

August 2017

Dear Constituent

Thank you for contacting me about sentencing for offences of animal cruelty.

I am pleased that we have a robust legal framework to tackle this vicious behaviour in the Animal Welfare Act 2006, which makes it an offence to cause unnecessary suffering to any animal.

The courts must decide what the penalty should be for each individual case, taking into account its circumstances and the guidelines laid down by the Sentencing Council. Currently, in addition to the maximum penalty of six months' imprisonment and/or an unlimited fine, the courts can also disqualify offenders from keeping animals for as long as they consider appropriate.

The Government routinely monitors sentencing policy for all offences, including animal welfare offences, and current sentencing practice does not suggest that the courts are finding sentencing powers for animal welfare offences inadequate.

Yours sincerely

Richard Benyon