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### **Animal Testing and the use of Bearskins by the Military:**

I support the phasing out of animal testing entirely and stopping pain for animals during such procedures in the meantime. It need not be a binary choice between animal and human welfare.

I believe the Government should undertake a comprehensive review, with a view to improving practice, limiting animal suffering and increasing transparency, and a long-term objective to phase out animal testing entirely.

I am proud the then UK Government banned cosmetics testing on animals in 1997, extending this to cosmetic ingredients in 1998.

Improvements over recent years to animal testing practices are welcome. Non-animal methods and technologies for research have also advanced over time and I want to see more of these developed, validated and used.

However, I remain concerned at the lack of transparency around animal testing project licence applications. I further think we should investigate ending the permissance of 'severe' suffering as defined in UK legislation.

Regarding the King's Guard's caps, I recognise concerns about the use of bearskins by the military. I strongly believe no bear should be hunted or killed to order for use by the Ministry of Defence. It is incredibly important that traditions develop and adapt to ensure they survive.

I would like to see the Government conduct an immediate review of alternatives to bear fur, examining contracts, looking at costs and speaking directly to troops so their views inform any future decisions.

The Government has stated its analysis of testing of the ECOPEL material showed it met only one of the five requirements it considers necessary to be a viable alternative. It has no plans to take it forward as a replacement material. The Government must publish the data and analysis to substantiate these claims.

It has further stated that its suppliers source pelts made available by the Canadian authorities following a licensed cull to manage the wild bear population, and that there are strict laws and regulations to protect against unlawful trade in black bears within Canada and internationally.

I support both the armed forces and high animal welfare standards, and I will continue to follow developments on this matter.

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