

## Debate Pack

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By Dominic Carver  
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# E-petition debate: Breed specific legislation

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# 1

## Background

E-petition [300561, on the legislation relating to “dangerous dogs”](#), had received 118,641 signatures when it closed on 11 September 2020. It calls for Government to “replace Breed Specific Legislation with a new statutory framework.” The full petition text states:

Breed Specific Legislation fails to achieve what Parliament intended, to protect the public. It focuses on specific breeds, which fails to appreciate a dog is not aggressive purely on the basis of its breed. It allows seizure of other breeds, but the rules are not applied homogeneously by councils.

We need a system that focuses on the aggressive behaviour of dogs, and the failure of owners to control their dog, rather than the way a dog looks. Reconsider a licensing system. The framework must be applied by local authorities the same, whereas currently some destroy dogs with no court order. It must be much more strictly controlled than it is currently. The system needs to be fairer for all, dogs and humans. We are touched by cases of people committing suicide over the current system.<sup>1</sup>

On 17 April 2020 the Government issued a full response to the petition stating that it was not considering replacing existing legislation and outlined details of the specific breeds which currently have restrictions on them under the [Dangerous Dogs Act 1991](#). The response stated:

The Government considers that prohibition on the four types of fighting dog under Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 should remain in place. This is supported by police who are responsible for enforcing the Act.

The law on dangerous dogs is concerned with protecting the safety of the public. The four types of dog, pit bull terrier, Japanese Tosa, Dogo Argentino and Fila Brasileiro are prohibited because they are types bred for fighting. The Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 states that no person shall give away, breed or breed from, sell, or exchange a prohibited dog. However, the law allows a person to keep an individual dog where a court has considered that it does not present a danger to public safety. The court must consider the temperament of the dog and whether the intended keeper is a “fit and proper person” and other matters such as suitability of accommodation. Dogs placed on the Index of Exempted dogs may be kept by the owner under strict conditions, including that the dog is neutered, microchipped and kept on a lead and muzzled in public. There

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<sup>1</sup>

are currently around 3,000 dogs where a court has granted an exemption and allowed them to stay with their owner.

The Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 also makes it an offence to allow a dog of any breed or type to become dangerously out of control in any place. The maximum penalty for this offence is 14 years imprisonment, where the offence has led to a death and 5 years imprisonment where someone is injured.<sup>2</sup>

The Government's response also outlined Community Protection Notices (CPN) as an additional tool available for tackling "irresponsible dog ownership". Research due for publication later this year was also highlighted. The work, commissioned by Defra and undertaken by Middlesex University, considers different approaches and the effectiveness of current dog control measures. The full Government response to the petition can be viewed on the [petition page](#).

## 1.1 Prohibited dog breeds

The [Dangerous Dogs Act 1991](#), which applies to England, Wales and Scotland was passed as an Act to:

prohibit persons from having in their possession or custody dogs belonging to types bred for fighting; to impose restrictions in respect of such dogs pending the coming into force of the prohibition; to enable restrictions to be imposed in relation to other types of dog which present a serious danger to the public; to make further provision for securing that dogs are kept under proper control; and for connected purposes.<sup>3</sup>

As set out in the Government's response to the e-petition, there are currently four specific breeds of dogs that are banned under the [Dangerous Dogs Act 1991](#) (DDA).

- the Pit Bull Terrier
- the Japanese Tosa
- the Dogo Argentino
- the Fila Brasileiro

However, Government [guidance on controlling your dog in public](#) also states that "whether your dog is a banned type depends on what it looks like, rather than its breed or name."<sup>4</sup> Whether a dog is a banned type is determined by a

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<sup>2</sup> Defra, [Government response to e-petition 300561](#), 17 April 2020

<sup>3</sup> [Dangerous Dogs Act 1991](#)

<sup>4</sup> GOV.UK, [Controlling your dog in public: Banned dogs](#).

police or council dog expert. Under the DDA it is also illegal to sell a banned dog, abandon a banned dog or breed from a banned dog.

A statutory instrument (SI) that supplements the DDA is [The Dangerous Dogs Exemption Schemes \(England and Wales\) Order 2015](#). This sets out circumstances under which it may be possible to keep a prohibited breed. Under this SI a court can decide that a dog is not a danger to the public but the dog must then be registered with the Index of Exempted Dogs.

If a dog is added to the Index the owner will be given a Certificate of Exemption, which is valid for the lifetime of the dog, but must comply with any specific requirements - such as muzzling in public. It is an offence to breed from, sell or exchange (even as a gift) a dog of any of the above breeds regardless of whether it has been placed on the Index or not.

## Additional Legislation

In addition to the Dangerous Dogs Act, there is other legislation that may be relevant when police or courts decide whether a dog is dangerous. This is set out in the Government guidance on [Dangerous Dogs Law: Guidance for Enforcers](#) published in 2009 and summarised in the Commons Library paper on [Dangerous Dogs](#) published in 2016. The relevant pieces of legislation are:

- [Dogs Act 1871](#)
- [Dangerous Dogs Act 1989](#)
- [Metropolitan Police Act 1839](#) and [Town Police Clauses Act 1847](#)
- [Offences Against the Person Act 1861](#)

The devolved nations also have additional legislation relating to the control and keeping of dogs, further details of which are set out in the Commons Library paper on [Dangerous Dogs](#).

## Enforcing the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991

In 2009, Defra published [Dangerous Dogs Law: Guidance for Enforcers](#). This document was prepared with the aim of assisting:

...police forces and local authorities in dealing with incidents brought to their attention involving dangerous dogs and allegations of people owning or breeding dogs prohibited under section 1 of the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991. It explains what the law is and assists each agency in defining their responsibilities and the areas where a joint approach would be advisable.

The guidance has been prepared by Defra in partnership with the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO), representatives of local authorities and the RSPCA. In preparing the guidance we have drawn on the experience of several forces who have established proven policies

and procedures through good practice and developing multi-agency agreements with local authorities and the RSPCA.<sup>5</sup>

The [guidance document](#) provides an overview of the legislation and outlines police responsibilities and best practice.

The Sentencing Council [published guidelines in October 2020](#) on how different offences committed under the 1991 Act can be dealt with and outlines the factors a court must take into account make when issuing sentences. Information from the Sentencing Council states:

The Council has published an assessment of the impact of the Dangerous dogs offences guidelines on sentencing trends, under the Council's statutory duty to monitor the operation and effect of sentencing guidelines and to draw conclusions from this information. The Dangerous dogs offences guidelines came into effect in July 2016:

- [Dog dangerously out of control in any place where death is caused](#)
- [Dog dangerously out of control in any place where a person is injured](#)
- [Dog dangerously out of control in any place where an assistance dog is injured or killed](#)
- [Dog dangerously out of control in any place](#)
- [Possession of a prohibited dog, breeding, selling, exchanging or advertising a prohibited dog](#)<sup>6</sup>

Further details on the sentences at a courts disposal and the factors considered when issuing them can be viewed using the above links.

## 1.2

## Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee Inquiry

In 2018, the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Efra) Committee ran an inquiry into the Government's approach to dealing with dangerous dogs, focusing on the banning of specific breeds. The Inquiry received over 400 written evidence submissions and held three evidence sessions. Introducing the need for the inquiry, the Efra Committee report '[Controlling dangerous dogs](#)', stated that:

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<sup>5</sup> Defra, [Dangerous Dogs Law: Guidance for Enforcers](#), 2009 p4

<sup>6</sup> Sentencing Council, [Dangerous dogs: assessment of guideline](#), 20 October 2020

Each year thousands of dogs are seized under the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991, and hundreds are subsequently put down. Since the Act was introduced, injury and fatality rates from dog attacks have increased. We therefore launched an inquiry on 11 May 2018 into the adequacy of the Government's approach to tackling dangerous dogs. We focused on the effectiveness of the current breed ban, and examined the actions needed to improve public safety and safeguard animal welfare.<sup>7</sup>

The report made several conclusions and recommendations to the Government which included specific commentary on Section 1 of the DDA. The report stated that:

We are concerned that Defra's arguments in favour of maintaining Breed Specific Legislation are not substantiated by robust evidence. It is even more worrying that non-existent evidence appears to have been cited before a Parliamentary Committee in support of current Government policy. This lack of clarity indicates a disturbing disregard for evidence-based policy-making.<sup>8</sup>

Based on this finding the Efra Committee recommended that:

Defra should commission a comprehensive independent evidence review into the factors behind canine aggression, the determinants of risk, and whether the banned breeds pose an inherently greater threat. We expect to receive regular progress updates on the evidence review, and to be provided with the results no later than Easter 2019. These results must then be used to inform the Government's future dog control strategy.<sup>9</sup>

The Committee's report also questioned the logic of singling out specific breeds when, it stated, other breeds not on the prohibited list could be equally as dangerous:

Defra says it has adopted a risk-based approach, but its justification for maintaining the breed ban in its current form is incoherent. Some legal breeds can pose just as great a risk to public safety as illegal breeds, and yet there are no legislative restrictions on their ownership. This inconsistency undermines the logic of the entire Act. We do not support extending the breed ban, as we do not believe it to be effective. However, if the Government feels the ban is a valuable tool in reducing numbers of dangerous dogs, it must clarify why other dogs which can be just as dangerous should not be prohibited.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Efra Committee, [Controlling dangerous dogs: Ninth Report of Session 2017–19](#), 12 September 2018

<sup>8</sup> Efra Committee, [Controlling dangerous dogs: Ninth Report of Session 2017–19](#), 12 September 2018

<sup>9</sup> Efra Committee, [Controlling dangerous dogs: Ninth Report of Session 2017–19](#), 12 September 2018

<sup>10</sup> Efra Committee, [Controlling dangerous dogs: Ninth Report of Session 2017–19](#), 12 September 2018

Based on this finding, the Committee report stated that the Government “must clarify why other dogs which can be just as dangerous should not be prohibited. We recommend that such a statement be provided.”<sup>11</sup>

The Government Response to the inquiry was received by the Efra Committee on 11 January 2019. Responding to the recommendation to conduct a comprehensive independent review the Government stated:

In November 2018, Defra commissioned further research in collaboration with Middlesex University to look at the following:

- Assess the effectiveness of current dog control measures including the use of the powers provided to police and local authorities in 2014.
- Identify and examine the factors and situations that may cause dog attacks, including whether any particular types of situation or domestic setting influence dog aggression and dog attacks; how behavioural problems among dogs might best be addressed; and how policy might need to develop to deal with dog behavioural problems.
- How to promote responsible dog ownership and, in particular, identify the help and information needed for dog owners who have experienced dog control issues or who are vulnerable to these (this includes evaluation of risk factors).

We will be pleased to update EFRA on the progress of this research which we expect will be published later this year.<sup>12</sup>

The latest update from Government on this research was given in response to a [parliamentary question](#) on 22 April 2021 which stated that the Government intends to publish a final report later this year:

Middlesex University’s draft report on measures to reduce dog attacks and promote responsible ownership was submitted to Defra in March this year. The report is currently being peer reviewed and will be finalised in light of peer review comments. Our intention is to publish the final report later this year.<sup>13</sup>

Responding to the Efra Committee’s request for a statement on why other breeds of dogs are not banned, the Government stated that:

Whilst any dog is capable of causing harm and even death to a person, the available evidence shows that prohibited type dogs (such as the pit bull terrier) which are moved illicitly are involved in a disproportionately

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<sup>11</sup> Efra Committee, [Controlling dangerous dogs: Ninth Report of Session 2017–19](#), 12 September 2018

<sup>12</sup> Controlling dangerous dogs. [Appendix: Government Response](#), 11 January 2019

<sup>13</sup> [UIN 183061](#), 22 April 2021

high number of attacks on people, including fatalities. If anyone considers they have evidence that any other particular breed or type of dog should be subject to restrictions under the DDA, we will of course consider this evidence. At this stage the Government does not consider that additional restrictions, over and above the existing offence of allowing a dog to be dangerously out of control, should be placed on other types of dogs.<sup>14</sup>

The report '[Controlling dangerous dogs](#)' contains full details of the Efra Committee's findings and recommendations and the Appendix outlining the Government's response to them can be read [here](#).

## Debate on the Inquiry

On Thursday 7 March 2019 a debate was held on [dangerous dogs](#) and the findings of the Efra Committee inquiry. The debate was opened by the chair of the Efra Committee, Neil Parish, who began by highlighting how many animals were currently on the index of exempted dogs:

The Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 was introduced to protect the public from dangerous dog attacks. The Act made it an offence to keep four types of dog traditionally bred for fighting, unless the dog was placed on the index of exempted dogs and kept in compliance with certain requirements. The dogs were the pit bull terrier, the Japanese tosa, Fila Brasileiro and Dogo Argentino. As of May 2018, 3,530 prohibited dogs were on the index, of which 3,514 were pit bull terrier-types. Only 16 of the dogs were not pit bull types.<sup>15</sup>

During the debate, Mr Parish, highlighted some dog attack statistics and explained why the Committee had not recommended repealing breed specific legislation:

When we began looking at the matter, I originally thought that the Committee would call for the repeal of the breed-specific legislation. However, we fell short of that because, although 80% of dog bites and attacks come from dogs outside those specific breeds, the number of pit bull type dogs that bite is quite high given their total number. We therefore do need to have legislation in place regarding those dogs, but it has to be fairly administered.<sup>16</sup>

Speaking for the Government, David Rutley, provided an update to the committee on the Governments progress in towards them. However, Mr Rutley also explained the complexities involved with changes the exiting legal system:

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<sup>14</sup> Controlling dangerous dogs. [Appendix: Government Response](#), 11 January 2019

<sup>15</sup> WH Debate, Dangerous Dogs, [Col 462WH](#), 7 March 2019

<sup>16</sup> WH Debate, Dangerous Dogs, [Col 464WH](#), 7 March 2019



I do not want to see healthy and well-adjusted dogs being put to sleep. For the reasons I have set out, however, we are subject to what is legally possible. Recent case law has interpreted the legislation, so the court may decide to give possession of a pit bull to a person who has had some contact with it, such as taking the dog for a walk. Ultimately, the courts will make the decision on whether the dog is safe, and the prospective person is fit and proper.

The difficulty is putting a stray dog that has no owner with a person the dog has not met before the court case. That is not feasible under the law. We continue to discuss with stakeholders what can be done, and we will involve my hon. Friend in those discussions, as I promised following my recent evidence to the Committee. We are happy to meet him and relevant welfare groups for further discussion and greater clarity. It is a tricky area, but the case law needs to be explored fully. I hope that my hon. Friend will accept the invitation to meet as sincere. He knows that I want us to do all we can to address the concerns that he has expressed.<sup>17</sup>

In closing the debate, Neil Parish noted that it was “apparent that there is cross-party support for some change to the Dangerous Dogs Act”<sup>18</sup> and conclude that:

There is a lot of work to be done, because we do not want more postal workers to be attacked or for the number of dog bites to keep going up as they have. Again, I thank the Minister for his engagement. The Select Committee, the Opposition and the Government can make the law work much better, and I hope that fewer dogs of good temperament will be put down in future.<sup>19</sup>

A full transcript of the debate is available to read [here](#).

## 1.3 Stakeholder views

The British Veterinary Association (BVA), a membership organisation representing Veterinary professionals, has criticised the Dangerous Dogs Act and called for section 1 to be repealed. In April 2021, the BVA published a [policy statement](#) outlining why it thinks the legislation needs changing. It highlighted that all dogs are capable of showing aggression and that multiple factors, such as training and environmental circumstances, influence their behaviour:

...the breed-specific legislation contained within the Dangerous Dogs Act (1991) does not represent an evidence-based approach to dog control

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<sup>17</sup> WH Debate, Dangerous Dogs, [Col 478WH](#), 7 March 2019

<sup>18</sup> WH Debate, Dangerous Dogs, [Col 479WH](#), 7 March 2019

<sup>19</sup> WH Debate, Dangerous Dogs, [Col 480WH](#), 7 March 2019

and we consider that the Act more widely has been ineffective in delivering its stated aims.

A review five years after the implementation of the Dangerous Dogs Act (1991) found no significant reduction in dog bites. In fact, a study published in 2021 found that adult hospital admission rates for dog bites tripled in England between 1998-2018, and the incidence of dog bites in children had remained consistently high. The same study found that between the financial years 2009/2010 and 2017/2018 the total estimated direct costs of dog bite admissions to hospitals were £174,188,443.

Further, ONS data shows that dog attack fatalities have in fact increased since the introduction of the Act. All dogs, whatever their breed type or size, are capable of showing aggression. It is important to recognise that multiple factors can contribute to the development of canine aggression and dog biting incidents, including a dog's socialisation, rearing and training, environmental circumstances and human-associated risk factors. Canine aggression and dog biting incidents should therefore be considered as complex public health and social issues, which require multifactorial prevention strategies.<sup>20</sup>

The policy statement from the BVA, which also contains references to the studies and statistics mentioned in the document, can be read [here](#).

The Kennel Club has stated that the Dangerous Dogs Act is demonising certain breeds and creating a status around some of the prohibited breeds that makes them more desirable to people wishing to flout the law:

The Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 has proven that demonising certain breeds makes them more attractive to people who want to flout the law and use dogs in this way. This contributes to the problem of creating so-called 'status dogs'. We firmly believe that doing away with breed-specific legislation would lessen the appeal of these dogs and also reduce cases of animal cruelty.<sup>21</sup>

The RSPCA has also campaigned for changes to the legislation saying that it "wants to see Section 1 of the Dangerous Dogs Act repealed and policy changed."<sup>22</sup> Explaining why the legislation doesn't work the RSPCA highlight the following evidence:

- Studies show that BSL has not reduced dog bite incidents in Ireland, Spain, Italy, Netherlands or Belgium.
- Since 1991 in the UK, 37 people have died in dog-related incidents - 28 of which involved dogs not prohibited by BSL.

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<sup>20</sup> BVA, [BVA and BSAVA position on the Dangerous Dogs Act \(1991\) and dog control](#), April 2021

<sup>21</sup> The Kennel Club, [Dangerous dogs - deed not breed](#)

<sup>22</sup> RSPCA, [Breed Specific Legislation \(BSL\)](#),

- In England, hospital admissions due to dog bites recorded between 2005 and 2015 increased by over 76% despite the prohibition of certain types of dogs.
- There is no specific research to demonstrate that dogs bred for fighting are naturally aggressive towards people or that they are unique in the way they can bite.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> RSPCA, [Breed Specific Legislation \(BSL\)](#),

## 2 Parliamentary Material

### 2.1 Parliamentary questions

#### **Dangerous Dogs: Exemptions**

**11 June 2021 | UIN 7758**

**Asked by: Andrew Rosindell**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many dogs were on the Index of Exempted Dogs in (a) England, (b) Scotland and (c) Wales in each of the last 10 years, by breed.

**Answering member: Victoria Prentis**

**Department: Defra**

There are currently 3,678 live dogs listed on the Index of Exempted Dogs. The table below indicates the number of these dogs per breed located in England, Scotland, and Wales:

ENGLAND	SCOTLAND	WALES	TOTAL
Pit Bull (3503)	Pit Bull (8)	Pit Bull (144)	3655
Dogo Argentino (17)	Dogo Argentino (2)	Dogo Argentino (1)	20
Japanese Tosa (2)	Japanese Tosa (0)	Japanese Tosa (1)	3
Fila Brasileiro (0)	Fila Brasileiro (0)	Fila Brasileiro (0)	0
			3678

The Department does not hold information on the number of dogs listed on the Index of Exempted Dogs for each of the past 10 years broken down by breed and by nation. However, the table below indicates the number of dogs per breed located in England, Scotland and Wales that were entered onto the Index of Exempted Dogs in each of the past 10 years.

[Please refer to [UIN 7758](#) for the complete table.]

#### **Dangerous Dogs**

**29 April 2021 | UIN HL15117**

**Asked by: Lord Patten**

To ask Her Majesty's Government when they last reviewed the penalties for (1) owning, or (2) being in charge of, a dog that is dangerously out of control; and what assessment they have made of the adequacy of the penalties for such crimes that are currently available to courts.

**Answering member: Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park**

**Department: Defra**

It is an offence to allow any dog to be dangerously out of control under section 3 of the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991. The penalties for allowing a dog to be dangerously out of control were increased in 2014.

In 2017, Defra reviewed the way the police and local authorities have used the powers available to them to tackle dog control and welfare issues. This resulted in further Defra guidance for these enforcement authorities emphasising their respective responsibilities and encouraging the use of good practice such as application of the LEAD initiative (Local Environmental Awareness on Dogs).

Defra commissioned Middlesex University to examine measures to reduce dog attacks and promote responsible ownership. The report was submitted to Defra in March this year. The report is currently being peer reviewed and will be finalised in light of peer review comments. Our intention is to publish the final report later this year.

**Dangerous Dogs**

**28 April 2021 | UIN HL15114**

**Asked by: Lord Patten**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the number of attacks by dogs on children and adults reported in each of the last five years in England; and how many dogs were ordered to be humanely destroyed in each of those years.

**Answering member: Baroness Williams of Trafford**

**Department: Home Office**

The Home Office collects data from police forces in England and Wales on the number of offences recorded by the police where an owner, or person in charge, allowed a dog to be dangerously out of control, injuring any person or assistance dog. Data for those forces in England able to supply data can be found below, for the most recent five years where full data is held (2015-2019).

Year	Number of offences*
2015	9729
2016	12406
2017	13675
2018	13808
2019	14478

\*Excludes Humberside, Kent, Greater Manchester, and Wiltshire Police. The data has not been subject to the same level of quality assurance checks as data published by the Home Office.

The Home Office does not collect data on the number of dogs which were ordered to be humanely destroyed.

### **Police: Training**

**3 July 2020 | UIN 64095**

**Asked by: Andrew Rosindell**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to (a) work with and (b) train police forces on ensuring dogs are not wrongfully taken into custody under the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991.

**Answering member: Victoria Prentis**

**Department: Defra**

Details of how long dogs are kept in police custody while being assessed under the Dangerous Dogs Act are not held centrally and are a matter for each separate police force. Each police force has access to a Dog Legislation Officer who is specifically trained in the law on dangerous dogs and dog related matters including animal welfare. Any concerns about specific cases should be reported to the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC). Details of how to contact the IOPC can be found on its website: [www.policeconduct.gov.uk](http://www.policeconduct.gov.uk) (opens in a new tab).

### **Dangerous Dogs Act 1991**

**30 June 2020 | UIN 64852**

**Asked by: Barry Sheerman**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the recommendation on breed specific legislation in paragraph 22 of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Select Committee's report on Controlling dangerous dogs, Ninth Report of Session 2017-19, HC 1040, whether he plans to repeal section 1 of the Dangerous Dogs Act.

**Answering member: Victoria Prentis**

**Department: Defra**

The Government response to the report by the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee (EFRA) entitled "Controlling Dangerous Dogs (HC1040)", was published on 28 January 2019 and addressed each of the Committee's recommendations. In its response the Government noted it has commissioned research by Middlesex University into dog attacks. The research is ongoing and will help to inform implementation of some of EFRA's recommendations.

In their Ninth Report of Session 2017-19, HC 1040, EFRA stopped short of recommending the repeal of section 1 of the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991. In the summary, the Committee stated "We agree with the Government that it would be irresponsible to amend the breed ban immediately without adequate

safeguards." In response to the EFRA report, the Government referred to the suite of powers and measures available to police and local authorities to respond to incidents involving dangerous dogs and to help prevent dogs from becoming dangerously out of control.

### **Dangerous Dogs**

**14 May 2019 | UIN 252518**

**Asked by: Jim Cunningham**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of breed specific legislation in reducing the number of dog attacks.

**Answering member: David Rutley**

**Department: Defra**

The Government considers that the general prohibition on certain types of dog bred for fighting, or that share the characteristics of dogs bred for fighting, should remain in place. Evidence shows that pitbull type dogs are responsible for a disproportionate number of attacks on people and fatalities, and should not be kept without individual dogs being subject to a public safety test including that the owner is a fit and proper person. We have not seen any evidence that shows removing the general prohibition would reduce the number of dog attacks.

## 2.2

## Previous debate

In 2018, an [e-petition calling for Staffordshire Bull Terriers not to be added the Dangerous Dogs Act](#) received 186,226 signatures. The Text of the petition stated that:

PETA, an organisation that is meant to be dedicated to protecting animals, has proposed to the UK government that it should add Staffordshire Bull Terriers to the dangerous dogs act, effectively banning them outright. Breed Specific Legislation is not the solution to the problem of dog attacks.

Many people in the UK today have the pleasure of owning a Staffordshire Bull Terrier. As one of these people I can recommend them as being loving, loyal and caring, far from dangerous they are great companions. It would be a terrible tragedy for the dog lovers of the UK to lose the right to own one of these great companions. We are calling on Parliament to save our staffies and not have them banned as dangerous dogs, because they are not. People create dangerous dogs, people are the problem.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> [E-petition: Reject calls to add Staffordshire Bull Terriers to the Dangerous Dogs Act](#), December 2018

The [Government response](#) stated that it had no intention of prohibiting the keeping of Staffordshire Bull Terriers. However, the petition was debated in Westminster Hall on Monday 16 July 2018. A full transcript of the debate is available to read [here](#) and a video of the debate can be viewed [here](#).



## 3

### Press Articles

[Small dogs: why are tiny hounds more aggressive than big ones?](#)

The Guardian

5 May 2021

[Lucille Downer: Dogs 'humanely destroyed' after fatal attack in Rowley Regis](#)

BBC News

4 April 2021

[When it comes to 'dangerous' dogs, the problem is often the owners](#)

The Telegraph

24 March 2021

[Thousands of dogs have been killed unnecessarily due to misguided ideas about breeds](#)

The Conversation

25 October 2018

[Hundreds of dogs killed unnecessarily every year due to 'misguided' dangerous animal laws, MPs say](#)

The Independent

17 October 2018

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