



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

May 2019

Dear Constituent,

Thank you for contacting me about animal sentience.

Obviously 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. The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs is currently engaging closely with relevant organisations and authorities to enhance its policies on this issue further; the Secretary of State recently met leading members of the #BetterDealForAnimals campaign to discuss this important matter.

I am aware of research in relation to the sentience of decapod crustaceans and their ability to feel pain. I understand that the Government is continuing to engage with third-party organisations to refine proposals on animal sentience, including which animals should be covered by any new legislation.

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 cracking down on puppy smuggling is a challenge 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 faithfully,

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

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