10th December 2015

Dear Rob,

Thank you for your letter of 4 November regarding a possible public consultation on proposals for a very tightly defined exemption to the ban on tail docking for working dogs in Scotland.

This proposal would allow vets to use their professional judgement and dock Spaniel and Hunt Point Retriever puppies only, if they believe on the evidence presented to them that they are likely to be used for working in future and that the pain of docking is outweighed by the possible avoidance of more serious injuries later in life.

I note that the Committee would support a full public consultation on this specific proposal so that the largest possible number of people in Scotland can have their say.

The Committee will therefore be interested to know that after further consideration I have concluded that a Scottish Government consultation on this proposal should now take place. I have asked for a consultation to be issued early next year – this will be a full public consultation running for the standard 12 weeks to allow the widest possible range of views and any new evidence to be considered. The consultation will be available on the Scottish Government website for anyone to respond to and an invitation to respond will also be issued to a wide range of interested bodies.

As normal, an analysis of the responses to the consultation will then be published and will help us decide if any change to the legislation is in fact appropriate.

Yours sincerely,

RICHARD LOCHHEAD