



Department
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To all MPs
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Dear colleague,

ANIMAL WELFARE (SENTIENCE) BILL

The UK has consistently led the way on animal welfare. Indeed, in 1876, the Cruelty to Animals Act was the first legislation in the world to regulate scientific experiments on animals. The UK was also one of the key EU members that lobbied for the recognition of animal sentience in Article 13 of the Lisbon Treaty in 2009. In addition, the Animal Welfare Act (2006) recognised in law that animals can feel pain and suffering.

Now that we have left the EU we have the opportunity to remake laws and go further to promote animal welfare by making sure that all Government departments consider animal sentience in policy, covering all vertebrate animals from farm to forest. The Animal Welfare (Sentience) Bill, introduced today, enshrines that recognition that animals are sentient in domestic law. It also creates a proportionate accountability mechanism to help reassure that central government policymaking takes this into account.

Our Bill achieves this by creating an Animal Sentience Committee. These experts will produce reports on how well policy decisions have paid all due regard to the welfare of animals. The relevant Minister must then respond to reports via statements to Parliament. From now on, Ministers will need to be ready to show that the needs of animals have been considered in relevant policy decisions.

This much awaited reform applies to all policy areas and to all stages of government policy making and implementation which isn't explicitly devolved. This means it covers England and policy areas that affect the whole of the UK, for example, military policy. It does not apply to policies formulated or implemented by the Scottish Ministers, Welsh Ministers or the Northern Ireland Executive.

It will also underpin the Government's [Action Plan for Animal Welfare](#), which was launched yesterday. The Government is committed to maintaining the very highest standards of animal welfare and I am delighted to be introducing this momentous piece of legislation.

I look forward to working with colleagues of all parties, in both Houses, to take this forward and build on the UK's global leadership on animal welfare issues.

RT HON GEORGE EUSTICE MP

