

7th November 2018

Dear Constituents,

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

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

An EU pet travel regulation introduced in 2014 has strengthened 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 further 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.

Some of the Pet Advertising Advisory Group's minimum standards have become mandatory for online sellers as part of a swathe of reforms to the animal licensing system. The reforms make it illegal to sell puppies younger than eight weeks and require anyone breeding and selling three or more litters a year to apply for a formal licence. Anyone trading commercially in pets online must be properly licensed.

Government advice to prospective owners 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, they 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

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