



January 2024

Dear Constituent,

Thank you for contacting me about pet theft.

I fully recognise the devastating impact that the theft of a pet can have on both the pet and families. In response to concerns about a perceived increase in pet theft during the Covid-19 pandemic, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) launched the Pet Theft Taskforce in May 2021. The taskforce's findings and recommendations, published in September 2021, included the creation of a specific offence.

I am aware that the Pet Abduction Bill, introduced by my colleague Anna Firth MP, would introduce a new criminal offence in relation to the theft of a dog or a cat. I know that the Government supported the Bill during its Second Reading, and I will support this Bill when it returns to the House.

More widely, Defra has been making improvements to the cat and dog microchipping regime in England in line with the taskforce's recommendations. This includes introducing legislation last year to extend compulsory microchipping to include cats, as well as dogs. This increases the likelihood of lost or stolen pets being reunited with their owner. In addition, police forces are working together to better coordinate and share best practice and advice on the steps owners can take to protect their pets.

Thank you for taking the time to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

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