



November 2023

Dear Constituent,

Thank you for contacting me about the use of cages for farm animals.

I would like to assure you that my ministerial colleagues and I take the welfare of all animals seriously. Since publishing the Action Plan for Animal Welfare, the Government has delivered an ambitious legislative programme, bringing significant improvements for animals both in the UK and abroad. Ministers are firmly committed to maintaining the UK's strong track record on animal welfare and to delivering continued improvements, both in the course of this Parliament and beyond.

I have noted your comments in relation to the import of food and the use of cages for animals and will continue to monitor this issue closely. However, I understand that my ministerial colleagues do not believe that the time is right to consult on cage reforms, recognising some of the challenges that numerous sectors have faced in recent years.

I am informed that the market is already driving the move away from using cages for laying hen production, and that the proportion of eggs from caged hens has steadily decreased from 47% of total throughput in Q4 of 2017 to 21% in Q1 of 2023. Regarding pigs, the UK is ahead of most other pig producing countries in terms of zero confinement farrowing, in that 40% of the national sow breeding herd farrow freely on outdoor pig units with no option of confinement.

The Government will continue to work with the sector maintain and enhance high standards of welfare. For example, the Animal Health and Welfare Pathway will prioritise areas for additional improvement in the health and welfare for pigs, cattle, sheep and poultry. I know that one of the Government's priorities for the pathway includes supporting producers to transition away from confinement systems.



Chris Heaton-Harris

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I am assured that the Government continues to advance international co-operation on animal welfare and to promote high welfare standards. I am aware that production methods such as sow stalls and battery cages are already not permitted in the UK. The Prime Minister has confirmed that the Government will safeguard the UK's ability to maintain high animal welfare, food and environmental standards in new trade agreements.

Of course, if you have specific concerns about the welfare of an animal, I recommend reporting it to the police or the RSPCA.

Thank you 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**