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To all Conservative MPs

Dear Colleague,

### ANIMAL WELFARE UPDATE

**We are a nation of animal lovers, and animal welfare has been a priority for the Government since 2010.**

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 protected service animals via 'Finn's Law' and banned the commercial third-party sales of puppies and kittens ('Lucy's Law').

Building on these steps, in 2021 we published an ambitious and comprehensive **Action Plan for Animal Welfare**. This set out an array of future reforms for this Parliament and beyond.

We have delivered. Since the publication of the Action Plan, we have delivered four key manifesto commitments:

1. **We passed the Animal Welfare (Sentience) Act.** This recognises in law that all vertebrate animals and invertebrates such as crabs, lobsters and octopuses are sentient beings. This will form the bedrock of animal welfare policy of the future.
2. **We passed the Animal Welfare (Sentencing) Act**, which introduced tougher sentences for animal cruelty, increasing maximum sentences from six months to five years.
3. Last month, **we made cat microchipping compulsory**, which will help reunite lost pets with their owners.
4. And just this week we announced that, having brought the Ivory Act into force in 2022, **we will now be extending it to cover five endangered species:** hippopotamus, narwhal, killer whale, sperm whale and walrus.

We have done more than any other Party on animal welfare, delivering on a manifesto that was drafted with the public's priorities in mind. I attach as an annex a full list of the measures we have taken since 2010.

**Today, we are taking two further steps in delivering our Action Plan.**

First, we are announcing the launch of the new Animal Sentience Committee. It will advise government on how policy decisions should take account of animal welfare. The Committee's membership provides expertise from both veterinary and social science and covers farm, companion, and wild animals. We expect the Committee to begin its work next month.



Secondly, we are announcing a consultation on new financial penalties of up to £5,000 for those who commit offences against animals. This will mean that, there is a new enforcement tool for use against the small minority of people who fail to protect the health and welfare of animals. This could apply, for example, if an animal is kept in poor living conditions due to a lack of appropriate shelter.

## **KEPT ANIMALS BILL**

The Kept Animals Bill, started nearly two years ago, was designed to implement several of our ambitions. This included banning the live exports of animals, seeking to prevent pet theft, and new measures to tackle livestock worrying.

Unfortunately, its multi-issue nature means there has been considerable scope-creep. The Bill risks being extended far beyond the original commitments in the manifesto and the Action Plan.

**In particular, Labour is clearly determined to play political games by widening the scope of this Bill to include hunting<sup>1</sup>. This is not the purpose of the Bill and will likely stoke unnecessary tensions and campaigns.**

The bills and regulations we have already passed demonstrate the enormous progress which can be made with single-issue legislation. Therefore, we will be taking forward measures in the Kept Animals Bill individually during the remainder of the Parliament.

We remain fully committed to delivering our manifesto commitments – and this approach is now the surest and the quickest way of doing so, rather than letting it be mired in political game-playing.

Having left the EU, we are able to and will ban live exports for fattening and slaughter. There have been no live exports from Great Britain since 2020, but our legislation will ensure this becomes permanent, and we remain committed to delivering it.

We are committed to cracking down on puppy smuggling. We will ban the imports of young, heavily pregnant or mutilated dogs – and we will be able to do this more quickly with a single-issue Bill than the secondary legislation required under the Kept Animals Bill.

We are committed to banning the keeping of primates as pets. We will do this by consulting before the summer recess on the primate-keeping standards, and they will be applied by secondary legislation being brought forward this year.

We also look forward to progressing delivery of the new offence of pet abduction and the new measures to tackle livestock worrying.

**Delivering these measures, as well as everything we are already delivering as part of and beyond the animal welfare elements of our manifesto – shows a Government which cares about animals and doesn't just talk about it or play games with it.**

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<sup>1</sup> *The Guardian*, 26 December 2022, [link](#).

**We are committed to maintaining our strong track record on animal welfare and to delivering continued improvements, both in the course of this Parliament and beyond.**

Yours sincerely,

*Terence Coffey*





## Annex: Our Animal Welfare Record of Delivery Since 2010

- Recognised **animal sentience** in law and today launched the Committee which will advise government on how policy decisions should take account of animal welfare.
- Ramped up **enforcement** with:
  - Increased maximum sentences for animal cruelty from six months to five years' imprisonment.
  - Launched the consultation today on financial penalty notice powers of up to £5,000 in addition to existing penalties under the Animal Welfare Act 2006.
  - New protections for service animals with 'Finn's Law'.
- Raised **farm animal** welfare:
  - Launched the Animal Health and Welfare Pathway with new annual vet visits and grants.
  - Implemented a revised welfare at slaughter regime and introduced CCTV in all slaughterhouses.
  - Banned traditional battery cages for laying hens, permitted beak trimming via only infra-red technology.
  - Raised standards for meat chickens.
- Significantly enhanced **companion animal** welfare:
  - Revamped the local authority licensing regime for commercial pet services including selling, dog breeding, boarding, animal displays.
  - Banned the third party puppy and kitten sales with Lucy's Law.
  - Made microchipping compulsory for cats and dogs.
  - Introduced offences for horse fly-grazing and abandonment
  - Introduced new community order powers to address dog issues
- Provided valuable new protections for **wild animals**:
  - Banned wild animals in travelling circuses.
  - Passed the Ivory Act, including one of the toughest bans on elephant ivory sales in the world, and earlier this week extended it to five further species.
  - Gave the police additional powers to tackle hare coursing.
  - Banned glue traps.
  - Supported the Private Members' Bill currently before Parliament banning the import of hunting trophies.

