



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

The Rt Hon George Eustice MP
Secretary of State for Environment,
Food and Rural Affairs

Seacole Building
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

T 03459 335577
defra.helpline@defra.gov.uk
www.gov.uk/defra

Rt Hon Sir George Howarth MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA
george.howarth.mp@parliament.uk

Our ref: MC2022/09900/JD

17 May 2022

Dear Sir George,

Thank you for your email of 11 May on behalf of your constituents about the imports of fur, foie gras and hunting trophies.

The Government shares the British public's high regard for animal welfare as set out in our Action Plan for Animal Welfare.

We are already world leaders in animal welfare and have a strong track record to build on. For example, the UK banned keeping calves in veal crates 16 years before the EU; and likewise banned close confinement stalls for sows and battery cages for laying hens. We have also banned domestic fur farming and the domestic production of foie gras.

We have previously made CCTV mandatory in all slaughterhouses in England, banned the use of wild animals in circuses, introduced the strongest ivory ban in the world, banned the third-party sale of puppies and kittens, and raised the maximum sentence for cruelty from six months to five years.

Our Action Plan for Animal Welfare, published in May 2021 builds on our high standards of animal welfare.

We have delivered on our manifesto commitment to introduce new laws on animal sentience. The Animal Welfare (Sentience) Act has completed its passage through Parliament and was granted Royal Assent on 28 April 2022. The Act provides legal recognition that animals are sentient beings and establishes an Animal Sentience Committee to consider how central Government policy decisions take account of animal welfare, with provisions to ensure Government Ministers respond to Parliament on the Committee's reports.

For farm animals, we are exploring options to phase out the use of cages in farming, including the use of enriched cages for laying hens, farrowing crates for pigs and cages for breeding pheasants and partridges. And we are taking advantage of our status as an independent trading nation, and delivering on the manifesto commitment, by banning the export of live animals for slaughter and fattening through the Animal Welfare (Kept Animals) Bill. The UK's departure from the EU has provided us with a much-awaited opportunity to address this longstanding ambition.

We are exploring options for better food labelling to enable people to purchase higher welfare produce. We are introducing a new 'Animal Health and Welfare Pathway' so that future subsidies will be conditional upon looking after the environment and animal welfare.

For pets, we are taking steps to tackle unscrupulous puppy smuggling through the Animal Welfare (Kept Animals) Bill, by reducing the number of pet dogs, cats and ferrets that can travel in one non-commercial movement. We have also recently completed a consultation on further restrictions to the commercial and non-commercial movement of pets into Great Britain (GB). We will introduce the compulsory microchipping of cats and measures to deter further the theft of pets. We will also be licensing rescue and rehoming centres to ensure they meet animal welfare standards, and we are banning the keeping of primates as pets.

We are considering greater protections for Britain's wild hare populations, as well as cracking down on cruel hare coursing. We are restricting the use of devices such as glue traps that cause great suffering. And we are raising the standards required of our zoos, including by supporting and advancing conservation efforts.

We are also determined to use our newly independent voice on the world stage to advocate for the highest animal welfare standards internationally. To this end we are in the process of extending our ivory ban to other ivory bearing species. We have committed to banning imports of hunting trophies from endangered species and will bring forward this legislation as soon as Parliamentary time allows. We are committed to banning all imports of shark fins and ending the advertising in the UK of low welfare animal experiences abroad.

Finally, in relation to fur and foie gras, we are examining our next steps closely.

Fur farming has been banned in England and Wales since 2000, and since 2002 in Scotland and Northern Ireland. There are restrictions on importing some skin and fur products, including from cats, dogs and seals. In addition, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species controls imports of fur from endangered species, and we do not allow imports of fur from wild animals caught using methods which are non-compliant with international humane trapping standards. We issued a call for evidence on the fur trade in GB which attracted around 30,000 responses. We are reviewing the evidence gathered and will publish a summary of responses soon.

The Government has also made clear that the production of foie gras from ducks or geese using force feeding raises very serious welfare concerns. We are gathering information and considering next steps.

I acknowledge the strength of feeling people have on this issue, and I share those concerns and will do all I can to ensure we build upon the animal welfare standards we are rightly proud of in this country.



RT HON GEORGE EUSTICE MP