



**Chris Heaton-Harris**  
Member of Parliament for Daventry  
House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA  
Tel: 020 7219 7048

January 2022

Dear Constituent,

Thank you for contacting me about animal sentience.

I am proud that the UK has consistently led the way on animal welfare. It was one of the key EU members that lobbied for the recognition of animal sentience in Article 13 of the Lisbon Treaty in 2009 and, in addition, recognised in law that animals can feel pain and suffering through the Animal Welfare Act.

Now that the UK has left the EU, I am glad that this country can 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, which is making its way through Parliament, enshrines the 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.

I am encouraged that this Bill will create an Animal Sentience Committee with experts which 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 is not explicitly devolved. This means it covers England and policy areas that affect the whole of the UK.

I welcome that these reforms will also underpin the Government's Action Plan for Animal Welfare, which contains upwards of forty valuable reforms. I know that this Government is committed to maintaining the very highest standards of animal welfare and I am delighted that this piece of legislation has now been introduced.



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I know there is a lot of interest in the welfare of decapod crustaceans, such as the crab and lobster, and cephalopod molluscs, such as the squid and octopus. There is clear evidence that animals with a backbone are sentient, and I am pleased that this is reflected in the Government's Animal Welfare (Sentience) Bill. However, I am assured that the Bill also gives the Secretary of State a power to extend the recognition of sentience to particular invertebrates in future on the basis of evidence.

I welcome, therefore, that crabs, octopus and lobsters, as well as all other decapod crustaceans and cephalopod molluscs, are to be recognised as sentient beings. I am aware of a government-commissioned review by the London School of Economics and Political Science, which concluded that there is strong evidence that decapod crustaceans and cephalopod molluscs are sentient.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Chris'.

**CHRIS HEATON-HARRIS MP**  
**MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR DAVENTRY**