

CHRIS HEATON-HARRIS MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

March 2017

*Dear Constituent,*

Thank you for contacting me about sentencing for offences of animal cruelty.

I am pleased that we have a robust legal framework to tackle this vicious behaviour in the Animal Welfare Act 2006, which makes it an offence to cause unnecessary suffering to any animal.

The courts must decide what the penalty should be for each individual case, taking into account its circumstances and the guidelines laid down by the Sentencing Council. Currently, in addition to the maximum penalty of six months' imprisonment and/or an unlimited fine, the courts can also disqualify offenders from keeping animals for as long as they consider appropriate.

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs is in regular contact with the Ministry of Justice in relation to sentencing policy for animal welfare offences, but I would note that current sentencing practice does not suggest that the courts are finding current sentencing powers inadequate.

Once again, thank you again for taking the time to contact me about this important issue.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Chris'.

**CHRIS HEATON-HARRIS MP  
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR DAVENTRY**