



Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs



Foreign, Commonwealth  
& Development Office

The Rt Hon the Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park  
Minister of State

Simon Marsh  
Acting UK Director  
Wild Welfare

Our ref: PO2021/00133/MK

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22 January 2021

Dear Simon,

Thank you for your letter of 9 December to the Prime Minister and your email of 14 December to the Secretary of State about the trade of wild animals and COVID-19 recovery policies. I am replying as the Minister responsible for animal welfare and apologise for the delay in doing so. Please also accept this as a reply to your letter to the Prime Minister.

The COVID-19 pandemic has provided us with a stark reminder of what happens when our relationship with nature breaks down. Although the exact cause of this pandemic is still to be determined, we know that poorly managed food systems, encroachment into wildlife areas, habitat loss and land-use change, poor animal health and welfare, and illegal and unsustainable wildlife trade all play critical roles in disease outbreaks.

If we are to achieve a global recovery and avoid future pandemics, it is imperative that the global community doubles its efforts to tackle the great global challenges we face in the loss of biodiversity, the disruption of habitats which bring wildlife into closer contact with humans and livestock, and unsanitary and unhygienic practices in our food chain. It means fully understanding risks to human and animal health, controlling diseases in livestock, ending unsustainable and illegal wildlife trade, and driving up standards in the production and sale of food around the world.

We are committed to leading calls for countries to agree, apply and enforce strong controls and the highest standards of biosecurity to minimise the risk of disease transmission, including the prohibition of certain species or practices where necessary. We fully recognise that the transport, housing and sale of live animals or meat can pose significant health risks and must be made safe. Where this is not possible, it should be stopped.

You are likely familiar with the Prime Minister's address to the One Planet Summit on 11 January, outlining the £3 billion to protect nature; whether marine life, timber conservation or sustainable food production. At a UK level, the Government is fully committed to the One Health approach, engaging a wide range of active cross-departmental collaboration groups, including: the Human-Animal Infections and Risk Surveillance Group; the UK five-year antimicrobial resistance national action plan Delivery Board; and the UK Zoonoses, Animal Diseases and Infections Group.

Now, more than ever, this approach is instrumental in protecting the health and livelihoods of everyone on the planet. We will continue to drive this work, recognising it as more than a concept and a lens through which we assess our plans to address future risks, including pandemics, building on opportunities through the 'Tripartite Plus' of the World Health Organization, the World Organisation for Animal Health, the Food and Agriculture Organization and the United Nations Environment Programme, and developing our international partnerships to strengthen health security across all spheres.

Thank you once again for your correspondence.

With best wishes,



**THE RT HON THE LORD GOLDSMITH OF RICHMOND PARK**