

Dr Neil Hudson MP FRCVS  
Member of Parliament for Penrith and The Border



House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA

The Rt Hon Lord Zac Goldsmith  
Minister of State  
Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs  
Seacole Building  
2 Marsham Street  
London  
SW1P 4DF

April 2021

Dear Lord Goldsmith,

As members of Dogs Trust's parliamentary Puppy Smuggling Taskforce, we are writing to ask that the Government takes urgent action to stop the illegal importation of dogs into the UK. We are encouraged that the Government is engaged in this area and very much welcome your positive and constructive responses in the EFRA Select Committee's November 2020 Evidence Session on Pet Smuggling.

For more than six years, Dogs Trust has been exposing the cruel puppy smuggling trade. Through their first four investigations and the establishment of the Puppy Pilot\* scheme, Dogs Trust have found evidence of:

- Puppies bred in horrific conditions
- Heavily pregnant females being illegally brought into the UK to allow dealers to dupe buyers into buying 'UK bred' puppies
- Unscrupulous vets falsifying data on pet passports, offering to sedate puppies to smuggle them through the border, providing EU passports and microchips for puppies from unlisted third countries
- 23-33 hour journeys from Central and Eastern Europe (depending on source country)
- No food, insufficient water, no exercise, no toilet breaks
- Ineffective border controls and enforcement of Pet Travel Scheme at UK ports
- Lack of sufficient penalties to deter the illegal trade

The findings in their fifth and latest report, 'Puppy Smuggling: Puppies still paying as Government delays', launched December 2020, are a glaring reminder that action is needed not only to end the suffering of puppies, but also to protect the unsuspecting buyers that are caught up in this trade. The investigation looked at adverts for breeds amongst those most intercepted on entry to the UK from Central & Eastern Europe and cared for on the Puppy Pilot in the last two years. The findings revealed that 29% of adverts in England were for imported puppies. 14% of all adverts reviewed across Great Britain were for imported puppies and 18% of these were confirmed by their seller as being under the legal minimum 15 weeks of age for entry into the UK.

Since the launch of the Puppy Pilot in December 2015, over 1,500 puppies have been admitted to Dogs Trust with a street value of over £3 million (if sold at today's inflated prices by their unscrupulous dealers). Between early 2019 and January 2021, 39 pregnant mums were cared for through the Pilot by Dogs Trust. These gave birth to an additional 182 puppies worth an approximate total market value of over £400,000. Even during the COVID-19 pandemic with restrictions on travel, between March and the end of January 2021, Dogs Trust rescued 362 illegally imported puppies.

Until the Government acts, many more puppies and adult dogs will suffer at the hands of the criminals involved in this trade. We urge the Government to take action and introduce legislation to put a stop to the illegal importation of dogs into Great Britain.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Neil Hudson MP FRCVS

*On behalf of*

**Alexander Stafford MP**

**Allan Dorans MP**

**Andrew Gwynne MP**

**Andrew Selous MP**

**Andy Carter MP**

**Ben Lake MP**

**Bob Blackman MP**

**Brendan Clarke-Smith MP**

**Carla Lockhart MP**

**Carol Monaghan MP**

**Caroline Lucas MP**

**Caroline Nokes MP**

**Christina Rees MP**

**Craig Tracey MP**

**Dave Doogan MP**

**David Amess MP**

**David Simmonds MP**

**Grahame Morris MP**

**Henry Smith MP**

**Ian Paisley MP**

**Jason McCartney MP**

**John Hayes MP**

**John Spellar MP**

**Julian Knight MP**

**Kenny MacAskill MP**

**Laurence Robertson MP**

**Lisa Cameron MP**

**Margaret Ferrier MP**

**Marion Fellows MP**

**Mark Tami MP**

**Navendu Mishra MP**

**Nick Smith MP**

**Olivia Blake MP**

**Patricia Gibson MP**

**Rachel Hopkins MP**

**Robert Halfon MP**

**Roger Gale MP**

**Rosie Cooper MP**

**Sarah Champion MP**

**Selaine Saxby MP**

**Siobhan Ballie MP**

**Stephen McPartland MP**

**Stephen Timms MP**

**Theresa Villiers MP**

**Tim Loughton MP**

**Tommy Sheppard MP**

**Tonia Antoniazzi MP**

\* In December 2015, Dogs Trust established the Puppy Pilot to provide care and support for illegally imported puppies seized at the ports during their time in quarantine. By funding the care of these dogs and supporting their responsible rehoming, enforcement agencies at the ports have been freed up to focus on seizures knowing the fate of the puppies was secure with Dogs Trust.