



Marie Rimmer CBE, MP
Member of Parliament for St. Helens
South & Whiston
House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA
Tel: 020 7219 4847/01744 752075

End the Cage Age:

I have long supported ending the use of cages on farms, while allowing farmers the time to plan and make necessary changes. In my view, these are outdated farming practices that cause animals distress and restrict their natural behaviour.

We have a long way to go regarding the use of cages and better animal welfare. I want to see improvements made to avoid the stress and fear cages can induce in animals, especially young ones. There are alternatives available, and I think we must move on to loose-housing systems. However, we must see improvements being made in a sensible, measured way, working with industry and introducing measures it can cope with, especially while the food production sector is facing difficult times.

It is also vital we ensure any that domestic production of animal products produced through higher welfare, cage-free standards, is not simply undercut and replaced through trade deals allowing imports from countries still using lower-welfare cage systems.

The Government had previously indicated its consultation on the future of cages for laying hens was almost ready, but that its consultation on pig farrowing crates was still being worked on.

More recently, despite its numerous stated aspirations for the UK to become the global leader in farm animal welfare, it has said that it does not consider the time right to consult on cage reforms due to challenges facing the food and farming sectors.

I believe all animals deserve protection, whether they are on a farm, at home as a pet, at large in the wild or in the sea. Animals should not suffer unnecessary pain and degradation and we must continue to drive up standards and practice in line with the most recent advances and understanding. Strengthening our animal welfare laws is one of the Opposition's top priorities.

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Constituency Office:

Marie Rimmer CBE, MP, 2nd Floor, Century House, Hardshaw Street, St. Helens WA10 1QU, 01744 752075,
marie.rimmer.mp@parliament.uk
Website: www.marierimmer.co.uk