

# Lucy's Law spells the beginning of the end for puppy farming

Today (Monday 6 April) the Government has introduced landmark new legislation to tackle the low-welfare, high volume supply of puppies and kittens, by banning their commercial third-party sale in England.

'Lucy's Law' means that anyone wanting to get a new puppy or kitten in England must now buy direct from a breeder, or consider adopting from a rescue centre instead. Licensed dog breeders are required to show puppies interacting with their mothers in their place of birth. If a business sells puppies or kittens without a licence, they could receive an unlimited fine or be sent to prison for up to six months.

The law is named after Lucy, a Cavalier King Charles Spaniel who was rescued from a puppy farm where she was subjected to terrible conditions. Puppy farms are located across the UK with most depending on third-party sellers or 'dealers' to distribute often sick, traumatised, unsocialised puppies which have been taken away from their mother at just a few weeks old.

This often involves long-distance transportation, with the puppy or kitten suffering life-threatening medical, surgical, or behavioural problems which are passed on to unsuspecting new owners. Lucy's Law effectively removes the third-party dealer chain, resulting in all dog and cat breeders becoming accountable for the first time.

As well as Lucy's Law, the Government has committed to supporting tougher sentences for animal cruelty, raising maximum prison sentences from six months to five years, and has pledged to bring in new laws on animal sentience and to end excessively long journeys for live animals.

Animal welfare minister Lord Goldsmith said:

Today is a significant milestone for animal welfare, and a major step towards ending cruel puppy farming and smuggling. After all the hard work of Marc Abraham and the Lucy's Law campaign, I'm so pleased that we finally have this crucial legislation which will help tackle the heart-breaking third-party trade of dogs and cats.

But we also need the public to do their bit to help by always asking to see puppies and kittens interacting with their mothers in their place of birth, looking out for the warning signs, and reporting any suspicious activity. By raising awareness of illegal sellers to the local authorities, we can all help to protect the nation's cats and dogs and give them the best start in life.

Marc Abraham, media vet, author, founder of Pup Aid and the Lucy's Law campaign, said:

I'm incredibly proud to have led the 10-year campaign to ban cruel puppy and kitten dealers and to get this essential Lucy's Law legislation over the line. I'd like to give a huge thanks to UK Government for passing this law, as well as every animal-loving parliamentarian, celebrity, welfare organisation, and member of the public that supported us.

Lucy was an incredibly brave dog, and it's right that her memory is honoured with such an important piece of legislation to help end puppy farm cruelty; protecting breeding dogs just like her, as well as cats, their young, and also unsuspecting animal-lovers from the dangers of irresponsible breeding and cruel puppy and kitten dealers.

Lucy's Law is the result of a 10-year grassroots campaign supported by prominent figures including Ricky Gervais, Brian May, Rachel Riley, and Peter Egan, and it will help disrupt the supply chain of unscrupulous breeders and dealers who breed dogs in shocking conditions, often kept imprisoned alone in the dark, with very little human or canine company.

Last month, the Government launched the 'Petfished' campaign to highlight these conditions and the deceitful tactics pet sellers use to trick buyers into thinking they are responsible breeders selling healthy animals. The campaign urges the public to look out for warning signs which suggest the seller could be an illegal third-party dealer such as litters without a mum present or being rushed through a sale.

For more advice on how to buy a pet safely visit [getyourpetsafely.campaign.gov.uk](https://getyourpetsafely.campaign.gov.uk).

## **Anyone looking to buy a puppy or kitten should look for these warning signs**

Before visiting:

- Research. Have a look at the seller's profile and search their name online. If they are advertising many litters from different breeds, then this is a red flag.
- Check contact details. Copy and paste the phone number into a search engine. If the number is being used on lots of different adverts, sites and dates then this is likely a deceitful seller.
- Check the animal's age. Puppies and kittens should never be sold under 8 weeks old – do not buy from anyone advertising a puppy or kitten younger than 8 weeks.
- Check the animal's health records. Make sure the seller shares all records of vaccinations, flea and worm treatment and microchipping with you before sale.

When visiting:

- Make sure the mum is present – if mum is not available to meet, it's

unlikely the puppy or kitten was bred there. Beware of the seller making excuses as to why mum is not there e.g. she's at the vet's, asleep, or out for a walk.

- Check there isn't a 'fake' mum – most fake mums don't interact with the puppies as they fear the real mum returning.
- Watch out for puppies or kittens labelled as 'rescue' but with much higher than expected price tags.
- If you feel rushed or pressurised into parting with cash, this is a red flag.
- Health problems observed at purchase are not normal and don't be convinced otherwise.
- Beware of offers to meet somewhere convenient e.g. car park or motorway services, or 'shop front' premises, common with rented properties just to make sales, and 'sales rooms' kept separate from nearby or onsite puppy farm.

RSPCA chief executive Chris Sherwood said:

Over the last decade RSPCA staff have dealt with almost 30,000 complaints relating to the illegal puppy trade. Our rescuers have saved dogs from unimaginable cruelty and hideous conditions; our vets have tried desperately to save the lives of tiny puppies riddled with worms and plagued by health and behaviour problems; and our carers have nursed dogs back to health, teaching them to trust people again, and showing them love for the first time.

We're incredibly pleased that the Government is today introducing a ban on third-party sales of puppies and kittens. We believe that this, along with tougher licensing regulations that were introduced in 2018 and better education of the public on how to buy puppies responsibly, will help to crackdown on this cruel trade. We hope these laws will be properly enforced so that all dogs who are used for breeding and selling will live happy, healthy lives where their welfare is prioritised above profits.

Holly Conway, Head of Public Affairs at the Kennel Club said:

We are delighted that Lucy's Law has been introduced today. Sadly, too often irresponsible breeders in the UK and abroad have depended on commercial third-party sellers – like 'dealers' or pet shops – to disguise the horrific conditions puppies are bred and brought up in to the public, readily making a huge profit while causing untold suffering.

We hope Lucy's Law will help bring an end to this cruel trade and that, as well as improving welfare conditions for puppies, it will also encourage anyone thinking of getting a puppy to really do their research, find a responsible breeder and bring home a happy, healthy new addition to the family.

TV personality, model and animal rights campaigner Lucy Watson said:

Sadly, I was totally unaware of the cruelty involved in the legal third-party puppy trade when I unwittingly bought my first dog Digby, a German Spitz, from a licensed pet shop. As a result of his irresponsible breeding, I have witnessed first-hand his life-long behavioural problems, most likely caused by lack of adequate socialisation as a result of early separation from his mum and littermates.

As well as Digby, I have since adopted crossbreed Marley from an organisation dedicated to rescuing puppies and breeding dogs from puppy farms and would always urge others to do the same. I've been a proud supporter of the Lucy's Law campaign since the very beginning and was even lucky enough to have met the actual rescue cavalier Lucy too!

## Further information

- Lucy's Law is the short-hand for the amendment to The Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (England) Regulations 2018 brought about by The Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2019, which makes unlawful the sales of puppies and kittens (under six months in both cases) by third party sellers/anyone other than the breeder. Lucy's Law currently comes into force on 6 April in England only as it is devolved legislation.
- Lucy's Law is the result of a 10-year grassroots and multi award-winning campaign to ban third party puppy and kitten dealers, by a coalition of campaigning groups including Pup Aid, C.A.R.I.A.D., Canine Action UK, Hidden Insight, and The Karlton Index. Other animal welfare organisations supporting Lucy's Law include RSPCA, The Kennel Club, Mayhew, All Dogs Matter, Raystede, Jerry Green Rescue, Friends of Animals Wales, All Party Dog Advisory Welfare Group (APDAWG), All Party Group for Animal Welfare (APGAW), Canine and Feline Sector Group, Institute of Licensing (IOL); celebrities including Ricky Gervais, Jane Fallon, Rachel Riley, Brian May, Peter Egan, Eamonn Holmes, Kay Burley, Carrie Symonds, Gail Porter, Lucy Watson, Liam Gallagher, Meg Mathews, Deborah Meaden, Sue Perkins, Sarah Harding; cross-party parliamentarians notably Michael Gove MP, Lord Goldsmith, Dr Lisa Cameron MP, Sir Roger Gale MP, Neil Parish MP, Alex Chalk MP, Caroline Lucas MP, Kerry McCarthy MP, Prime Minister Boris Johnson MP.
- If you're rescuing a cat or dog, you can start by [checking if the rescue organisation is a member of the Association of Dogs and Cats Homes \(ADCH\)](#), although many reputable rescues aren't members of ADCH.
- If you're buying a puppy please use The Puppy Contract; and if you're buying a kitten please use The Kitten Checklist.