



Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs



Foreign, Commonwealth  
& Development Office

The Rt Hon the Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park  
Minister of State

Dr Neil Hudson MP  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA  
[neil.hudson.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:neil.hudson.mp@parliament.uk)

Our ref: MC2021/09867/SR

7 May 2021

Dear Neil,

Thank you for your letter of 13 April on behalf of Dogs Trust's parliamentary Puppy Smuggling Taskforce, about illegal importation of dogs to the UK.

The Government takes the issue of puppy smuggling and other illegal importations of pets very seriously. It is an abhorrent trade which causes suffering to animals and puts the health of pets and people in the UK at risk. Through our manifesto commitment, we are determined to crack down on puppy smuggling, the illegal trade and the low welfare issues it causes.

Now the Transition Period has ended, we have the opportunity to manage our own pet travel and commercial importation rules. We have been actively listening to the concerns of stakeholders and the Government is considering options to strengthen our efforts to tackle puppy smuggling and the welfare of puppies during travel. These options will take into consideration the recommendations of stakeholders such as the British Veterinary Association (BVA) and Dogs Trust, and recent Parliamentary work from the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (EFRA) select committee.

The UK has one of the toughest pet border checking regimes in the world. Every pet dog travelling to Britain has its microchip and documents checked to make sure puppies are properly vaccinated and are old enough to travel. We have legislation in place to ensure those guilty of offences are duly punished, which include amongst other penalties, a maximum penalty of 12 months in prison or an unlimited fine. We continue to work closely with the Dogs Trust on the Puppy Pilot and appreciate their ongoing support.

The Government also continues to raise awareness of issues associated with the low-welfare and illegal supply of pets through our 'Petfished' campaign. The campaign provides clear signposting on where responsible breeders and rehoming centres can be found and encourages prospective buyers to research the seller thoroughly before they visit and decide to purchase. The campaign also provides a list of red flags for buyers to look out for when searching for a pet online. The step by step guide on buying a dog or cat advises that you should expect to see the animal interacting with its mother and siblings when you visit. More information can be found here: <https://getyourpetsafely.campaign.gov.uk/>

I would encourage anyone who has suspicions or evidence of illegal activity relating to the importation of animals to contact the APHA Intelligence Unit at [intelunit@apha.gov.uk](mailto:intelunit@apha.gov.uk) or by contacting their Local Authority's Trading Standards officer.

Thank you once again for your letter.

With best wishes,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a stylized 'R' followed by a long horizontal stroke that curves upwards at the end.

**THE RT HON THE LORD GOLDSMITH OF RICHMOND PARK**