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Jo Swinson MP
House of Commons
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Your ref: JS6295
Our ref: MC2019/05223/SS

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Dear Jo,

Thank you for your email of 1 March to the Secretary of State on behalf of a number of your constituents, about the recognition of animals as sentient beings in UK law after we leave the EU. I am replying as the Minister responsible for this policy area.

The Government is committed to the very highest standards of animal welfare as we leave the EU. There has never been any question that this Government's policies on animal welfare are driven by the fact that animals are sentient beings. We will make any necessary changes required to UK law in a rigorous and comprehensive way to ensure animal sentience is recognised after we leave the EU.

The Government will ensure that animal sentience is not only recognised in domestic law, but that we will have an effective and proportionate means of taking animal sentience into account in policy making.

Here in the UK, we are already improving animal welfare standards without EU input and beyond the scope of Article 13. The Government is committed to taking action to improve animal welfare at home and abroad, including by increasing maximum sentences for animal cruelty, banning third party sales of puppies, and introducing one of the world's toughest bans on ivory sales. We have also made CCTV mandatory in slaughterhouses and we are planning other reforms. These steps show how seriously this Government takes animal welfare.

As we move towards a new relationship with Europe and the rest of the world, we have a unique opportunity to shape future animal welfare policy in the UK to ensure our already high animal welfare standards are maintained and enhanced.

Thank you once again for taking the time to contact the Secretary of State about this important issue.

With best wishes,

DAVID RUTLEY MP

Approved by David and signed electronically to avoid delay.