



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

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Iain Stewart MP
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Dear Iain,

Thank you for your email of 19 December on behalf of your constituents about dog fighting. I am replying as the Minister responsible for this policy area.

Dog fighting is illegal under Section 8 of the Animal Welfare Act 2006, which also applies to those who are present. The Animal Welfare (Sentencing) Act 2021 came into force in June 2021, providing one of the toughest sanctions in Europe and strengthening the UK's position as a global leader on animal welfare. This realises our manifesto commitment to increase the sentences available to our courts for the most serious cases of animal cruelty.

The Animal Welfare (Sentencing) Act 2021 increases the maximum sentence from six months to five years imprisonment and/or an unlimited fine for animal cruelty offences, including causing unnecessary suffering and involvement in an animal fight, and is a significant step forward in improving animal welfare. Following a conviction, the court may also ban the offender from keeping animals or certain types of animals and/or order that their animals are removed from them. This strengthened penalty sends a clear message that animal cruelty will not be tolerated and will enable our courts to take a firmer approach to cases such as dog fighting.

The Online Safety Act 2023 requires social media firms to remove online content facilitating animal torture in a further push to make the UK the safest place in the world to be online.

On 31 January 2023, the Government confirmed a total police funding settlement of up to £17.2 billion in 2023/24, an increase of up to £313.8 million when compared to 2022/23. The Home Office has since announced a further £330 million of in year funding to support forces in managing the costs associated to the 2023-24 pay award. The Home Office remains committed to ensuring that the police have the resources they need. However, it is for Chief Constables and directly elected Police and crime commissioner, and Mayors with Police and crime commissioner functions to make operational decisions including how to allocate resource based on their local knowledge and experience.

Please do not hesitate to get in touch if you need further information.

Yours sincerely,

LORD DOUGLAS-MILLER