Dear

I am writing to you out of concern for the increasing amount of dogs that are ending up in government pounds and rescue centres. Dogs Trust statistics show that every year over 120,000 dogs end up in government pounds. Pounds are legally obliged to keep each dog alive for just seven days before they can kill it. In the UK every year so many unwanted dogs are being put down that the amount averages at least one dog per hour, 365 days a year.

This is disgusting and it is a disgrace.

I am writing to urge you to address this problem, the root of which is indiscriminate over breeding, in parliament. Puppy farms made the front page of *The Independent* a few months ago, but as far as we can see, the government is making no effort to address this problem. The issue of over breeding and puppy farms are a massive welfare issue in their own right, but they also lead directly to further abuse of animal rights and animal welfare. Over breeding by individuals as well as established puppy farms has dire consequences for dogs all over the UK.

Papers and social media sites are full of ‘free to a good home adverts’ advertising dogs, as well as adverts for cheap dogs. It is a recognised fact by charities that work with dogs that only 1 in 10 of the dogs rehomed in this way actually end up in a good home. Some will be neglected, some deliberately abused, but a significant proportion will also be picked up for use as ‘bait’ dogs by dog fighters. These fighters know what they are doing. They know that if they present themselves to people as a good home, no home checks will be carried out, no follow up will be enacted, and they have acquired themselves a free animal that they can goad other dogs into ripping into pieces.

Why is the government idly allowing this cycle of over-breeding, disposable approach to animals and animal abuse to continue? Why is the government happy to spend money on pound places for over 120,000 dogs a year rather than deal with the cause of the problem? As my MP, these are questions that I expect you to raise.

I support the Last Chance Hotel’s proposals for animal welfare reform. They suggest:

* Formulating a pro-active policy and / or change to animal welfare legislation to combat indiscriminate over-breeding of dogs.
* Reintroducing dog licences for owners, with specialist licences for breeders, with the number of breeders being limited (as well as the number of litters they are permitted to produce) and afforded only to those who breed in accordance with the highest of animal welfare standards.
* A specialist agency should be set up to police this licensing. This could be funded by the cost of licences, penalties incurred by those failing to adhere to them, as well as savings made with far fewer dogs taking up space in government pounds.
* Financial and penal penalties incurred for breach of the new provisions should be harsh enough to ensure the majority adhere to them. Animal abuse should be punished much more harshly. If an individual has been found to be fighting dogs and / or using bait dogs or engaging in other similar levels of animal abuse they should receive a custodial sentence, banned from keeping animals for life **AND THIS SHOULD BE POLICED.** If they are banned for life they should not be able to get around the ban by putting animals in the name of a friend or family member. They should not be permitted to have any animals in their house or on their premises!
* Prohibition of advertising dogs for rehoming through ‘free to a good home’ adverts. (Incidentally, cats also suffer similar levels of abuse when rehomed in this way, so should be afforded similar protection to dogs).
* The Last Chance Hotel proposes that a policy shift is enacted so that ‘deed not breed’ is punished. Any dog can be made aggressive with continual brutalisation. If the ban is removed from certain breeds, the stigma attached to these dogs would gradually dissipate. This would in turn lead to them no longer being sought after by people who want them for completely the wrong reasons. There is nothing cool about having a pitbull or other banned breed if middle class families and people’s grannies have one!
* Owners who have deliberately made their dogs aggressive should be made an example of.

The government needs to start tackling the root of the problem, rather than actively punishing dogs. At present they are permitting a situation where as a society we are complicit in neglect and abuse on a massive scale. Enough.

I would appreciate it if you would contact me in order to inform me how you plan to address this matter.

Yours sincerely,