



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

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House of Commons
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Dear Colleague,

The Animal Welfare (Sentencing) Bill has been introduced by the Government into the House of Commons. The current maximum penalty for the worst animal cruelty offences under the Animal Welfare Act 2006 is six months. The Animal Welfare (Sentencing) Bill will amend this to make provision for an increase in the maximum penalty for these offences to five years' imprisonment and/or an unlimited fine in England and Wales. This will apply to the more serious offences associated with animal cruelty.

The Government committed to increasing maximum sentences for animal cruelty offences in September 2017, and this was widely and warmly welcomed. Our current maximum penalty for animal cruelty offences of six months' imprisonment is significantly below the European average of just two years. Northern Ireland has already set the maximum penalty for animal cruelty offences at five years' imprisonment, and the Scottish government has announced an intention to do so. The Welsh Government have confirmed that the new maximum penalty should apply in Wales and the Bill is drafted on this basis.

The new maximum penalty of five years is also in line with campaigns by key stakeholders such as Battersea Dogs and Cats Home, Dogs Trust and the RSPCA. This Bill is a positive step forward in improving animal welfare and will act as a serious deterrent against cruelty and neglect. It further demonstrates the Government's commitment to maintain our status as a world leader on animal welfare. I look forward to your support in getting this Bill onto the statute book as soon as we can.

If you would like to discuss the Bill further, I would be pleased to meet you. My office can be contacted at ps.david.rutley@defra.gov.uk.

With best wishes,


DAVID RUTLEY MP