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Food & Rural Affairs

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Richard Burden MP  
House of Commons  
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*Dear Richard,*

Thank you for your letter of 29 November on behalf of a number of your constituents about the sale of puppies and kittens.

The Government is serious about improving the welfare of cats and dogs in both breeding establishments and at point of sale. One way of achieving this aim is ensuring that potential buyers are more aware of what to look for when purchasing a cat or dog. This is why we have helpful advice for potential buyers on the GOV.UK website. We also work with stakeholders to explore other ways of relaying such messages to those who are considering buying a cat or dog.

We are currently reviewing laws which relate to the animal activities licensing schemes, including those that regulate the selling of pet animals, including cats and dogs. In 2016 we consulted on a number of proposals including one to apply specific welfare conditions to pet vendors. The consultation resulted in around 1,700 responses, the majority of which were overwhelmingly positive to our proposals. A summary of the responses was published in September and more detailed proposals will be produced this year. We hope to announce the way forward soon and publish draft regulations with a view to their coming into force.

We have proposed that modern standards of welfare should be applied to all pet shops and other commercial pet vendors even if they are selling from their own home or trading online. The standards include a requirement that animals are not sold at too young an age, which for mammals is defined as before they are weaned or should have been weaned. For cats and dogs this is likely to be at or below eight weeks. As part of the licensing review, we are also looking closely at introducing provisions to clarify this requirement in the regulations. The advice on the GOV.UK website would change to reflect the fact that kittens and puppies should not be purchased if they are under eight weeks of age.

I consider that the combination of these measures, including the results of the recent consultation, provide the right balance for the authorities to tackle the issue of irresponsible dog breeding and selling.

*Yours sincerely,  
John*