

Written evidence submitted by Michael Kerner (MAAB0065)

Dear Mr Parish,

I write to you in your capacity as Chair of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee.

I have been watching with interest the latest inquiry into moving animals across borders and I am delighted to see that parliament is taking this issue very seriously and attempting to better protect the welfare of animals.

Whilst I completely agree with many of the recommendations you have made to government, I wanted to flag the circumstances that I, along with other British citizens, find myself in. I am the spouse of a UK civil servant, currently posted overseas in North America, and last year we welcomed a dog to our family, which happens to have a docked tail (which is a surprisingly common practice in North America). We of course had not planned to get a dog with a docked tail, and in fact we weren't aware that the tail had been docked before we got her. Whilst we are extremely upset that our lovely dog's tail was docked, we have provided a wonderful life for her and of course, she is now a very important member of our family.

Again, whilst I agree with the actions being taken by parliament to safeguard animals (being the owner of a pet who has unfortunately been subject to this mistreatment has made me feel even more strongly about it), I am now extremely concerned that our dog will not be allowed in to the UK with us when we move home in two years' time, at the end of our posting.

I am aware that you are writing to government with a report and recommendations, if you were able to separate the issue of importing young puppies who have been subject to low welfare practices, such as tail docking, with dogs who are already family pets that would be greatly appreciated by myself and others I know in the same situation. I believe there will be a way to separate this by age, for example, dogs over the age of six months and who are already family pets, or being imported back to the UK as part of 'household effects', should be permitted to enter.

Looking to Switzerland, who are considered global leaders in animal welfare, they have a similar policy on the importation of dock tailed dogs. However they have exemptions when already owned pets are imported as part of "household effects". "Dogs with cropped ears or docked tails may be brought into Switzerland by their foreign keepers on a temporary basis for holidays or other short stays and also imported as part of the household effects. They must have been in the owner's possession for at least six months before relocation. A similar clause for the UK Government's Bill, allowing UK citizens who owned the dogs prior to this legislation to import them into the UK, would be extremely helpful.

I completely agree that docking tails is a horrendous thing to do, however I do hope you will understand the predicament we are in - potentially being forced to choose between rehoming our dog overseas or not being able to return to the UK, which also feels extremely cruel on our wonderful dog.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Best wishes,
Michael

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