

Press release: Government proposals on puppy welfare

Plans under consideration include:

- Ensuring that licensed dog breeders must show puppies alongside their mother before a sale is made.
- Tightening regulations so that puppy sales are 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.
- Regulating adverts, including on the internet, by ensuring licensed sellers of all pets, including puppies, include the seller's licence number, country of origin and country of residence of the pet in any advert for sale.

Legislation introducing these proposals could be brought forward early in the New Year.

Measures to tackle unethical and cruel puppy smuggling across borders will also be explored. And plans will also address the breeding of dogs with harmful genetic disorders.

These proposed reforms will apply tighter requirements to more breeders and sellers and will tackle the sale of weak underage puppies, the breeding of unhealthy dogs and dogs with severe genetic disorders, requiring much veterinary treatment and causing much angst, cost and upset to the new owners.

Prime Minister Theresa May said:

Any unscrupulous mistreatment of animals is disturbing – so in our drive to achieve the highest animal welfare standards in the world, we continually look at what more can be done. The arrival of a happy, healthy puppy, as I know myself, is a memorable time for a family – but it's absolutely right we do everything we can to eradicate animal cruelty from our society. The proposals my government is developing will be an important step forward.

Environment Secretary Michael Gove said:

At this time of year it is all too easy to be moved by images online or adverts in the local press advertising new born puppies looking for a home for Christmas. But what we don't see is all too often a sad history of mistreatment and malpractice. That is why we are looking at how we can go further to crack down on unscrupulous

breeders so pet owners will have no doubt their new dogs have had the right start in life.

This is one part of our efforts to ensure we have the highest animal welfare standards in the world. We have also ensured CCTV cameras will be mandatory in all slaughterhouses and will increase prison sentences from six months to five years for animal abusers.

In addition, the Government can today confirm it will take forward proposals put out for consultation earlier in the year to improve how the pets are bred and sold. This included a ban on the sale of puppies and kittens under the age of eight weeks, which will now extend to include rabbits, as well as compulsory licensing for anyone in the business of breeding and selling dogs.