



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

Lord Douglas-Miller
Minister for Biosecurity, Animal Health and Welfare

Seacole Building
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

T: +44 (0) 3459 335577
E: correspondence.section@defra.gov.uk
W: gov.uk/defra

Rt Hon Sir George Howarth MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA
kate.brady@parliament.uk

Our ref: MC2023/21212/TT

29 December 2023

Dear Sir George,

Thank you for your email of 30 October to the former Secretary of State on behalf of your constituents about cat theft. I am replying as the Minister responsible for this policy area.

Stealing a pet is a criminal offence under the Theft Act 1968. We understand the devastating impact that the theft of a pet can have. The Government launched a Pet Theft Taskforce in May 2021 in response to concerns about a perceived increase in pet theft during COVID restrictions. The Taskforce published its findings and recommendations in September 2021, including the creation of a specific offence. We have listened carefully to views expressed on the pet abduction measures during the passage of the Animal Welfare (Kept Animals) Bill, including adding cats. We would be supportive of legislation on pet abduction when parliamentary time allows and will take this feedback into consideration.

We have already introduced legislation to extend compulsory microchipping to cats in England from 10 June 2024. The new legislation is intended to increase the likelihood that lost or stolen pet cats can be reunited with their keeper, benefitting cat welfare. Last year we also consulted on microchipping reform, including proposals to make it easier to identify keepers in England from an animal's microchip. We will issue a response to the consultation soon.

Please do not hesitate to get in touch if you need further information.

Yours sincerely,

LORD DOUGLAS-MILLER