



DEBATE PACK

Number CDP 2017/0205, 31 October 2017

Puppy smuggling

This pack has been prepared ahead of the debate to be held in Westminster Hall on Wednesday 1 November 2017 from 4.30-5.30pm on puppy smuggling. The debate will be opened by Nigel Huddleston MP.

The House of Commons Library prepares a briefing in hard copy and/or online for most non-legislative debates in the Chamber and Westminster Hall other than half-hour debates. Debate Packs are produced quickly after the announcement of parliamentary business. They are intended to provide a summary or overview of the issue being debated and identify relevant briefings and useful documents, including press and parliamentary material. More detailed briefing can be prepared for Members on request to the Library.

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1. Puppy smuggling

Under the EU Pets Travel Scheme or PETS, vaccinated and microchipped dogs, cats and ferrets are allowed to travel between EU countries for non-commercial reasons as long as they have a pet passport and have complied with all the requirements of the scheme, which include a rabies vaccination.

The [PETS scheme](#) is designed to allow a maximum of five pets to travel with their owner, rather than for the commercial movement of animals intended for sale as pets. Under the scheme, pet owners must fill in a declaration confirming that they are not going to sell or transfer the ownership of the pet. An approved transport company must be used for the travel of pets unless travelling between the UK and Ireland.

There is evidence that the scheme is being abused to import very young puppies illegally for the UK pet trade, with animal charities raising concerns about the welfare and health of the animals being imported. In addition there is evidence puppies are being hidden and smuggled into the UK. In response, there have been calls from charities to address the issue and strengthen the requirements for travelling with pets once the UK leaves the EU.

Number of dogs and puppies in the UK

There is no reliable data on the demand for puppies in the UK. There are no official estimates of the number of dogs in the UK (the dog license was abolished in 1987). Available estimates have a rather wide range. The Pet Food Manufacturers Association (PFMA) has produced a recent estimate that there were around 8.7 million dogs in the UK in 2017: [PFMA Dog population estimate 2017](#). However, [Murray et al 2015](#) estimated that there were between 10.7 and 12.5 million dogs in the UK with a central estimate of 11.6 million.

It is impossible to estimate the proportion, or number, of dogs that are smuggled puppies as we do not have any information on the age profile of the dog population. It is not even possible to estimate with any certainty the number of puppies as a whole. [Kennel Club registration statistics](#) indicate that around 228,000 puppies were registered with them in 2016/17 but this is a far from comprehensive estimate of the number of puppies born in the UK per year. The Kennel Club register is restricted to puppies where both mother (dam) and father (sire) of the litter are registered with the Kennel Club [Kennel Club registration FAQs](#).

The PETS Travel Scheme

When the PETS Travel Scheme was introduced, and up to 2012, pets had to wait 6 months for a blood test to prove the rabies vaccine had been effective before they could be issued with a passport under the PETS scheme. Defra's [Animal and Plant Health Agency](#) provided an explanation in 2011 of why the changes were being introduced removing this requirement and highlighting the reduced risk to the public of rabies:

The revised rules will deliver substantial benefits to pet owners, making it easier and cheaper for the people who travel from the UK and return with their pets (on average 100,000) each year, and especially for those travelling with their pets for the first time. These changes will also provide UK citizens the same level of free movement with their pet animals which other EU citizens are allowed.

These changes are also scientifically justified. The level of risk to the public has substantially reduced in recent years as the incidence of rabies in domestic and wild animal populations in the EU and other countries has decreased, and the treatments for pets and humans are far more effective. The EU pet movement system has been highly successful, demonstrated by the fact that, with many hundreds of thousands of pet movements across and into the EU, there has not been a single case of rabies associated with the legal movement of pets under the scheme since the system was introduced in 2004.¹

The [EU pet travel Regulation \(576/2013\)](#) came into force in December 2014 and amended existing requirements setting a minimum age for rabies vaccination. Since then pets must be 15 weeks old to be able to travel; they must have been vaccinated on or after 12 weeks of age there is a 21 day wait after vaccination before they can travel. Requirements such as tick treatments were also removed. Defra published an [information sheet](#) for pet owners at the time which summarised the changes. On the age of pets it stated that it would “prevent very young pets being moved across the EU”.

The Government [consulted](#) on the changes in 2014. The Kennel Club [response to the consultation](#), although generally positive, raised concerns about how effective the change would be in addressing the problem of illegal imports:

The checks on the Pet Travel Scheme will only work if individuals declare themselves as transporting animals. Within this framework of conducting checks, there will be a significant limitation on the effectiveness of enforcement carried out by carriers, regardless of how strict the pet travel rules may be, which the Kennel Club remains concerned about.²

Border Checks

The [Government response](#) to an [EFRA Committee report](#) from January 2017, referred to further below, included details of the how checks are currently carried out at the UK borders, and information on non-compliance with the scheme in 2015:

One hundred per cent of checks are carried out on pet animals entering Great Britain on approved routes under EU Pet Travel Scheme. The checks are performed by carriers, or pets checkers acting on their behalf. Defra’s Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) are responsible for training and appointing carriers and pets checkers. APHA undertake random checks of pet animals to ensure the carriers are performing checks to the required standard. In 2015 APHA completed checks on 5,663 animals travelling into GB. Of the 5,663 animals checked, 73 animals were found to be non-compliant with the EU Pet Travel Regulations.

¹ APHA, [Pet Travel Scheme Frequently Asked Questions](#), 2011

² The Kennel Club, [Kennel Club Responds To Pet Travel Changes](#), 2014

APHA work closely with carriers and pets checkers to address any issues identified and provide any additional training required.

More recently, in a [written response](#) from October 2017, the Government set out that approximately 600 puppies have been seized and taken into quarantine since APHA began an initiative in December 2015 to identify and seize smuggled dogs and puppies in collaboration with the Kent Police and [the Dogs Trust](#). In 2016 there were 5 convictions in relation to the illegal import of dogs under [Section 80 of the Animal Health Act](#).

Welfare and Health Concerns

Charities, including [the Dogs Trust](#), and [the RSPCA](#) have repeatedly raised concerns about puppies being smuggled into the UK to meet the demands of the puppy trade.

The [Dog's Trust](#) has been running an ongoing campaign to highlight concerns about puppy smuggling and carried out [three undercover investigations](#) since 2014. The Trust's 2015 investigation, [The Puppy Smuggling Scandal](#), concluded that the importation of puppies had increased as a result of fraudulent use of pet passports; and that undeclared imports were easily carried out particularly at weekends when Trading Standards officials were not routinely available. The Animal and Plant Health Agency is responsible for enforcement, although they do not always have a permanent presence at ports. The Dogs Trust report raised concerns about enforcement.

Both APHA and Trading Standards state that Trading Standards rely upon APHA to provide information to enable them to act. Clearly this cannot happen if APHA are not present and Trading Standards only have a telephone service running out of working hours.³

Central and Eastern Europe

The report on the latest investigation, [Puppy Smuggling a Tragedy Ignored](#), published in July 2017, found puppies under the legal age limit, with falsified papers, being smuggled from Central and Eastern Europe. It also highlighted a failure to comply with welfare requirements for transporting them. It concluded that most puppies arrive from Hungary, Poland and Lithuania with Latvia, Slovakia and Romania also important. The report also raised concerns about limited border checks.⁴ Paula Boyden, veterinary director for Dogs Trust called for increased visual checks and for the PETS travel scheme to be amended:

"The number of prosecutions is far too low and the lack of visual checks at ferry ports and borders is unacceptable. We want to see stronger deterrents including prison sentences for those caught trafficking puppies. To highlight the flaws in the system, we smuggled a fake dog 'Charly' though the border twice – once at Eurotunnel and once at Dover – after no visual checks were made.

"The government must revise pet travel legislation when the UK leaves the EU and ensure that puppies entering this country are healthy, not underage and are not being brought in to sell on to

³ The Dog Trust, [The Puppy Smuggling Scandal](#), 2015

⁴ The Dog's Trust, [Puppy Smuggling a Tragedy Ignored](#), 17 July 2017.

unsuspecting buyers via a scheme meant for non-commercial use.”

Puppies are bred in large numbers, often in horrific conditions in Central and Eastern Europe by corrupt breeders who are continuing to exploit the demand for these desirable breeds in Great Britain. They are brought into the country illegally at a young age in order to appear ‘cuter’ to buyers, with desirable breeds such as Pugs, Dachshunds, English and French Bulldogs making up 82% of those intercepted at the border.⁵

Ireland

Although there is a great deal of focus on Central and Eastern Europe, they are not the only reported sources of illegally smuggled puppies. There have been several reports in the Irish press over in recent years on the issue, with some estimating up to [30,000 puppies a year](#) are [smuggled into the UK](#). Various agencies, including the police, have been coordinating to address the issue through [Operation Delphin](#) since 2016:

As part of wide-ranging activity at ports, the RSPCA is working in partnership with a number of agencies, under the umbrella of 'Operation Delphin'. These include Border Force; Local Authorities, namely Isle of Anglesey County Council and Pembrokeshire County Council; the DSPCA; ISPCA; SSPCA; USPCA; veterinary surgeons; the Police; HMRC; Welsh Government; APHA; and other agencies, to target illegal puppy traders. The illegal trafficking of puppies is a major issue for the RSPCA, with the charity deeply concerned that large quantities of young puppies are transported into England and Wales, with welfare problems often a major concern.⁶

DEFRA Guidelines on purchasing pets

The demand for puppies is considered to be a significant driver for the illegal imports of very young pets into the UK. Recognising this Defra has published [guidelines](#) on purchasing pets, noting that ‘Illegally imported dogs and cats may not only carry diseases such as rabies but may also be advertised in a way that misleads the buyer regarding the animal’s history, breed or pedigree.’ The advice goes on to say the illegal trade in pets ‘...puts the health of the animals, and the general public, at risk from diseases including rabies’, warning prospective buyers:

If your new pet is found to be illegally imported and non-compliant with disease control rules, then you may find yourself having to pay for costly quarantine and veterinary bills. If you are unable to meet these costs, this may leave the local authority with no option other than to euthanase (put down) the animal.

Your local authority may conduct an investigation into potential criminal offences. You could become a witness in any further enforcement action.⁷

⁵ ibid

⁶ North Wales Police, [Almost 100 puppies rescued at Holyhead in 'shocking example' of illegal puppy trade](#), 16 November 2016

⁷ GOV.UK, [Bringing your pet dog, cat or ferret to the UK](#), (Accessed 30 October 2017)

Calls for changes to the legislation following Brexit

The [EFRA Select Committee](#) published a report on [Domestic Pets](#) in November 2016. The report set out three areas of concern: the age at which puppies were allowed entry into United Kingdom; enforcement checks at ports; and intelligence sharing between agencies. The report included a call for the issue of border control for pets to be included in Brexit negotiations, and for the minimum age for a dog to be allowed to travel to be raised to 6 months:

The Pet Travel Scheme (PETS) is providing a vehicle for the illegal importation of puppies. The Government must ensure that negotiations regarding our future relationship with Europe include this issue. The age at which dogs are allowed to enter the United Kingdom under PETS should be increased to six months, thereby reducing their commercial value to smugglers.

We recommend that the Government increase spot checks at entry points into the United Kingdom to enforce the rules on non-commercial trade on domestic animals.⁸

The [Government response](#) was published in February 2017. More recently, George Eustice, the DEFRA Minister stated on Brexit, in reply to a written question [PQ 7268](#) on 12 September 2017, that :

Leaving the EU provides us with an opportunity to develop gold standard policies on animal welfare. We are determined to get a good EU exit deal for Britain and we have been absolutely clear we will maintain and enhance our world-leading animal welfare standards.

The Dogs Trust, in its [latest report](#), called for a number of measures to be implemented following Brexit:

- When the UK leaves the EU, revised legislation must be introduced by Defra as a priority to effectively regulate pet travel and commercial pet movements
- Reintroduce a requirement for a rabies blood (titre) test before entry into the UK, together with a wait period which is in line with the incubation period of rabies
- Reintroduce a requirement for dogs and cats to be treated against ticks before entering the UK.⁹

⁸ EFRA Committee, [Domestic Pets](#), November 2016

⁹ The Dog Trust, [Puppy Smuggling a Tragedy Ignored](#), July 2017

2. News items

Kent Online

Dogs Trust investigation shows pups being smuggled in to Kent

18 July 2017

<http://www.kentonline.co.uk/kent/news/mans-best-friend-got-a-128971/>

BBC News Online

Dogs Trust action plea over illegal puppy smuggling

17 March 2017

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-kent-35832015>

BBC News Online

Illegal puppy imports 'more than treble' in three years

1 February 2017

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-38825539>

Daily Post (North Wales)

Holyhead port puppy smuggling plot smashed as 100 dogs found hidden in crates

16 November 2016

<http://www.dailypost.co.uk/news/north-wales-news/holyhead-port-puppy-smuggling-plot-12184696>

Independent

The devastating reality of puppy smuggling in the UK

26 October 2016

<http://www.independent.co.uk/extras/the-dark-world-of-puppy-smuggling-a7381891.html>

Guardian

Savage trade in underage and illegal puppies highlighted by UK charity

The Dogs Trust has evidence of hundreds of 'designer' dogs smuggled in appalling conditions into the UK from eastern Europe

4 August 2016

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/aug/04/savage-trade-in-underage-and-illegal-puppies-highlighted-by-charity>

Irish Times

Puppies being 'mass produced' in Ireland and sold in UK

Current legislation enables establishments to breed thousands of puppies, warns DSPCA

4 August 2016

<https://www.irishtimes.com/news/crime-and-law/puppies-being-mass-produced-in-ireland-and-sold-in-uk-1.2745131>

3. Press releases

Dogs Trust

UNDERCOVER INVESTIGATION BY DOGS TRUST REVEALS SICKENING PUPPY SMUGGLING TRADE IS RIFE

18th July 2017

- *Shocking case of four-week-old puppies with umbilical cords still attached being subjected to a 30-hour journey*
- *Puppies sedated to smuggle them across the border without any documentation*
- *One group of puppies transported in a basket covered in cling film with just one tiny hole for them to breathe through*
- *Limited visual checks allowed fake dog to be smuggled across the border twice*
- *82% of puppies intercepted at the border are popular breeds such as Pugs and French Bulldogs*

[Dogs Trust is calling on the government](#) to take immediate action to address the illegal importation of puppies into Great Britain, after an undercover investigation discovered smugglers across Central and Eastern Europe continuing to abuse the system.

The UK's largest dog welfare charity is urging people to contact their local MP via the Dogs Trust website to insist that the government revise inadequate legislation to put a stop to this horrific trade.

Undercover footage revealed a vet in Lithuania selling sedatives to allow puppies to be smuggled across the British border. Puppies as young as four weeks old were also transported with their umbilical cords still attached during a cramped 1,000 mile, 30-hour journey across Europe.

In another shocking case, puppies were observed vomiting and another eating their own faeces during a journey in a packed mini-van from Lithuania. Confined to pet carriers stacked amongst other packages in the back of the van with no air conditioning, and outside temperatures of 25 degrees, the puppies were given water just twice and not fed at all.

Vets in Poland and Lithuania were also filmed falsifying pet passports and faking rabies vaccination records, enabling underage puppies to slip through the net without the correct paperwork as part of the third undercover investigation by Dogs Trust.

Paula Boyden, veterinary director for Dogs Trust said:

These shocking cases clearly show that urgent action is needed to stop the puppy smuggling scandal. It remains as serious an issue for animal welfare and public health in 2017 as it did in 2014, when our first investigation highlighted the devastating effects of the 2012 changes to the Pet Travel Scheme, which effectively invited corrupt dealers to traffic underage puppies into Great Britain without the required treatments.

“The number of prosecutions is far too low and the lack of visual checks at ferry ports and borders is unacceptable. We want to see stronger deterrents including prison sentences for those caught trafficking puppies. To highlight the flaws in the system, we smuggled a fake dog ‘Charly’ through the border twice – once at Eurotunnel and once at Dover – after no visual checks were made.

The government must revise pet travel legislation when the UK leaves the EU and ensure that puppies entering this country are healthy, not underage and are not being brought in to sell on to unsuspecting buyers via a scheme meant for non-commercial use.

Puppies are bred in large numbers, often in horrific conditions in Central and Eastern Europe by corrupt breeders who are continuing to exploit the demand for these desirable breeds in Great Britain. They are brought into the country illegally at a young age in order to appear ‘cuter’ to buyers, with desirable breeds such as Pugs, Dachshunds, English and French Bulldogs making up 82% of those intercepted at the border.

In 2016 alone, 275,876 dogs travelled to Great Britain on the Pet Travel Scheme; a non-commercial system allowing animals to travel easily between EU Member States without undergoing quarantine. The highest number of puppies intercepted as part of the Dogs Trust Puppy Pilot arrived from Hungary, Poland and Lithuania with Latvia, Slovakia and Romania also predominant. Of the puppies seized, more than 95% of puppies rescued by Dogs Trust were deemed too young to travel and 6% sadly died due to poor health, malnutrition and dehydration.

Paula continues:

Following two previous investigations in 2014 and 2015, we launched our Puppy Pilot scheme. Through this, and with the help of APHA, Border Force and Kent Trading Standards, we have funded the quarantine costs of over 500 illegally imported puppies and found them new homes through our rehoming centres. Until Dogs Trust stepped in, seized puppies were at risk of being put to sleep or turned away at the borders.

Dogs Trust has released an [animation](#) to highlight the plight of a smuggled puppy, Charly, as he undertakes the perilous journey to Great Britain. To watch and share the animation, as well as emailing your local MP [to support Dogs Trust’s campaign to help transform the lives of illegally imported puppies visit \[www.puppysmuggling.org.uk\]\(http://www.puppysmuggling.org.uk\)](#).

Television and radio presenter Dermot O’Leary is backing the campaign and says:

As a dog lover myself I was horrified to learn that puppies are being smuggled into Great Britain in such terrible condition. I fully support Dogs Trust’s campaign to increase awareness of the puppy smuggling scandal.

Notes to editors

‘Puppy Pilot’ case studies:

- A litter of four Pugs were seized at Dover in May 2017 on suspicion of being underage. The puppies, aged around four weeks old, were transported thousands of miles from the Czech Republic to Great Britain in a small wicker basket with a layer of

cling film wrapped across it, with just one small breathing hole made in the top. Upon their arrival into Great Britain, the puppies were taken to quarantine as part of the Puppy Pilot to receive urgent veterinary care. None of the puppies had been weaned, indicating that they had been taken from their mother far too young. Staff worked round-the-clock to feed and care for them, and whilst three of the puppies began to improve, one of the puppies showed worrying symptoms. Staff treated the puppy but his health began to deteriorate and he sadly passed away.

- In March 2017 a litter of five English Bulldogs were seized at Dover on suspicion of being underage. A vet examination confirmed that they were probably just four weeks of age – eleven weeks younger than they should have been to travel to Great Britain. Shockingly a number of the puppies still had their umbilical cords attached. Their microchips had been taped to their carriers and the transporters had bought surgical tools with them so they could insert the chips. They received urgent medical attention and during their time in quarantine had an extensive socialisation programme to get them used to life in the real world.

Dogs Trust is the UK's leading dog welfare charity and has a network of 20 Rehoming Centres in the UK and one in Dublin. The charity cares for over 15,000 stray, unwanted and abandoned dogs each year. Dogs Trust has a non-destruction policy, and will never put a healthy dog to sleep. The charity is working towards the day when all dogs can enjoy a happy life, free from the threat of unnecessary destruction.

Kennel Club

Kennel Club Statement on New Dogs Trust Report on Illegal Puppy Smuggling

18 July 2017

Following the release of a shocking new Dogs Trust report on puppy smuggling, which can be accessed at www.puppysmuggling.org.uk, the Kennel Club, the UK's largest dog welfare organisation has issued the below statement:

Caroline Kisko, Kennel Club Secretary, said:

The Kennel Club, the UK's largest dog welfare organisation, is shocked by the findings of the Dogs Trust's new report on the illegal importation of puppies into the UK.

The Kennel Club fully supports Dogs Trust's calls for immediate government action to address this problem, which has serious dog welfare implications, and we would urge the public to support these calls by contacting their local MP requesting an urgent revision of ineffective legislation in this area.

The sad reality is that anyone buying a puppy that has been illegally imported is extremely likely to face high vet costs and a lot of heartbreak when their new pet falls ill or even dies because they have been bred by unscrupulous breeders who care only for profit.

We would always recommend anyone wishing to buy a puppy goes to a responsible breeder who is prioritising the health and

welfare of their dogs, such as a Kennel Club Assured Breeder. Breeders assured by the Kennel Club, which is accredited by UKAS to certify breeders under its Assured Breeder Scheme, have their breeding premises inspected by the Kennel Club, must carry out any relevant health testing and must have every one of their puppies checked by a vet before sale. Furthermore, the Kennel Club monitors buyer feedback for all breeders in its Assured Breeder Scheme and any breeder found wanting can be removed from the scheme. Outside of the Assured Breeder Scheme there is really no way of knowing that a breeder is following best practice and putting the health and welfare of their dogs first.

There is a wealth of information available on the Kennel Club's website about what to look for and what to avoid when buying a puppy and being armed with this information is crucial to ensure puppy buyers are not unwittingly contributing to the illegal trade in puppies.

DEFRA

New plans to crack down on backstreet puppy breeders

2 February 2017

Proposals include reducing the number of litters a breeder can produce without a licence to improve pet welfare standards

Tougher dog breeding licensing rules to better protect thousands of puppies are to be introduced as part of [a swathe of reforms to safeguard the welfare of Britain's pets](#), Environment Secretary Andrea Leadsom announced today.

The plans to tighten up laws around selling pets and breeding dogs will make it completely illegal to sell puppies younger than eight weeks and require anyone breeding and selling three or more litters of puppies a year to apply for a formal licence. Irresponsible breeders who don't stick to these rules face an unlimited fine and/or up to six months in prison.

The new rules will mean smaller establishments - sometimes called 'backstreet breeders' - which supply thousands of dogs to families each year, as well as larger commercial breeders, must meet strict welfare criteria to get a licence. Irresponsible breeders can neglect the health and welfare of the puppies they raise and may not properly vaccinate them, leading to steep vets' bills and heartbreak for buyers.

The rules will also be updated and made fit for the modern age with anyone trading commercially in pets online needing to be properly licensed, to help make reputable sellers easily accessible to prospective buyers.

The plans also cover how pet shops, boarding houses and riding stables are licensed, introducing a single 'animal activities licence' to improve the process and make enforcement easier.

Environment Secretary Andrea Leadsom said:

Everyone who owns a pet or is looking to introduce one into their life will want to know that the animal has had the very best start

to life. Yet for thousands of puppies born each year to irresponsible breeders, from smaller operations to larger puppy farms, their first weeks are spent in cramped and squalid conditions without the care and attention they need. That is why we are cracking down on the worst offenders by strengthening the dog breeding licence and giving councils the power they need to take action.

With more and more pet sales now taking place on the internet, it's right that this market is subject to the same strict licensing criteria as other breeders and pet shops so that consumers are not misled. The plans announced today will help people choosing new family pets to be confident the animals have been properly bred and cared for from birth and are ready to move safely to their new homes.

Under the new plans, pet shops will also be required to give buyers written information about the animals they buy, with details of the five welfare needs owners must meet under the Animal Welfare Act around environment, diet, behaviour, housing and freedom from pain. This advice is particularly important when buying exotic pets, which can have very specific welfare needs.

Welcoming the plans, Dogs Trust Veterinary Director, Paula Boyden, said:

As the UK's largest dog welfare charity, Dogs Trust welcomes the Government's review of animal establishments licensing in England and the range of measures it sets out.

We are particularly pleased that it will be illegal to sell a puppy below the age of 8 weeks and that there will be tighter licensing rules which will require sellers of pets to display their licence when advertising. We also applaud the move towards a risk based single licensing system which will incorporate those breeders that have gained UKAS approval rather than exempting them.

We believe that Local Authority Inspectors need support to enforce these tighter licensing rules. As such, moves to mandate the use of Model Conditions and for inspectors to be offered training and standards to be set is most welcome.

Caroline Kisko, Kennel Club Secretary said:

We are pleased that Defra will be taking forward proposals to ban the sale of puppies under the age of 8 weeks by commercial third parties; we have called for a ban on third party sales, and refuse to register puppies being sold to third parties, but this new rule is a step in the right direction. We also welcome the requirement for pet sellers to provide written information about the animals they sell and for those who sell pets online to display their licence number.

As the litter licensing threshold is set to reduce from five litters to three we look forward to working with Defra on the new risk based licensing system, to ensure that UKAS accredited Assured Breeder Scheme (ABS) members will continue to be inspected by the Kennel Club for the maximum licence length of three years. This will incentivise more breeders to join the scheme, and breed to a higher standard of welfare that the ABS requires, and reduce the inspection burden on local authorities.

Pet owners are also being urged to make sure their pet's microchip details are up to date. Latest figures show 94% of dogs have been

fitted with microchips, nine months after the Government introduced a law requiring all dogs to be painlessly fitted with a chip containing their owner's details. But a Battersea Dogs and Cats Home study of stray dogs last year found that only 20% of their microchips contained up to date information.

It's vital that owners who move house or change their phone number make sure they keep their pet's details up to date, so they can be reunited should their four-legged friend ever go missing. Owners can check with their microchip provider that their details are correct.

Andrea Leadsom added:

It is absolutely critical that owners not only make sure their pet is microchipped, but that they also make sure details are kept up to date so they can be reunited if their pet is lost or stolen.

It is excellent to see that so many owners have taken action to get their dogs chipped, yet all too many still need to be rehomed because the owner hasn't updated their details—heart-breaking for the owner and the dog, and easily avoidable with a five-minute phone call.

[More information on buying a cat or dog](#)

Background

- Read [The review of animal establishments licensing in England: Next steps](#)
- [Summary of responses to the review](#)
- Many welfare charities also offer free guidance on buying a pet. The RSPCA offers a 'puppy contract' – a document signed by the buyer and seller confirming that both parties have or will meet their obligations to the puppy's welfare.
- The [Animal Welfare Act 2006](#) covers all animals in England, and details their five welfare needs.
- [Information on the requirement to get your dog microchipped](#)
- [Advice on getting your pet microchipped](#)
- Estimated number of microchips with out-of-date information from 'Microchipping Where It Matters Most', by Battersea Dogs and Cats Home, 2016.

EU Dog and Cat Alliance

MEPs Pause to Discuss EU Dog and Cat Welfare in Breeding and Trade

28 September 2016

Yesterday (27th September) MEPs, the European Commissioner for Health & Food Safety Vytenis Andriukaitis and key figures from the animal welfare world united at the European Parliament to highlight the important developments to companion welfare in the EU. Organised by the EU Dog & Cat Alliance, key speakers included President of the

Intergroup on the Welfare and Conservation of Animals Sirpa Pietikäinen MEP who also hosted the event.

The EU Dog & Cat Alliance is calling for an Action Plan to tackle the illegal trade in dogs and cats in the EU. With a worrying number of pets being illegally brought into countries across the EU, often with falsified pet passports and having endured poor travelling and living conditions, the Alliance and its members are calling for changes to be made to improve this worrying situation.

Says Adrian Burder, EU Dog & Cat Alliance:

This illegal trade can only be addressed through a comprehensive approach, involving the European Commission, European Parliament and Member States, including agencies, border and veterinary authorities. The Alliance believes that in order for improvements to be seen steps need to be taken sooner rather than later and the issue addressed in a coordinated way at the root of the problem.

Sirpa Pietikäinen MEP, President of the Intergroup on the Welfare and Conservation of Animals said:

The European Parliament has arguably been the most supportive of the EU institutions for EU action to protect dogs and cats. We need to treat this illegal trade as a serious trafficking offence and increase the efforts of the EU customs and police co-operation in this field. As a member of this House, I believe that the Parliament will have a crucial role to play in making this happen. I call upon my colleagues in the EP to support this initiative.

The illegal trade in dogs and cats in the EU stretches far beyond simply animal welfare concerns, and also has implications for public health, consumer protection and the smooth functioning of the EU internal market, as well as anti-trafficking efforts. Numerous steps will be needed in order to solve this problem. These include consumer education and protection, information sharing between agencies and a common approach to the issue across the EU as whole. All of this has been factored into the proposed EU Action Plan the Alliance members are united in supporting.

Adrian continues:

Today's event is aimed at highlighting one of the biggest issues affecting companion animals in Europe today. Hundreds of thousands of young dogs and cats in the EU are bred for illegal sale in absolutely terrible conditions, transported long distances in cramped cages, often without food or water, unvaccinated and neglected. This can frequently result in life-long behavioural issues for the pet as well as health problems – both genetic and in terms of communicable diseases. This is why today we have launched a campaign for an EU Action Plan to tackle the illegal trade in dogs and cats and it is hoped that with all of the points from the plan in place an end to the illegal trafficking of cats and dogs could be within our grasp. But first it needs to be escalated and seen as a priority within the EU.

Full details of the plan can be found via www.dogandcatwelfare.eu. To follow the campaign on Twitter search #EUpetwelfare.

4. Parliamentary material

Debates

Commons Adjournment Debate: Sale of Puppies

HC Deb 17 October 2017 | Vol 629 cc813-

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2017-10-17/debates/B004F6EC-1632-4060-9CF2-6D5270D262F6/SaleOfPuppies>

Westminster Hall debate: Welfare of Young Dogs Bred for Sale

HC Deb 8 March 2016 | Vol 607 cc29WH-

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201516/cmhansrd/cm160308/halltext/160308h0001.htm#16030851000001>

Ten-minute Rule Bill: Illegal Importation of Dogs (Fixed Penalty)

HC Deb 26 March 2014 | Vol 578 cc371-

https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmhansrd/cm140326/debtext/140326-0002.htm#140326-0002.htm_snew3

PQs

[Animal Welfare Offences](#)

Asked by: Baroness Jones of Whitchurch

My Lords, we very much welcome the Secretary of State's recent announcement of an increase in maximum sentences, as the Minister has described, but does he accept that the law is only as good as the people who will need to enforce it? For instance, the Dogs Trust has repeatedly highlighted the scandal of puppy smuggling into the UK. It is done not by individuals but by organised gangs which, as we know, frequently keep underage puppies in appalling conditions. Does he accept that more police and border control resources are needed to stop this cruel practice, otherwise the law becomes meaningless?

Answered by: Lord Gardiner of Kimble

My Lords, what the noble Baroness has said is absolutely on the dot: we need to drive down on the illegal smuggling of puppies. That is why I endorse what the Dogs Trust has done in working with Kent County Council, Border Force and the transport companies. We absolutely want to rout out the illegal smuggling of puppies. That is one of the reasons why it is so important that we invite people who wish to have pets to consider rehoming and make sure that, if they want to buy a puppy, they see it interacting with its mother—look to those sources and do not go for puppies that very often arrive in this country ill.

HL Deb 24 Oct 2017 | Vol 785 c837

[Dogs: Imports](#)**Asked by: Burden, Richard**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate his Department has made of the number of puppies being smuggled illegally into the UK.

Answering member: George Eustice | Department: Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

We take the issue of illegal trafficking of puppies very seriously, and the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) are gathering intelligence to help us understand the size of the problem regarding puppy smuggling.

Defra and APHA work constructively with other government agencies and charities to share intelligence on illegal movements of pet animals. APHA has established an intelligence team which will gather data, intelligence and information on illegal movement of dogs and puppies and, as appropriate, share with enforcement bodies.

APHA works in partnership with the Dogs Trust and Kent County Council to identify and seize dogs and puppies which were not compliant with the requirements as part of a pilot project at Dover responding to intelligence on potential non-compliance. Approximately 600 puppies have been seized and taken into quarantine since the initiative began in December 2015.

HC Deb 17 October 2017 | PQ 106485

[Dogs: Smuggling](#)**Asked by: Sheerman, Mr Barry**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps the Government is taking to tackle the smuggling of dogs into the UK.

Answering member: George Eustice | Department: Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

We take the issue of illegal trafficking of puppies very seriously.

Responsibility for stopping the illegal movement of puppies begins in the country where they are born. When cases of illegal puppy movements under the Pet Travel Scheme are discovered, the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) working with Defra will raise instances of abuse of the scheme with the authorities in the relevant countries.

Defra's Chief Veterinary Officer has written to EU countries to raise concerns over illegal smuggling of puppies and animals and APHA has worked in partnership with the Dogs Trust at Dover where approx. 600 puppies have been seized and taken into quarantine since the initiative began.

Defra also works closely with the Pet Advertising Advisory Group to drive up standards for online advertisements and make potential pet

owners and website operators more aware of rogue dealers to reduce demand.

HC Deb 15 September 2017 | PQ 9107

[Dogs: Smuggling](#)

Asked by: Spellar, John

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many prosecutions have occurred or proceedings commenced as the result of seizure of illegally imported puppies taken into Dogs Trust's care via its puppy pilot quarantine scheme since the start of that initiative.

Answering member: George Eustice | Department: Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

The Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) is working with the Dogs Trust and Kent County Council to identify and seize dogs and puppies which were not compliant with the requirements of the Pet Travel Scheme as part of a pilot project responding to intelligence on potential non-compliance. However any prosecutions or proceedings commenced as a result of the puppy pilot would be undertaken by the Local Authorities.

Local Authorities are required to submit a return to Parliament each year (under Section 80 of the Animal Health Act). The reports do contain high level details of all prosecutions, and the report for 2016 shows that 5 prosecutions were taken in relation to the illegal import of dogs. However we do not hold information on whether these successful prosecutions were as a result of the Puppy Pilot.

HC Deb 12 September 2017 | PQ 7281

[Dogs: Smuggling](#)

Asked by: Moon, Mrs Madeleine

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will bring forward legislative proposals to improve measures to prevent the illegal importation of underage puppies after the UK leaves the EU.

Answering member: George Eustice | Department: Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

While the United Kingdom remains in the European Union we remain signed up to the Pet Travel Scheme and the rules by which dogs and puppies are imported into the United Kingdom.

Since December 2015 the Animal and Plant Health Agency teams have been working in partnership with the Dogs Trust, Kent County Council and Kent Police on a pilot to identify and seize non-compliant dogs at Dover and Folkestone. To date over 600 dogs have been seized the majority being under the minimum age permitted to enter the UK.

Leaving the EU provides us with an opportunity to develop gold standard policies on animal welfare. We are determined to get a good EU exit deal for Britain and we have been absolutely clear we will maintain and enhance our world-leading animal welfare standards.

HC Deb 12 September 2017 | PQ 7268

[Pets: Imports](#)

Asked by: Fitzpatrick, Jim

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many (a) dogs, (b) cats and (c) ferrets were imported (i) non-commercially under the Pets Travel Scheme and (ii) commercially under the Trade in Animals and Related Products Regulations 2011 into the UK in 2016.

Answering member: George Eustice | Department: Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

The commercial data was extracted from the Trade Control and Expert System (TRACES) and the pet data was taken from APHA's system for recording pets entering the UK, based on information provided by pet checkers.

In some cases imports are recorded on TRACES as "Canis familiaris / Felis catus", so APHA are unable to distinguish between cat or dog imports. These are included on the table in row "Mixed cats/dogs".

	Pets	Commercial
Dogs	275,876	34,017
Cats	24,145	2,572
Ferrets	129	0
Mixed cats/dogs	N/A	327

HC Deb 07 February 2017 | PQ 62238

[Dogs: Smuggling](#)

Asked by: Cameron, Dr Lisa

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if her Department will assess the potential merits of moving enforcement responsibilities from carriers to Government agencies in order better to tackle the illegal importation of puppies by way of the pet travel scheme.

Answering member: George Eustice | Department: Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Defra takes the issue of the illegal importation of puppies and abuse of the pet travel scheme seriously. All pet animals entering Great Britain on approved routes under European Union Pet Travel Scheme are subject

to documentary and identity checks. These are performed by carrier's staff or checkers acting on their behalf. The Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) train and appoint carriers and pet animal checkers. APHA also undertake random audits. Audits carried out in 2015 identified only 1.3% of the animals checked to be non-compliant with pet travel rules. APHA work closely with carriers and pet animal checkers to address any issues identified and provide additional training as required.

We have no current plans to amend the arrangements for checking pet animals at the border. Defra is currently reviewing the operation of the Pet Travel Scheme in England and review includes the pet checking and carrier approval process. As part of the review the Department held a public consultation during the autumn of 2016. We are currently analysing the feedback from the consultation which will be published as part of the overall review in 2017. Since December 2015 APHA Port of Dover staff have been working in partnership with the Dogs Trust to identify, seize and quarantine underage puppies illegally transported into the country.

HC Deb 22 December 2016 | PQ 57906

[Dogs: Smuggling](#)

Asked by: Cameron, Dr Lisa

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans her Department has for ensuring that intelligence on illegal puppy importations is shared between (a) Euro Tunnel, (b) ferry operators and (c) other carriers and relevant enforcement agencies.

Answering member: George Eustice | Department: Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Sharing intelligence across government and with those organisations transporting pet animals is one of the most important ways of identifying illegal puppy importation. A central intelligence unit has been established within the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA). One of the unit's roles is to review available data and intelligence and ensure it can be shared appropriately with enforcement agencies, animal welfare charities and carriers.

An operational group comprising government enforcement agencies, animal welfare charities and relevant carriers has been set up to support the unit. The role of this group is to identify data and intelligence that can be used to uncover illegality, threats, trends and concerns surrounding puppy importation.

HC Deb 22 December 2016 | PQ 57904

[Dogs: Smuggling](#)

Asked by: Baroness Redfern

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they have taken to minimise the illegal trafficking of puppies.

To ask Her Majesty's Government what guidance they have given to Border Force regarding the illegal trafficking of puppies.

Answering member: Lord Gardiner of Kimble | Department: Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Defra takes the issue of illegal trafficking of puppies very seriously. The action we have taken to tackle illegal puppy movements covers the key areas in the supply of trafficked puppies. Responsibility for stopping the illegal movement of puppies begins in the country where they are born. Where puppies have been discovered to have been moved into the UK using falsely certified pet passport paperwork my officials have raised the issue with authorities in the relevant countries. We also have effective border controls in place. These require all pet animals travelling into Great Britain on approved routes to have documentary and identity checks at the border. There are stringent penalties available against individual found to be breaking the rules by illegally moving dogs into the country.

Defra and the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) have and continue to work constructively with other government agencies and animal welfare charities to share intelligence on illegal movements of puppies. APHA has provided Border Force officials with the requirements that dogs and puppies entering the UK must meet. APHA works closely with Border Force colleagues to assist them in reducing the illegal trafficking of puppies.

Finally the illegal trafficking of puppies is ultimately driven by demand. Defra has published guidance for consumers on the responsible purchase of pet animals. It has worked closely with the Pet Advertising Advisory Group to drive up standards for online advertisements making potential pet owners and website operators more aware of rogue dealers and this work will continue.

HL Deb 21 December 2016 | PQ HL3969; PQ HL3968

[Dogs: Smuggling](#)

Asked by: Arkless, Richard

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions she has had with local authorities in Northern Ireland and Scotland about the illegal trafficking of puppies from the Republic of Ireland; and what assessment she has made of the effect on such trafficking of the transfer in Scotland of search powers from Trading Standards to local port authorities.

Answering member: George Eustice | Department: Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

The Government takes the illegal movement of dogs and puppies seriously and it is committed to working with the Devolved

Administrations, delivery bodies, enforcement agencies and non-government organisations to tackle this issue.

Whilst there have been no recent Ministerial meetings on the illegal movement of dogs, Defra's Chief Veterinary Officer has recently discussed the issue with his Scottish, Welsh and Northern Ireland counterparts. Additionally, there have been discussions on this issue between other Defra officials and officials within the Devolved Administrations.

Defra has not carried out an assessment of the impact of transferring Trading Standards search powers to local port authorities in Scotland as this is a devolved matter. However, we will continue to work closely with the Scottish Government and other interested parties to ensure that there is a full exchange of ideas and information on combating the illegal importation of puppies.

HC Deb 18 April 2016 | PQ 33910

[Dogs: Imports](#)

Asked by: Fitzpatrick, Jim

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what the number and countries of origin were of dogs imported into the UK for (a) non-commercial reasons under PETS and (b) commercial reasons.

Answering member: George Eustice | Department: Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

For imports under the Pet Travel Scheme, a record is made of the country that prepared the relevant documentation. This will not always be the country of origin.

The majority of pets entering Great Britain have UK pet passports, suggesting that they are returning with their owners from a holiday or visit abroad.

Data is collated by a range of third parties, typically transport companies approved to carry pet animals and it is not possible for the Government to guarantee the accuracy of the statistics.

I have attached the available information on commercial and non-commercial imports of dogs for the years 2013, 2014 and 2015.

[Commercial Imports 2015](#) (PDF Document, 119.27 KB)

[Imports of Dogs during 2015](#) (PDF Document, 99.01 KB)

HC Deb 21 January 2016 | PQ 22443

5. Useful links and further reading

Dogs Trust *Puppy Smuggling: A Tragedy Ignored - Investigation into the continuing abuse of the Pet Travel Scheme and the illegal entry of dogs into Great Britain* 2017

https://www.dogstrust.org.uk/puppy-smuggling/puppy%20smuggling%20report_final%20pdf.pdf

DEFRA *Animal welfare: reviewing animal establishments licensing in England* February 2017

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/animal-welfare-reviewing-animal-establishments-licensing-in-england>

EU Dog and Cat Alliance: Movement across Member State borders

<https://www.dogandcatwelfare.eu/issues/movements-across-member-state-borders/>

Blue Cross joins others to call for action on illegal EU dog and cat trade

<https://www.bluecross.org.uk/blue-cross-joins-others-call-action-illegal-eu-dog-and-cat-trade>

RSPCA: Scrap the Puppy Trade

<https://www.rspca.org.uk/getinvolved/campaign/dogownership/scrappuppytrade>

Four Paws campaign against the illegal puppy trade

<https://www.stoppuppytraders.org/en-GB/four-paws-campaign-against-illegal-puppy-trade>

European Society of Dog and Animal Welfare *Trade and trafficking*

<http://www.esdaw.eu/trade--trafficking.html>

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