



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
LONDON SW1A 0AA

December 2017

*Dear Constituent,*

Thank you for contacting me about the status of animals as living beings. I would like to assure you that this Government is committed to the very highest standards of animal welfare.

Having looked into this matter I understand the main reason for the move was to harmonise the legal status of animals under the French Civil Code with its Penal and Rural Codes, which already recognised animals as having interests that could not apply to inanimate property. It made no change to the protections animals enjoy. UK laws are arranged differently so it is not possible to draw a direct comparison between our legal regimes, but I did note that French legislators explicitly rejected bans on bullfighting and cockfighting, both of which are illegal here.

The UK has some of the highest animal welfare standards in the world. We intend to remain world-leading in the future and as a minimum, to retain our existing standards of animal welfare once we have left the EU.

The EU (Withdrawal) Bill will convert the existing body of direct EU animal welfare laws to become UK laws. Most of these EU laws relate to farmed animals and many were passed after Article 13 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) came into effect.

Based on the Animal Welfare Act the Animal Protection Index which is maintained by World Animal Protection, rates the UK's formal recognition of animal sentience as grade A. Other Lisbon Treaty signatories such as France, Italy and Spain do not enjoy this rating, having each received grade C.

Article 13 of the TFEU created a qualified obligation on the EU and Member States "to have full regard to the welfare of animals (as they are sentient beings)" when formulating and implementing EU law. The Government has said that it will consider how the 'animal sentience' principle of Article 13 might be explicitly reflected in the UK when we leave the EU.



Here in the UK, we are improving animal welfare standards without EU input and beyond the scope of Article 13. We are making CCTV mandatory in all slaughterhouses – a requirement which goes above and beyond any EU rule. We will consult on draft legislation to jail animal abusers for up to five years – more than almost every other European nation. We propose combatting elephant poaching with a ban on the ivory trade which is more comprehensive than anywhere else in Europe. Our ban on microbeads which harm marine animals has been welcomed by Greenpeace as “the strongest in the world”, and is certainly the strongest in Europe.

I therefore believe that existing UK legislation, which provides necessary and appropriate protection for animals in this country, will not be weakened when we leave the EU.

Once again, many thanks for taking the time to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Chris".

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