27 March 2018

Dear Graeme,

I am writing to let you know that Scottish Government Guidance on the Welfare of Pet Rabbits will be published during the Easter recess.

As you will be aware, the animal welfare group Rabbits Require Rights Scotland (now known as Advocates for Rabbit Welfare) raised a petition with the Scottish Parliament in 2015 calling for pet rabbits to be given increased protection in law. The Committee closed the petition on the basis that the Scottish Government would consider the options for pet rabbits as part of our review of animal welfare policy and that the concerns raised in the petition would be taken into account as part of this work.

Officials have worked closely with Advocates for Rabbit Welfare and other animal welfare and pet industry stakeholders in the production of this guidance. Its purpose is to provide information to pet rabbit owners, and those considering getting pet rabbits, to help them ensure that they can fully meet the welfare needs of their pets. Rabbits have long been regarded as ‘easy’ pets for children, but in more recent years vets and animal welfare experts have concluded that rabbits have much higher welfare needs than was previously thought, and that traditional practices in keeping pet rabbits were not meeting these needs. The organisations we have been working with are pleased that this guidance will inform public understanding of the needs of pet rabbits and will support owners in meeting these needs.

Yours,

ROSEANNA CUNNINGHAM