



October 2022

Dear Constituent,

Thank you for contacting me about the use of cages for farm animals.

I would like to assure you that my ministerial colleagues and I take the welfare of all animals very seriously. Ministers are delivering a series of ambitious reforms, as outlined in the Action Plan for Animal Welfare.

The Government is committed to phasing out confinement systems and supporting the industry in doing so. However, Ministers need to work carefully and sensitively with the pig and poultry industries, which are both currently facing challenges.

I know that 60% of our hens are now kept in free-range systems, with major supermarkets pledging to stop selling eggs from the remaining 40% of hens in colony cages by 2025. I am aware that the Government will soon launch a consultation on the caging of laying hens, but Ministers will continue to work with the industry on improving feather cover and keel bone health, as well as reducing the amount of beak trimming.

Regarding pig farrowing crates, 40% of our pigs are kept outdoors, so outdoor farrowing systems are used for those sows. I understand that the consultation on pig farrowing crates is still being prepared and ministers are conducting a significant review into the supply chain.

Further, the Government's Animal Health and Welfare Pathway will prioritise areas for additional improvement in the health and welfare for pigs, cattle, sheep and poultry. On pigs specifically, the Government will continue to improve biosecurity in order to control endemic diseases. On meat chickens, through the Pathway, producers are being encouraged to implement the Better Chicken commitment which would require the use of slower growing breeds and lower stocking densities.

More broadly, Ministers are taking action to improve the health and wellbeing of farm animals through the Animal Welfare (Kept Animals) Bill, which will ban exports of livestock and equines for slaughter and fattening.

Of course, if you have specific concerns about the welfare of an animal, I recommend reporting it to the police or to the RSPCA.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.



Chris Heaton-Harris
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Tel: 020 7219 7048

Yours faithfully,

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

CHRIS HEATON-HARRIS MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR DAVENTRY