunity to give their views (for example, on animal welfare) in relation to how the UK should approach future Free Trade Agreement negotiations with the USA, Australia and New Zealand, and on the UK's consideration of accession to the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership. All four consultations collectively attracted over 600,000 responses – making this one of the largest consultation exercises (by volume of responses) run by the UK Government. In any future potential trade agreement that the UK seeks to negotiate, the government will undertake proportionate consultation.

To provide continuity in our country's existing trade relationships, the Government is transitioning existing EU trade agreements, to which our country is party, into UK law. As these trade agreements will be transitioned on the closest possible terms as each original agreement, this process will not have an impact on animal welfare standards.

Outside the EU, the UK will remain party to bodies such as the World Organisation for Animal Health, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species and others, and will continue to promote improved animal welfare standards internationally.

I also note your comments about animal sentience. 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.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



Alok Sharma MP

Follow Alok on Twitter: @AlokSharma_RDG

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