



OLIVÉR VÁRHELYI

MEMBER OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION
HEALTH AND ANIMAL WELFARE

Rue De La Loi, 200
B-1049 Brussels
Cab-varhelyi-Contact@ec.europa.eu

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Subject: Animal welfare legislation

Dear Mr Kruuse,

Thank you for your letter of 19 May 2026, in which -on behalf of the Estonian Parliament- you express your appreciation for the Commission's commitment to revise the EU animal welfare legislation, and raise a series of important issues to be considered in the context of that exercise.

I fully agree with you that we need a balanced approach to the revision. And I can assure you that elements such as the geographical, climatic and socio-economic conditions, as well as the competitiveness of EU farmers and other food business operators, are always carefully considered as part of the impact assessments that precedes the Commission's legislative proposals. Your description of the delicate situation for egg producers in Estonia is well noted. It illustrates well that the current fragmented legal landscape distorts the internal market.

In its communication on the EU strategy on livestock, the Commission announced that by the end of 2026, it intends to propose a targeted revision of animal welfare rules for laying hens and broilers, focusing on the phasing-out of cages, practical on-farm welfare indicators, ending the systematic killing of male chicks and equivalent import requirements. This revision will be an opportunity to address your concerns, as well as the problem with unfair competition from trading partners in third countries with lower animal welfare standards, in line with the objectives of the EU Vision for Agriculture and Food.

I am counting on your support on the upcoming proposal.

Yours sincerely,

Olivér Várhelyi

Mr Urmas Kruuse
Chair of the Rural Affairs Committee
Parliament of Estonia