

News story: Third party puppy sales: Michael Gove launches call for evidence on ban

A ban on third party puppy sales is to be explored by the government as part of a package of reforms to drive up animal welfare standards, the Environment Secretary Michael Gove has announced today.

A [call for evidence](#) is launched today seeking views on a possible ban on third party sales, which would mean anyone looking to buy or adopt a dog will either deal directly with the breeder or with one of the nation's many animal rehousing centres.

A [raft of measures to crack down on unscrupulous puppy breeders](#) set out by the Prime Minister in December have also been laid in Parliament today.

Environment Secretary Michael Gove said:

We need to do everything we can to make sure the nation's much loved pets get the right start in life. From banning the sale of underage puppies to tackling the breeding of dogs with severe genetic disorders, we are cracking down on sellers who have a total disregard for their dogs' welfare.

This is a further step to raise the bar on animal welfare standards. We are also introducing mandatory CCTV in all slaughterhouses and increasing maximum prison sentences tenfold for animal abusers.

The legislation being put before parliament today will come into force later this year, including:

- Banning licensed sellers from dealing in puppies and kittens under the age of eight weeks;
- Ensuring that licensed dog breeders show puppies alongside their mother before a sale is made;
- Tackling the sale of weak underage puppies and the breeding of unhealthy dogs and dogs with severe genetic disorders;
- Introducing compulsory licensing for anyone in the business of breeding and selling dogs;

- Requiring puppy sales to be completed in the presence of the new owner, preventing online sales where prospective buyers have not seen the animal first;
- Insisting licensed dog breeders can only sell puppies they have bred themselves.

These plans have been widely welcomed by charities.

RSPCA deputy chief executive Chris Wainwright said:

We are delighted that Defra is considering a ban on third party sales of puppies. We believe that cracking down on unscrupulous traders, who put profit ahead of animal welfare, will provide much-needed protection for prospective pet owners and puppies.

We have always said that an end to third party sales alone would not be enough to end the puppy trade crisis and we are pleased that this is being looked at alongside enhanced licensing conditions for breeders which will come into force later this year.

Together, we hope these moves will offer better protection to puppies and their parents and also reduce the number of families duped by rogue traders in this illegal multi-million-pound trade.

Mayhew rehoming centre's CEO Caroline Yates said:

We are really pleased today to hear that there will be a call for evidence on banning third party sales of animals. It is a real issue that animal welfare organisations are very concerned about. Getting a dog or cat is not a commercial business and these big puppy farms have no regard for their health or welfare.

Owners are being duped into buying animals from these places and the resulting sickness and poor treatment means there is also an additional burden on animal welfare charities that are mopping up the problem.

Caroline Kisko, Kennel Club Secretary, said:

The Kennel Club welcomes Defra's announcement as a crucial step forward to tackle the cruel puppy farming industry. The Kennel Club, whose own regulations explicitly ban the sale of puppies to third parties, has long called for an end to the sale of puppies in pet shops and by other third party retailers.

Third party sales are an underhand practice designed to protect

puppy farmers with terrible consequences for dog welfare. Puppy buyers unknowingly purchase a puppy from a seemingly nice dealer in pleasant surroundings, who would in fact have purchased the puppy from a backstreet dealer who has given no thought to their health and welfare.

There is simply no way that a responsible breeder would ever sell a puppy to a pet shop or a pet dealer and we are delighted to see this issue getting the attention that it deserves. Good breeders, such as Kennel Club Assured Breeders, always insist on speaking at length to potential puppy buyers to ensure their pups will be given good homes.

Launching the call for evidence on a ban, Environment Secretary Michael Gove invited all interested parties to share their views by 2 May 2018 on how this could best be introduced.

The government recently consulted on plans to increase maximum prison sentences for animal abusers to five years and recognise animal sentience in domestic law. The [consultation](#) closed on 31 January and we are now considering the responses. We will set out next steps in due course.

1. For further information on this press release, please contact the Defra press office on 020 8225 7318.