

Antony Higginbotham MP
Member of Parliament for Burnley



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

18th June 2020

Dear Constituent,

Re: Gamebirds & Cages

Thank you for contacting me about the welfare of gamebirds bred for shooting.

There is no place in this country for animal cruelty, and we must ensure that those who abuse animals are met with the full force of the law. The Animal Welfare Act 2006, already makes it an offence to cause unnecessary suffering to any animal, including gamebirds and I am in full support of strengthening welfare standards with the introduction of the Animal Welfare (Sentencing) Bill which is currently before Parliament.

This new Bill will enable tougher prison sentences for the most serious perpetrators of animal cruelty, from the current maximum of six months to up to five years. I believe that this increase in sentencing will send a clear message that this behaviour will not be tolerated. The maximum five-year sentence will become one of the toughest punishments in Europe, strengthening the UK's position as a global leader on animal welfare.

Animal Welfare legislation is also backed up by the statutory Code of Practice for the Welfare of Gamebirds Reared for Sporting Purposes. It is only right that when birds are housed or penned, the accommodation should be well constructed and of sufficient size to ensure good health and welfare. It should be common practise.

Equally, barren raised cages for breeding pheasants and small barren cages for breeding partridges should not be used and any system should be appropriately enriched. Keepers are required by law to be familiar with the code of practise, which encourages the adoption of high standards of husbandry, and any failure to observe its provisions can result in prosecutions.

I have full faith in the work of the Animal and Plant Health Agency to enforce the rules, as well as Lancashire County Council, who can both carry out routine welfare inspections and investigate complaints. Crucially prosecutions can and should be brought where necessary.

As your Member of Parliament I support the action taken to ban cages or close confinement systems where there is clear scientific evidence that they are detrimental to animal health and welfare.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'A. Higginbotham', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

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