

The Rt. Hon. Michael Gove MP
Secretary of State for the Environment, Food & Rural Affairs
House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA

26 September 2018

Dear Secretary of State

I was most heartened to hear of two recent positive announcements on the welfare of dogs in this country – firstly, the government’s intention to consult on how best to implement a ban on third party puppy sales and secondly, the announcement of a ban on shock collars. It is reassuring that the government is listening to the overwhelming voice of the British people and taking steps to challenge the suffering of dogs.

May I also raise with you the plight of dogs in laboratories? Whilst I of course appreciate that experiments on animals is a matter chiefly for the Home Office, I do believe that this is a question that government as a whole should consider. As you yourself have said, the UK is a nation of animal lovers and it is the government’s wish to protect companion animals across the board.

As you will know, some 3,800 experiments were carried out on dogs in UK laboratories in 2017. Note that this figure does not include experiments that started in 2017 nor those that were ongoing. Most of these tests involve dogs in regulatory toxicity testing for the development of human medicines. Tests on dogs are also carried out to fulfil the requirements of plant protection laws, including tests for weed-killers and pesticides.

The UK’s Human Medicines Regulations 2012 defer in many respects to the European Union’s Medicine Directive, and indeed there are no separate UK regulations on safety requirements. Safety requirements are at present established by two seemingly legally binding European Medicines Agency guidelines which specify that a rodent and a non-rodent must be used in repeated dose studies to support a new medicine.

www.ema.europa.eu/docs/en_GB/document_library/Scientific_guideline/2010/03/WC500079536.pdf

We would argue that, with the government’s ongoing consideration of the legislative and regulatory landscape post-Brexit and in the light of increasing evidence that using dogs in experiments to predict how humans will respond to drugs is not scientifically justifiable and that the emotional and intellectual capacities of dogs are much more advanced and their suffering in experiments greater than many scientists previously accepted, the time has come to think again.



We would like to see an immediate end to the use of dogs in tests for plant and agri-products, and we would call on the government to commit to an urgent and transparent review, involving all stakeholders, of the use of dogs in all regulatory testing.

As you have demonstrated, as our awareness of animal sentience grows and as science develops, it is beholden on all of us to constantly strive for better.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michelle Thew". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Michelle Thew
Chief Executive