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Dr Luke Evans MP
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Dear Dr Evans,

Thank you for your letter of 7 October on behalf of your constituents about the use of cages in farming.

We are firmly committed to maintaining and improving animal welfare and want to work closely with the farming sector to deliver high standards.

The use of enriched 'colony' cages for laying hens and farrowing crates for pigs is an issue we will want to fully consider in due course.

Eggs produced from hens in enriched 'colony' systems in the UK accounted for 25% of the total throughput in Q4 2023, with free range eggs accounting for 64% and the UK already has a significant outdoor pig sector with 40% of the national sow breeding herd farrowing freely on outdoor units with no option for confinement.

The Animal Health and Welfare Pathway makes grants available for equipment, technology and infrastructure to improve the health and welfare of livestock. The grants have been codesigned with farmers, academics, vets and industry representatives. This includes supporting the transition to cage free systems by offering grants to laying hen and pullet farmers in England (with flocks of 1000 birds or more) to refurbish or replace existing housing, including those looking to make the transition from colony cages to high-welfare non-cage systems.

The new government is currently listening to all interested parties, including farmers, industry representatives and non-governmental organisations, as well as assessing data and information about what is working and what is not working before setting out detailed plans in relation to further grants.

Yours sincerely,

DANIEL ZEICHNER MP