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The Rt Hon Lord Benyon  
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Lord Benyon

Thank you for your letter of 17 January 2023 seeking confirmation of the Scottish Government's position regarding the Animals (Low-Welfare Activities Aboard) Private Members Bill.

Following discussion at the Inter Ministerial meeting on the 23 Jan, and having given further consideration to the various related issues, the Scottish Government cannot give its support to this legislation.

I appreciate and commend the intention behind the Bill, to achieve an improvement in the welfare of animals used as part of the tourist trade aboard. However, I share the concerns held by the Welsh Government on; the high level of uncertainty; the pace at which the bill will be forced through, leaving little time for proper consideration and opportunity to make amendments at the appropriate stages; the extra demand on policy and legal resource would likely be detrimental to other animal welfare commitments and concerns on the overall effectiveness of this legislation in practice.

Ideally we would have been able to fully support and effectively bring in these measures through the now fallen Animals Abroad Bill. I believe this is a greatly missed opportunity to introduce safeguards covering a number of areas to improve animal welfare.

The recent political uncertainty and delay on progress of various animal welfare commitments is a significant cause for concern. I would like to highlight, in the strongest possible terms, the importance of taking forwards the UK Kept Animals Bill at the earliest opportunity. This Bill will bring in necessary and important powers to control the import of dogs and ban the live export of livestock for slaughter. As you will undoubtedly be aware, this Bill has strong stakeholder support and if it fails to progress through parliament, the UK Government will have to take full responsibility.

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Further to the lack of progress on the UK Kept Animals Bill, I would like to express my concern surrounding the lack of clarity, or indeed urgency, on a number of other previous UK Government proposals covering important animal welfare issues, where joint working across GB has been previously agreed or was expected. These include calls for evidence on the welfare of quail and gamebirds, and consultations on welfare at slaughter, phasing out of cages for laying hens and farrowing crates for pigs.

I would be most grateful if you could address the concerns outlined above and provide clarity on the progression of these important proposals. I am of course open to further discussion and would welcome any opportunities for constructive engagement between our officials to aid delivery of this work.



**MAIRI GOUGEON**

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