

[MP joins pet theft campaigners to present petition to 10 Downing Street](#)

- [Home](#)
- [All News](#)
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A north-east MP fighting for a change in the law on pet theft has joined campaigners from across the UK who presented a petition to Number 10 Downing Street.

Scottish Conservative Ross Thomson wants existing legislation to be amended to recognise the status and importance that pets have within families.

At present, pets are treated as possessions and no different from any other inanimate object that is stolen, such as a TV or a car.

The MP for Aberdeen South proposed a ten-minute rule bill to parliament in July amend the Animal Welfare Act 2006 and the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006 to make the theft of a protected animal a specific offence. The bill is due for its second reading on Friday, October 26.

The north-east MP has campaigned previously on animal welfare issues, successfully persuading the UK Government's Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) to look at changes to laws around the use of electric shock collars.

Mr Thomson was joined in Downing Street by fellow MP Gareth Johnson, representatives of Stolen and Missing Pets (SAMPA), Pet Theft Awareness, Dogs Lost UK, campaigner Debbie Matthews and Dr Daniel Allen, Animal Geographer and the author of "Otter" and 'The Nature magpie'. The petition has been backed by more than 100,000 people.

Ross Thomson, MP for Aberdeen South, said:

"I was delighted to join campaigners pushing for a change in the law in Downing Street.

"The response to the petition has been overwhelming.

"For anyone unfortunate enough to have experienced pet theft, it can be truly heart-breaking, distressing and devastating.

"The theft of a pet should be recognised as a serious, criminal and punishable offence that recognises the status the animal has within their family.

"I want to see tougher sentencing guidelines for courts to deal with those that are caught.

"It is time for change.

"I am very pleased at the level of cross-party support I have received on this issue so far.

"I look forward to this bill proceeding to its second reading and I hope that we can deliver the change that is needed as soon as possible."