



Craig Whittaker MP

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Response to The Hunting Act – January 2017

Thank you for contacting me about the Hunting Act.

I appreciate the strong feelings many people have on this issue and I share your concern for ensuring the welfare of animals.

As part of the Hunting Act's pest control exemptions, farmers and gamekeepers can use up to two dogs to flush foxes from cover to be shot. This makes an important contribution to land managers' ability to control foxes. However, upland farmers have said that the two-dog limit is impractical on this terrain, which can be vast, difficult and often covered by woodland. They have asked for more flexibility, bringing the law closer to the position in Scotland.

The Government had intended to give the House of Commons an opportunity to amend the provisions for exempt hunting so that farmers and gamekeepers could decide, based on the terrain and other circumstances, if it is appropriate to use more than two dogs to flush out foxes. Conservative Members would have received a free vote.

However, the Scottish National Party announced, contrary to its long-held position and the fact that the amendments would have no impact on Scotland, that its MPs would vote on this measure.

The Government intends to give Parliament an opportunity to repeal the Hunting Act on a free vote, with a government bill in government time.

In the event of such a vote, I would vote to retain the legislation as I view it as necessary to protect animal welfare.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Kind regards,

Craig Whittaker MP