



Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs

The Rt Hon Lord Benyon  
Minister for Biosecurity, Marine and Rural Affairs

2 Marsham Street  
London  
SW1P 4DF

T: +44 (0) 3459 335577

E: [correspondence.section@defra.gov.uk](mailto:correspondence.section@defra.gov.uk)

W: [gov.uk/defra](http://gov.uk/defra)

Rt Hon Sir George Howarth MP  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA  
[kate.brady@parliament.uk](mailto:kate.brady@parliament.uk)

Our ref: MC2022/19029/SJ

19 January 2023

Dear George,

Thank you for your email of 22 September to the Rt Hon Ranil Jayawardena MP on behalf of your constituents about imports of fur, foie gras, and hunting trophies. I am replying as the Minister responsible for this policy area and I apologise for the delay in doing so.

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

Since 2010 we have achieved remarkable things for animal welfare. On farms, we introduced new regulations for minimum standards for meat chickens, banned the use of conventional battery cages for laying hens, and made CCTV mandatory in slaughterhouses in England. For pets, microchipping became mandatory for dogs in 2015, we modernised our licensing system for a range of activities such as dog breeding and pet sales, have protected service animals via 'Finn's Law', and banned the commercial third-party sales of puppies and kittens ('Lucy's Law'). In 2019 our Wild Animals in Circuses Act became law, and we have led work to implement humane trapping standards.

The passing of the Animal Welfare (Sentencing) Act 2021 realises the Government's manifesto commitment to introduce tougher penalties for animal cruelty. The Animal Welfare (Sentencing) Act 2022 has delivered on the commitment to introduce new laws for animal sentience. We have also introduced new powers for police and courts to tackle the illegal and cruel sport of hare coursing through the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022, and we also backed bills introducing penalty notices for animal welfare offences and to ban glue traps, all of which have received Royal Assent.

We have pledged to ban the imports of hunting trophies from thousands of species. The Government is committed to a ban that is among the strongest in the world and leads the way in protecting endangered animals. We are supporting the Private Member's Bill, led by Henry Smith MP, that will deliver this. The Bill recently passed Second Reading in the House of Commons.

We are also committed to banning the import and export of detached shark fins and shark fin products. This ban will help ensure that shark fins obtained through unsustainable and cruel finning practices are not entering the UK. The Government is committed to the ban and welcomes the Private Member's Bill, led by Christina Rees MP on this topic.

The Action Plan for Animal Welfare outlined our intention to explore potential action in relation to the import of animal fur. We have since conducted a Call for Evidence on the fur sector along with other forms of engagement with interested parties. We are continuing to build our evidence base on the fur sector, and speak to a range of interested parties.

Via the Action Plan for Animal Welfare, the Government has made clear that the production of foie gras from ducks or geese which have been force-fed raises serious welfare concerns, and that the production of foie gras by force feeding is already illegal in the UK. We are committed to building a clear evidence base to inform decisions on banning the import or sale of foie gras and other products derived from low-welfare systems.

I hope this letter addresses your concerns. Whilst we have done much for the welfare of animals, there is more to do and our determination to continue to have the highest animal welfare standards in Europe remains undiminished.

Yours sincerely,



**THE RT HON LORD BENYON**