



Craig Whittaker MP

CALDER VALLEY

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Animals as sentient beings

Thank you for contacting me about the status of animals as living and sentient beings.

Animals are protected by UK law to ensure their owners are in no doubt that unnecessary suffering will not be tolerated; all animals must be fed, watered, sheltered and treated with respect. It is a criminal offence to cause unnecessary suffering to any animal.

I can assure you that the UK's existing legislation is strong enough to provide this after we have left the EU. In fact, after we leave the EU there will be other animal welfare measures we will be free to put in place. For example, we would like to control the export of live farm animals for slaughter, not something we can do at present under EU rules. We are a nation of animal-lovers and we have a reputation as a world-leader in animal protection. The Animal Protection Index, maintained by World Animal Protection, rates the UK's formal recognition of animal sentience as grade A. Other countries such as France, Italy and Spain do not enjoy this rating, having each received grade C.

The Government works hard to ensure the UK remains a leader in animal protection. From next year, CCTV will be mandatory in all slaughterhouses in order to monitor operations; puppy farming has been cracked down on, and we're taking steps to combat illegal wildlife trade and the distress that this can cause animals.

Our commitment to animal protection is not under threat as we leave the EU. The amendment to the EU Withdrawal Bill which was not taken forward did not provide any protections for animals that are not already covered in UK law.

Contrary to some reports, I did not vote against animal welfare in the recent Commons debate on New Clause 30. In fact, I acted as a teller so I could not vote. See the following link:
<http://www.publicwhip.org.uk/mp.php?id=uk.org.publicwhip/member/41780>.

Like you, I want to see proper protections in place for all animals, and I am clear that the Government retains this as a top priority regardless of our EU membership.

Thank you again for contacting me.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Craig Whittaker', with a stylized flourish at the end.

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