

Rt Hon Margaret Beckett MP
Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
DEFRA
Nobel House
17 Smith Square
London SW1P 3JR

23 February 2004

Dear Minister,

I write in connection with my successful amendment in Environment Committee which would allow Member States to prohibit the export of horses for slaughter.

I have been requested by a number of my constituents to urge you to support my amendment and defend the opt out which currently allows the UK to retain the Minimum Values Order, thereby prohibiting the export of horses and ponies from the UK.

If the Commission and more importantly, the Council, were to accept my amendment the UK would be able to retain its ban on the export of horses and ponies.

However, I understand from the Commission that the UK government is not in favour of retaining its ban on the export of horses and ponies, preferring instead a number of half measures (as set out in your 14 November letter) that will not be sufficient to prevent horse dealers from transporting UK equines to continental markets and slaughterhouses. Support from the UK government for my amendment is therefore crucial if we are not to see the beginning of a trade in live horses from the UK.

I would therefore be grateful if you would outline what action the UK has taken in the Council to prevent this from happening and what action the UK government intends to take in the future to prevent a live horse trade from the UK becoming a reality.

I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely

Caroline Lucas
Green Party MEP for South East England