

HENRY SMITH MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Tim Davie CBE
Director-General, BBC
BBC Broadcasting House
Portland Place
London W1A 1AA

17th December 2020

Dear Mr Davie

We are writing to you as a cross-party group of Members of Parliament who care about animal welfare to express our serious concerns over the programme 'Will My Puppies Make Me Rich?', which we note has been commissioned by BBC Three.

This year has seen unprecedented levels of interest, and a significant increase, in dog ownership due to COVID-19 and the changes to everyone's way of life which the virus has resulted in.

There have been huge rises in imported puppies as well as illegal and irresponsible breeding practices. At a time when there are already serious welfare implications associated with poor breeding practices and major concerns for popular breeds like French Bulldogs and pugs, that have been selected for physical features that seriously compromise their welfare (such as flat faces), urgent steps are required to safeguard and promote responsible dog breeding and dog welfare more generally.

Sadly, we believe the production and broadcast of this programme has the potential to further contribute to welfare issues associated with poor breeding practices and ill-informed pet acquisition, and counter the collective efforts of animal welfare organisations to address this major problem. We consider the premise of this programme to be extremely irresponsible, seeking not only to popularise puppy breeding but also glamorise it as a 'get rich quick' scheme.

We are particularly concerned that the main angle of the programme will be to champion young people who have established themselves as businesses to breed 'designer canines' and that it will be actively promoting breeding as a way for young people to make money at a time of economic hardship for many.

Given the level of trust associated with the BBC, we believe you have a huge responsibility to set and maintain the very highest ethical standards and a programme of this nature appears at odds with this.

Our concerns are shared by a number of animal welfare groups, academics and sector bodies including the RSPCA, SSPCA, Battersea, Dogs Trust, PDSA, Royal Veterinary College, British Veterinary Association, British Small Animal Veterinary Association, Pet Industry Federation, Dog Breeding Reform Group, Brachycephalic Working Group and Companion Animal Welfare Group Wales. This is in addition to the significant opposition the programme has received in recent days as well as concerns expressed to us by our constituents.

We urge you to seriously reconsider the premise behind this programme and ensure that dog welfare and responsible breeding practices are at the forefront in any similar BBC programming decisions.

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Many thanks for your attention in this regard.

Yours sincerely



Henry Smith
Member of Parliament
Crawley Constituency

Sir David Amess, Member of Parliament for Southend West
Lee Anderson, Member of Parliament for Ashfield
Tonia Antoniazzi, Member of Parliament for Gower
Hannah Bardell, Member of Parliament for Livingston
Paula Barker, Member of Parliament for Liverpool, Wavertree
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