

Steps to further improve animal welfare of pets unveiled

Wales has led the way on measures to improve the standard of animal health and welfare and has introduced a number of pieces of legislation in recent years, including a welfare-focused licensing scheme for licensed breeders; the requirement for dogs to be microchipped; and bans brought in on the use of electronic shock collars and the cosmetic docking of dogs' tails.

To further improve welfare standards for puppies in Wales, the Cabinet Secretary has confirmed her intention to build on the improvements made since the Animal Welfare (Breeding of Dogs) (Wales) Regulations 2014 were introduced by investigating the potential banning of third party sales. Officials will now look at options to take this forward.

Speaking in plenary, the Cabinet Secretary also confirmed a review of the microchipping Regulations will take place to include research into the levels of compliance and enforcement.

Consideration will be given to whether there is a benefit in extending the Regulations to include other species, including cats.

Under the Animal Welfare Act 2006, there is a duty of care on all owners and keepers of animals to ensure their welfare needs are met, including the costs associated with owning a pet. However, people's circumstances can change.

Work will get underway to explore what veterinary provision, assistance and advice is available to people who need help in caring for their pets, possibly at times of illness or emergency, such as fleeing from a violent household.

Revised Codes of Practice for horses and dogs will be published before summer recess and a consultation on the revised Cat Code will commence in the autumn.

The Rabbit Code will be reviewed and work will start on identifying if there's a need to introduce any new Codes, such as for primates and other exotic pets, or racing greyhounds.

In 2016, RSPCA Cymru made a case for the introduction of an Animal Offender Register in Wales and a Task and Finish Group was established to consider the evidence. The draft final report states that due to the absence of practical solutions which would enable the creation of such a register, and the lack of UK-based evidence to support the impact that some stakeholders believe one would have, the Group does not recommend the development of a register at this time. The Cabinet Secretary will receive the final report before the Summer Recess.

The Cabinet Secretary has also asked RSPCA Cymru to provide evidence about whether the recommendation in the 2014 Wooller Report that the RSPCA

Inspectorate receives statutory status under the Animal Welfare Act 2006 is workable in Wales.

Cabinet Secretary said:

“As a Government, animal welfare is a priority for us. In Wales, we pride ourselves on having excellent animal welfare standards and expect everyone to reflect this by being responsible owners.

“We have introduced a number of pieces of legislation in recent years which underlines our commitment to continue improving standards of animal health and welfare in Wales.

“In Wales, we demand high standards from our licensed breeders and sourcing a healthy puppy which can be seen with its mother, or rehoming an animal from a reputable Animal Welfare Establishment, is the first, fundamental step towards being a responsible owner. Yet the illegal importation of puppies, driven by huge demand, continues to be a problem.

“I believe the potential banning of third party sales is worthy of investigation and I will be discussing options with officials to take this forward.

“I am today announcing a range of measures to help us build on our success to date. This includes a review of our Microchipping Regulations, support for owners whose circumstances change and the publication of updated and new Codes of Practice.

“Embedding a culture of responsible ownership cannot be achieved in isolation and I am grateful for the dedication and passion shown towards animals in Wales. There is always more that can be done but we are proud, as a nation, to be leading the way in raising standards of animal welfare.”