



Ministry of Justice

The Right Honourable
Robert Buckland QC MP
Lord Chancellor & Secretary of
State for Justice



Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs

The Right Honourable
George Eustice MP
Secretary of State for
Environment, Food
and Rural Affairs



Home Office

The Right Honourable
Priti Patel MP
Secretary of State for the
Home Department

To: all MPs with constituencies in England

10 May 2021

Launch of Pet Theft taskforce

On Saturday we announced a Pet Theft taskforce to investigate the reported rise in pet theft since the beginning of lockdown.

Many of you have raised this issue with us. We are a nation of animal lovers and in the face of the pandemic, pets have been a source of great comfort and many people have enjoyed the companionship and other benefits of owning a pet for the first time.

However, there have been concerning reports of a significant rise in cases of pet theft over the past year.

The new taskforce has been set up to gather evidence to understand the factors that may be contributing to any rise in thefts and to recommend any necessary measures to tackle the problem.

Stealing a pet is already a criminal offence under the Theft Act 1968, with offenders facing a maximum penalty of seven years in prison. If the animal suffers during the theft, criminals are further liable to prosecution for offences under the Animal Welfare Act 2006, and could face an increased maximum penalty of 5 years' imprisonment from this summer onwards.

The taskforce will be chaired by the Lord Chancellor and be made up of government officials from Defra, the Home Office and Ministry of Justice as well as operational partners such as the police. It will seek input from animal welfare groups and experts in relevant fields to:

- Gather, research and commission work to build a clear evidence base of the scale of any issue,
- Consider the issue from end to end, including causes, prevention, reporting, enforcement and prosecution, and,
- Make clear and timely recommendations on ways to improve the situation around pet theft.

The full Terms of Reference for the taskforce can be found in at this link:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pet-theft-taskforce-terms-of-reference>

The plans are part of the Government's commitment to tackle crime and the impacts of crime, further strengthening the UK's position as a global leader in animal welfare. They come alongside other measures including taking steps to end live animal exports and crack down on the illegal smuggling of dogs and puppies. Further proposals to improve standards and eradicate cruel practices are to be set out later this month.



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and Rural Affairs**



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