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The Rt Hon Andrea Leadsom MP  
From the Secretary of State

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Rt Hon George Howarth MP  
House of Commons  
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Dear George,

Thank you for your email of 26 October on behalf of a number of your constituents about the sale of kittens.

The Government is serious about improving the welfare of cats and dogs in both breeding establishments and at point of sale. One of the ways this can happen is if potential buyers are more aware of what to look for when purchasing a cat or a dog. This is why we have helpful advice for potential buyers on the Government's official website. We also work with stakeholders to explore other ways in which such messages can reach those people considering buying a cat or a dog.

We are currently reviewing the laws on the animal activities licensing schemes, including those that regulate dog breeding and the selling of pet animals, including cats. Earlier this year, we consulted on a number of proposals including one to apply specific welfare conditions to breeders of dogs and to pet vendors. This will mean that such activities will have to meet specific welfare standards in order to obtain a licence.

The standards will apply to all licensed breeders of dogs and vendors of pet animals whether they are running a traditional high street pet shop or selling online from their home. They include a requirement that animals are not sold at too young an age, which for mammals is defined as before they are weaned or should have been weaned, which for cats is likely to be at or below 8 weeks. As part of the licensing review, we are looking closely at introducing provisions to clarify this requirement in the regulations and the advice on the Government website will change to reflect that kittens should not be purchased if they are under eight weeks of age.

We also propose to remove the exemption which allows anyone in the business of selling kittens bred from the family's pet pedigree cat to be exempt from requiring a licence to sell animals.

I hope that this reply is helpful.

Best wishes,

**Andrea Leadsom MP**  
**Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs**