



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

The Rt Hon George Eustice MP
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Rt Hon Sir George Howarth MP
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Dear Sir George,

Thank you for your email of 10 February on behalf of your constituents about the about the Animal Welfare (Kept Animals).

The Government published its Action Plan for Animal Welfare on 12 May 2021. This is a wide-reaching and ambitious plan to set out our current and future work on animal welfare. The Government has a manifesto commitment to crack down on puppy smuggling and one of our key reforms in the plan is to end this abhorrent, cruel practice and low-welfare pet imports.

As part of the Action Plan, we are now making some significant changes to domestic law through the Animal Welfare (Kept Animals) Bill. The Bill includes powers to introduce new restrictions on pet travel and on the commercial import of pets on welfare grounds, via secondary legislation. In August 2021, the Government launched an 8-week consultation on our proposed restrictions to the commercial and non-commercial movement of pets into Great Britain.

The consultation proposed to maintain the existing requirements for cats. This is because there is currently limited evidence that there is a significant illegal trade in cats or significant numbers of low welfare movements. The number of non-compliant cats seized at the border is much lower than for dogs, for example, in 2020 we seized and detained 17 kittens (under 15 weeks) compared to 543 puppies. We have also not seen the same issues with pregnant cats being imported, with no pregnant cats seized and detained in 2020.

In relation to the total number of cats being imported, the estimate of 70,000 cats, as detailed in the 'Cats and Their Stats' report, appears to be based on an estimate of the number of cats obtained between March 2020 and March 2021 and the proportion of individuals that reported in a survey that they had sourced a pet from abroad during the same period. The official Government statistics show that between March 2020 and March 2021 27,601 cats entered the UK under the non-commercial rules and 8,511 cats entered under the commercial rules. The official statistics are based on data submitted by pet checkers and carriers for non-commercial movements. Data for commercial movements in 2020 is taken from the Trade Control and Expert System, and data for commercial movements in 2021 is taken from the Import of Products, Animals, Food and Feed System. We are engaging with Cats Protection to understand the difference between the reported figures.

The consultation sought views on whether maintaining the existing requirements in relation to cats was the right approach. We are currently analysing the responses to the consultation and will publish a summary in due course. This will allow us to take on board the views of the public and interested groups in order to shape our future policy.

We will continue to work closely with stakeholders prior to the introduction of the legislation, to ensure that our final measures are well considered and led by the latest evidence.



RT HON GEORGE EUSTICE MP