



Department  
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Dear Sir George,

Thank you for your email of 12 March to the Secretary of State on behalf of your constituents about the welfare of farmed pigs. I am replying as the Minister responsible for this policy area.

We are firmly committed to maintaining our strong track record on animal welfare and to delivering continued improvements in the course of this Parliament and beyond. However, we do not consider the time is right to consult on farrowing crate reforms, being mindful of the challenges the pig sector is facing.

The UK has a significant outdoor pig sector with 40% of the national sow breeding herd farrowing freely on outdoor units with no option for confinement. Defra's 2018 statutory welfare code of practice for pigs confirms that 'the aim is for farrowing crates to no longer be necessary and for any new system to protect the welfare of the sow, as well as her piglets'.

Over the years the Government has funded research into farrowing systems which led to the website [Freefarrowing.org](http://Freefarrowing.org). This site provides a variety of information and resources for pig farmers on the different farrowing options available and includes the latest research conducted on them.

We continue to work with the sector to maintain and enhance our high standards. The Animal Health and Welfare Pathway, part of our new domestic agricultural policy, supports farmers to produce healthier, higher welfare animals. The Government's welfare priorities for the Pathway include supporting producers to transition away from confinement systems.

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

Yours sincerely,

Rt Hon Mark Spencer MP