



LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL
LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS
THE RT. HON. JACOB REES-MOGG M.P.



The Rt. Hon. Priti Patel M.P.,
Secretary of State for the Home Department
Home Office
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During Business Questions on Thursday 25th March, the following questions were raised with me relating to your Department.

Tom Hunt (Official Report, col. 1094)

Last weekend, just outside Ipswich, 83 stolen dogs were found. There have been six people arrested who are currently out on bail. Suffolk police deserve to be credited for their successful operation—one of the largest involving stolen dogs. But the concern among many of my constituents is that those responsible get away with little more than a slap on the wrist. I have raised this matter before during business questions and I have also led a debate on it. I have written to the Sentencing Council asking it to amend the guidance around the Theft Act 1968 and was rebutted. It is clear to me that only action in this place will ensure that this will cease to become a high reward, low risk crime. Will my right hon. Friend find time in this place to debate what action this place can take to stand up for our pets?

Selaine Saxby (Official Report, col. 1097)

Like my hon. Friend the Member for Ipswich (Tom Hunt), our excellent Devon and Cornwall police and crime commissioner, Alison Hernandez, is concerned about the growing issue of pet theft. In Devon and Cornwall there are, on average, 80 dog thefts a year, a quarter of which are linked to organised crime, yet no one has received the maximum sentence of only seven years. Will my right hon. Friend allocate Government time to debate how to tackle the issue of pet theft and ensure that the punishment reflects the crime? The loss of a loved pet—a member of the family—is far more than mere theft.

Lee Anderson (Official Report, col. 1104-5)

My best friend is a 12-year-old west highland white terrier called Alfie, and life without him would be almost unbearable. Yet every time my wife takes him out for a walk she is scared to death that he will be stolen. That is a shocking, shocking crime and should carry a mandatory jail sentence, in my opinion, and my residents would back me up on that. So, for the third time today, could I ask my right hon. Friend to please reassure me that he will do all he can to ensure a debate on that important issue in the House, or ask the Government to make a statement on the matter and help protect man's best friend?

Mr Rees-Mogg

It is clear from this session that pet theft is of considerable concern to hon. Members. This session is often a straw in the wind as to the issues that are of political importance, because Members raise whatever they want, and when you get three questions on the same subject it shows that there is public concern. The Government are doing the things that I set out previously, including providing the additional police force, but people ought to feel confident going for a walk, and it is unreasonable, unfair and unpleasant that my hon. Friend's wife, Mrs Anderson, does not feel safe going for walks for worry that her dog will be stolen. We want people to feel secure taking their dogs for walks, and I have heard the concerns of the House.

I wish to draw these questions to your attention for you to take note. Pet theft is clearly a concern and I would be grateful if a minister could write to these members to set out the Government's approach to tackling the problem.

I am copying this letter to Tom Hunt, Selaine Saxby and Lee Anderson.

With every good wish,

Is my,
James Kenyon