



Chris Heaton-Harris
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Dear Constituent,

Thank you for contacting me about pet theft and cats.

I would like to assure you that I fully recognise that the theft of a much-loved pet can have a huge impact on both pets and families. In 2021, the Government set up the Pet Theft Taskforce to investigate concerns about a perceived increase in pet theft. This taskforce gathered, researched and commissioned work to build a clear evidence base of the issue and worked with police, law enforcement, and experts to formulate recommendations. Since publication of the report, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the Home Office and the Ministry of Justice have been working on implementing the taskforce's recommendations.

The Kept Animals Bill, introduced in June 2021, was designed to implement several of the Government's ambitions for animal welfare, including measures to address pet theft. However, I am aware that the Bill's multi-issue nature meant that there was considerable scope creep, and it risked going beyond the original commitments in the Conservative manifesto on which I was elected and those set out in the action plan. Therefore, the Government announced that it would be taking forward measures in the Kept Animals Bill individually during the remainder of the Parliament. I have noted your suggestion for cats to be included in the offence of pet abduction, and my ministerial colleagues recognise that campaigners have called for this. I will continue to monitor this issue closely.

More widely, the Government has legislated to make microchipping cats compulsory. The new rules mean that cats must be microchipped before they reach 20 weeks of age. I am assured that this will make it easier for lost or stray pet cats to be reunited with their owners and returned home safely.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

CHRIS HEATON-HARRIS MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR DAVENTRY