



June 2023

Dear Constituent,

Thank you for contacting me about the King's Guards ceremonial caps.

I am aware of the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals' (PETA) ongoing campaign to replace the real fur used in the bearskin King's Guards ceremonial caps with faux fur.

Guardsmen take great pride in wearing the bearskin cap, which is an iconic image of Britain, and the MOD is very sparing in the acquisitions that it makes. Individual soldiers do not possess their own hats, rather they are cared for and shared within the Household Division and, despite their constant use, every effort is made to carefully prolong the longevity of each ceremonial cap. On account of this, they usually last for more than a decade, with some having been in use for as long as 60 years.

That said, I can assure you that the MOD would like to find an alternative material to bearskin should one prove acceptable. This is a commitment the MOD takes very seriously. Indeed, where sustainable, affordable and appropriate faux material exists, the MOD has used it; the busby caps of the Royal Horse Artillery are a prime example.

The MOD are aware of testing on potential faux fur products which was carried out in December 2020 by an accredited testing house, against three of the MOD's criteria for suitability, however the material only passed one of those tests (water penetration).

Further testing was conducted in April 2022, however, the MOD does not believe from the information seen that the organisation which conducted those tests is accredited by either the UK Accreditation Service or the International Laboratory Accreditation Operation. In order to consider taking any proposed product forward, the MOD need test results that have been conducted by an independent and accredited testing house.

Consequently, the MOD have not to date seen evidence that a suitable faux fur product exists to be considered as an alternative. Until that material is sourced and proven, I can assure you that the UK goes to great lengths to ensure that the pelts that make the King's Guards caps are procured in the most responsible way possible.

Let me be clear, bears are never hunted to order for the MOD. Bear pelts used for the King's Guards' ceremonial caps are sourced exclusively from Canada precisely



**Chris Heaton-Harris**

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because it is a regulated market and a declared party to the convention on international trade in endangered species of wild fauna and flora.

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**