



October 2023

Dear Constituent,

Thank you for contacting me about animal welfare.

The Government is firmly committed to the UK's strong track record on animal welfare and to delivering continued improvements, both in this Parliament and beyond.

I understand that the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) does not consider that the time is right to consult on cage reforms, considering the challenges facing the laying hen and pig sectors. However, I am aware that the market is already moving away from using cages for laying hen production. The proportion of eggs that come from caged hens has steadily decreased, from 47% of total throughput in Q4 2017, to 21% in Q1 2023.

Further, the UK is ahead of most other pig producing countries in terms of zero confinement farrowing, in that 40% of the national sow breeding herd farrow freely on outdoor pig units with no option of confinement. The Government's animal welfare priorities for its Animal Health and Welfare Pathway include supporting producers to transition away from confinement systems.

Regarding labelling reforms for animal welfare, Defra ran a call for evidence in 2021 on the potential impacts of different types of labelling reform for animal welfare. Ministers will continue to work with the industry to explore how to harness the market to improve food information for consumers and raise animal welfare standards.

I am aware that the Government will take forward measures in the Kept Animals Bill individually during the remainder of this Parliament, including measures relating to live exports, puppy smuggling, and the import of dogs with cropped ears. While there have been no live exports for slaughter and fattening since 2020, I know that Ministers recognise the long-standing concern over this trade are determined to end it.

Further, the abhorrent practice of non-exempted mutilations such as cropping dogs' ears has rightly been banned in the UK for 15 years. The cropping of a dog's ears is an offence under the Animal Welfare Act 2006, however, the importation of dogs with non-exempted mutilations such as cropped ears or docked tails is still allowed under the current pet travel rules. I am aware that Ministers would support legislation to ban the import of dogs with mutilations as a single-issue Bill when parliamentary time allows.



**Chris Heaton-Harris**  
Member of Parliament for Daventry  
House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA  
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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**