



Ministry
of Justice

The Right Honourable
Robert Buckland QC MP
Lord Chancellor & Secretary of
State for Justice

Catherine McKinnell MP
Chair, Petitions Committee
Tom Hunt MP
Petitions Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

MoJ ref: 200617

17 July 2020

Dear Catherine and Tom,

PET THEFT

Thank you both for your letter of 17 June regarding the law on pet theft.

The Government fully understands the deep distress caused by the theft of a much-loved family pet and the importance of dealing with pet theft given this impact it can have on owners. All reported crimes should be taken seriously, investigated and, where appropriate, taken through the courts and met with tough sentences. However, I should reiterate that stealing a pet is already a criminal offence under the Theft Act 1968 for which the maximum penalty is 7 years' imprisonment.

As rightly acknowledged, sentencing decisions are a matter for the courts, taking into account all the circumstances of the individual case. The Sentencing Council's guidelines on theft specifically include the emotional distress, and therefore the harm, that the loss of valued pets (amongst other matters) can have on victims, and accordingly recommends higher penalties for such offences.

I understand the strength of feeling among campaigners regarding this issue, but the Government is satisfied that the existing law on theft already covers the criminal offence of pet theft. The Government therefore has no plans to introduce a new specific offence to deal with the theft of pets.

Yours ever

RT HON ROBERT BUCKLAND QC MP