



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs



Department
for International
Development



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

The Rt Hon the Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park
Minister of State

Rt Hon Sir George Howarth MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

Our ref: MC2020/06272/MO

11 May 2020

Dear Sir George,

Thank you for your email of 11 March on behalf of your constituents about animal sentience and caged farming. I am replying as the Minister responsible for this policy area and I apologise for the delay in responding. Defra is currently dealing with high volumes of correspondence due to COVID-19. Thank you for your understanding during this challenging time.

The Government has committed to introducing new laws on animal sentience, and this will be taken forward when Parliamentary time allows.

With regards to caged farming, the Government cares very much about the welfare of all animals and is examining the evidence around the use of cages for farm animals and considering the options.

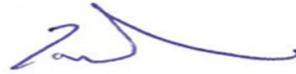
The Government is examining the future use of cages for all laying hens and I welcome the commitment from our major retailers, with positive support from our egg producers, to stop retailing eggs from enriched colony cage production systems by 2025. I am pleased to say that the UK already has a much larger free range sector by far than any EU country, with over 50% of our hens kept in free range systems.

In relation to pigs, the Government has been clear it is our ambition that farrowing crates should no longer be used for sows. Indeed, the new pig welfare code clearly states 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”. I am pleased to say the UK is already ahead of most pig producing countries in terms of non-confinement farrowing, with around 40% of our pigs housed outside and not farrowed with crates. Defra has funded research into alternative farrowing systems, however, the commercial development of farrowing systems and practices is not yet sufficiently advanced to recommend the compulsory replacement of all farrowing crates.

I hope this letter has assured you that we are committed to maintaining our position as a world leader in the protection of animals now that we have left the EU and have absolutely no intention of watering down our welfare standards.

Thank you once again for your email.

With best wishes,



THE RT HON THE LORD GOLDSMITH OF RICHMOND PARK