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The Rt Hon George Howarth MP
House of Commons
London
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Our ref: MC386398/SF

6 October 2015

From George Eustice MP
Minister of State

Dear Mr Howarth,

Thank you for your letter of 22 September on behalf of your constituents about the export of live animals. The Government would prefer animals to be slaughtered as close as practicable to their point of production. However, the live export trade is a lawful trade.

To help you address your constituents' queries, I am enclosing a short briefing note setting out the Government's position on this matter. Should your constituents have more detailed questions, these can be addressed directly to the department via the contact details provided at the end of this note.

PP GEORGE EUSTICE MP

Approved by the Minister,
signed in his absence.

Enc: briefing note



Export of live animals

Published

Why doesn't the Government ban the export of live animals?

The Government would prefer animals to be slaughtered as close as practicable to their point of production. A trade in meat and meat products is preferable to the long distance transport of animals to slaughter. However, the trade in live animals for slaughter is a legal one but it is now very small, compared to twenty years ago, when every year nearly two million animals were exported. Last year about 35,000 sheep were exported for slaughter. This compares to approximately 14 million sheep slaughtered in the UK in the same period.

The unilateral banning of the trade would be illegal and undermine the principle of the free movement of goods in the European Union. Introduction of national welfare legislation would not be possible as there is already legally binding EU legislation on the protection of animals during transport in existence.

The Government is committed to improving the welfare of all animals. For this reason, we expect animals exported live, to be transported in conditions that comply fully with the legal welfare requirements. In addition, we expect any slaughterhouse used to meet high welfare standards, whether it is here or abroad.

What is the Government doing to drive change in Europe?

We have made clear in Brussels that this Government supports improvements being made to enforcement across the EU of existing rules on the long distance transport of livestock. We will maintain the pressure on the EU Commission to update the rules on welfare during transport where there is sufficient scientific evidence to support a change. This includes reducing the maximum journey time for horses and better protection for the transport of infant livestock.

