



Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs



Department  
for International  
Development

**The Rt Hon the Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park**  
Minister of State

Rt Hon Sir George Howarth MP  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

Our ref: MC2020/00937/MO

22 January 2020

Dear Sir George,

Thank you for your email of 17 January on behalf of a number of your constituents about increasing the maximum sentence for animal cruelty offences. I am replying as the Minister responsible for this policy area.

In line with the manifesto commitment to introduce tougher sentences for animal cruelty, we remain fully committed to increasing the maximum custodial sentences for animal cruelty offences from six months to five years. This will enable courts to take a firmer approach to cases such as dog fighting, abuse of puppies and kittens, or gross neglect of farm animals.

The new maximum penalty of five years is also in line with campaigns by key stakeholders such as Battersea Dogs and Cats Home, Dogs Trust and the RSPCA. This is a positive step forward in improving animal welfare and will act as a serious deterrent against cruelty and neglect. Northern Ireland has already set the maximum penalty for animal cruelty offences at five years' imprisonment, and the Scottish Government introduced the Animals and Wildlife (Penalties, Protections and Powers) (Scotland) Bill on 30 September 2019. The Welsh Government have confirmed that the new maximum penalty we are proposing should apply in Wales.

The increase to five years' imprisonment will provide one of the toughest sanctions in Europe, strengthening the UK's position as a global leader on animal welfare. This builds on our recent work to improve animal welfare standards, such as a requirement for CCTV in all slaughterhouses and implementing one of the world's toughest ivory bans. For companion animals, we have introduced new updated minimum welfare standards for pet selling, dog breeding, riding schools, animal boarding and exhibiting animals; as well as a ban on the commercial third-party sale of puppies and kittens.

We will introduce the legislation necessary to increase the maximum custodial penalty as soon as Parliamentary time allows.

Thank you once again for your email.

With best wishes,

**THE RT HON THE LORD GOLDSMITH OF RICHMOND PARK**