

# UK to lead the way on animal welfare through flagship new Action Plan

In a first of its kind, the Government has today published an [action plan for animal welfare](#) that will revolutionise the treatment of animals in the UK and introduce measures to protect the welfare of animals abroad.

Now that we have left the EU, the UK has new freedoms to further strengthen animal welfare standards and reinforce its position as a global champion of animal rights.

The Action Plan for Animal Welfare, launched today by the Environment Secretary George Eustice, will build on our existing world leading standards by recognising animals as sentient in law and committing to a range of new game changing welfare measures to protect pets, livestock and wild animals.

During a visit to Battersea Dogs and Cats Home, the Environment Secretary said that the Government would take a significant step forwards on animal welfare by formally recognising animals as sentient beings through a new Animal Sentience Bill that will be introduced to Parliament tomorrow (13 May), putting animal welfare at the very heart of government policy decision making.

Launching the plan, the Environment Secretary George Eustice said:

We are a nation of animal lovers and were the first country in the world to pass animal welfare laws.

Our Action Plan for Animal Welfare will deliver on our manifesto commitment to ban the export of live animal exports for slaughter and fattening, prohibit keeping primates as pets and bring in new laws to tackle puppy smuggling.

We will lead on the protection of animals abroad by implementing the world's toughest ivory ban and banning the import of hunting trophies to protect iconic species. As an independent nation we are now able to go further than ever to build on our excellent track record.

The Action Plan for Animal Welfare also sets out how the government will:

Improve welfare for pets by:

- tackling puppy smuggling through changes to import rules
- introducing compulsory microchipping for cats
- cracking down on pet theft through a new government taskforce
- banning remote controlled training e-collars

Protect wild animals by:

- making it illegal to keep primates as pets
- introducing new laws to crack down on illegal hare coursing
- supporting legislation to restrict the use of glue traps
- funding wildlife conservation projects both at home abroad

Protect animals abroad by:

- banning the import of hunting trophies from endangered animals
- banning the sale of ivory by implementing the Ivory Act this year
- prohibiting the import and export of detached shark fins to protect the iconic shark species
- exploring a ban on the sale of foie gras
- banning the advertisement in this country of unacceptable low-welfare animal practices abroad – such as elephant rides

Improve welfare for farmed animals by:

- ending the export of live animals for fattening and slaughter
- introducing new measures to improve welfare during transport
- giving the police more powers to protect farm animals from dangerous or out of control dogs
- examining the use of cages for poultry and farrowing crates for pigs
- improving animal welfare at slaughter
- incentivising farmers to improve animal health and welfare through future farming policy

To deliver these reforms, the Government will be introducing a series of Bills in due course focusing on animal sentience, kept animals here in the UK and the welfare of animals. There will also be a series of non-legislative changes to promote animal welfare over the coming months, with a number of regulations due to be brought forward as early as this year.

The Government will also ensure that animal welfare is not compromised in all our future trade negotiations.

The UK has a world-leading record on animal welfare, and over the last decade the Government has introduced a range measures to ensure we offer animals the care, respect and protection they deserve. This includes banning the use of battery cages for laying hens, introducing compulsory CCTV in slaughter houses and raising the maximum sentence for animal cruelty [from six months to five years](#).

Chris Sherwood said, Chief Executive of the RSPCA said:

These announcements will make a real and lasting difference to animals' welfare, so we're pleased the Government is committed to improving animals' lives in the UK and abroad. We can no longer ignore the inextricable link that exists between the way we treat animals, our own health and that of the planet – but to really achieve a step change, it will take courage from right across

Government.

We urge the government to put animal welfare at the heart of policy making and make these announcements just the beginning of an evolving, holistic animal health and welfare strategy.

Peter Laurie, Chief Executive of Battersea Dogs & Cats Home said:

Battersea very much welcomes the new Action Plan for Animal Welfare. Every dog and cat deserves to be safe from harm and this means clamping down on those trading animals illegally and in poor welfare conditions, being proactive to protect owners from the devastation of having their pet lost or stolen, and doing everything we can to reunite them.

Our pets are not only sentient beings, but much-loved family members and we support any measures that will protect them from unnecessary suffering, and reassure dog and cat owners, both now and in the future.

Claire Bass, Executive Director of Humane Society International/UK said:

We are very pleased to see so many commitments to protect animals brought into focus by government through this action plan. Britain prides itself as a nation of animal lovers and animals suffering both here and overseas for food, fur, entertainment, the pet trade and more deserve this proactive agenda.

Delivering on the plan will require understanding and real commitment from across Whitehall. Respect for animal welfare is not only the right thing to do for animals, it will also play a critical role in tackling global environmental and public health challenges such as climate change, antibiotic resistance and pandemic prevention.

Since 2010, the Government has also brought in mandatory microchipping for dogs to help reunite lost dogs with their owners and has introduced additional protection for service animals by introducing [‘Finn’s Law’](#). Last year, the Government introduced [Lucy’s Law](#) to tackle puppy farming by banning the commercial third-party sales of puppies and kittens. In 2019, the Government also outlawed the use of [wild animals in circuses](#).

Recognising the links between animal health and welfare and the health of our planet, the Government is also working closely with industry to transform future farming policy through the [Animal Health and Welfare Pathway](#) which will forge a new deal between government and farmers to promote healthier and higher welfare animals. The Pathway will pay farmers to improve animal health and welfare, reduce carbon emissions and slow the rise of anti-microbial

resistance.

The full Action Plan for Animal Welfare can be accessed [here](#).

You stay up to date with all the latest developments by searching #ActionForAnimals.