



Craig Whittaker MP

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Animal Sentience: Article 13 and New Clause 30

Thank you for contacting me about animal sentience.

I am committed to the very highest standards of animal welfare, and to making the UK a world leader in the field.

It concerns me that some have suggested that the vote my colleagues and I cast on New Clause 30 of the EU Withdrawal Bill somehow signalled a weakening in the protection of animals. It did not, and it was not a vote against the idea that animals are sentient and feel pain.

The vote against New Clause 30 was the rejection of a faulty amendment that would not have achieved its stated aims. Article 13 of the Lisbon Treaty, which this clause sought to transfer into UK law, has not delivered the progress we want to see: its legal effect is unclear and it has failed to prevent cruel practices across the EU.

Ministers will instead make any necessary legal changes to ensure animal sentience is recognised after we leave the EU. The Withdrawal Bill is not the right place to address this, so they are considering the right legislative vehicle.

EU rules prevent us from restricting or banning live animal export, cracking down on puppy smuggling or banning the import of puppies under 6 months. The EU protocol on animals being sentient beings allows bullfighting, veal farming, foie gras 'production', and cruel fur product imports. Article 13 has not stopped any of these practices, and leaving the EU gives us the chance to do much better.

Here in the UK, we are improving animal welfare standards without EU input and beyond the scope of Article 13. Recent steps include making CCTV mandatory in all slaughterhouses, consulting on draft legislation to jail animal abusers for up to five years and introducing Europe's most comprehensive ban on the ivory trade.

Once we have left the EU we could do even more.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Kind regards,

Craig Whittaker MP