

[Press release: New plans to crack down on backstreet puppy breeders](#)

Tougher dog breeding licensing rules to better protect thousands of puppies are to be introduced as part of [a swathe of reforms to safeguard the welfare of Britain's pets](#), Environment Secretary Andrea Leadsom announced today.

The plans to tighten up laws around selling pets and breeding dogs will make it completely illegal to sell puppies younger than eight weeks and require anyone breeding and selling three or more litters of puppies a year to apply for a formal licence. Irresponsible breeders who don't stick to these rules face an unlimited fine and/or up to six months in prison.

The new rules will mean smaller establishments – sometimes called 'backstreet breeders' – which supply thousands of dogs to families each year, as well as larger commercial breeders, must meet strict welfare criteria to get a licence. Irresponsible breeders can neglect the health and welfare of the puppies they raise and may not properly vaccinate them, leading to steep vets' bills and heartbreak for buyers.

The rules will also be updated and made fit for the modern age with anyone trading commercially in pets online needing to be properly licensed, to help make reputable sellers easily accessible to prospective buyers.

The plans also cover how pet shops, boarding houses and riding stables are licensed, introducing a single 'animal activities licence' to improve the process and make enforcement easier.

Environment Secretary Andrea Leadsom said:

Everyone who owns a pet or is looking to introduce one into their life will want to know that the animal has had the very best start to life. Yet for thousands of puppies born each year to irresponsible breeders, from smaller operations to larger puppy farms, their first weeks are spent in cramped and squalid conditions without the care and attention they need. That is why we are cracking down on the worst offenders by strengthening the dog breeding licence and giving councils the power they need to take action.

With more and more pet sales now taking place on the internet, it's right that this market is subject to the same strict licensing criteria as other breeders and pet shops so that consumers are not misled. The plans announced today will help people choosing new family pets to be confident the animals have been properly bred and cared for from birth and are ready to move safely to their new homes.

Under the new plans, pet shops will also be required to give buyers written information about the animals they buy, with details of the five welfare needs owners must meet under the Animal Welfare Act around environment, diet, behaviour, housing and freedom from pain. This advice is particularly important when buying exotic pets, which can have very specific welfare needs.

Welcoming the plans, Dogs Trust Veterinary Director, Paula Boyden, said:

As the UK's largest dog welfare charity, Dogs Trust welcomes the Government's review of animal establishments licensing in England and the range of measures it sets out.

We are particularly pleased that it will be illegal to sell a puppy below the age of 8 weeks and that there will be tighter licensing rules which will require sellers of pets to display their licence when advertising. We also applaud the move towards a risk based single licensing system which will incorporate those breeders that have gained UKAS approval rather than exempting them.

We believe that Local Authority Inspectors need support to enforce these tighter licensing rules. As such, moves to mandate the use of Model Conditions and for inspectors to be offered training and standards to be set is most welcome.

Caroline Kisko, Kennel Club Secretary said:

We are pleased that Defra will be taking forward proposals to ban the sale of puppies under the age of 8 weeks by commercial third parties; we have called for a ban on third party sales, and refuse to register puppies being sold to third parties, but this new rule is a step in the right direction. We also welcome the requirement for pet sellers to provide written information about the animals they sell and for those who sell pets online to display their licence number.

As the litter licensing threshold is set to reduce from five litters to three we look forward to working with Defra on the new risk based licensing system, to ensure that UKAS accredited Assured Breeder Scheme (ABS) members will continue to be inspected by the Kennel Club for the maximum licence length of three years. This will incentivise more breeders to join the scheme, and breed to a higher standard of welfare that the ABS requires, and reduce the inspection burden on local authorities.

Pet owners are also being urged to make sure their pet's microchip details are up to date. Latest figures show 94% of dogs have been fitted with microchips, nine months after the Government introduced a law requiring all dogs to be painlessly fitted with a chip containing their owner's details.

But a Battersea Dogs and Cats Home study of stray dogs last year found that only 20% of their microchips contained up to date information.

It's vital that owners who move house or change their phone number make sure they keep their pet's details up to date, so they can be reunited should their four-legged friend ever go missing. Owners can check with their microchip provider that their details are correct.

Andrea Leadsom added:

It is absolutely critical that owners not only make sure their pet is microchipped, but that they also make sure details are kept up to date so they can be reunited if their pet is lost or stolen.

It is excellent to see that so many owners have taken action to get their dogs chipped, yet all too many still need to be rehomed because the owner hasn't updated their details—heart-breaking for the owner and the dog, and easily avoidable with a five-minute phone call.

[More information on buying a cat or dog](#)

1. Read [The review of animal establishments licensing in England: Next steps](#)
2. [Summary of responses to the review](#)
3. Many welfare charities also offer free guidance on buying a pet. The RSPCA offers a 'puppy contract' – a document signed by the buyer and seller confirming that both parties have or will meet their obligations to the puppy's welfare.
4. The [Animal Welfare Act 2006](#) covers all animals in England, and details their five welfare needs.
5. [Information on the requirement to get your dog microchipped](#)
6. [Advice on getting your pet microchipped](#)
7. Estimated number of microchips with out-of-date information from 'Microchipping Where It Matters Most', by Battersea Dogs and Cats Home, 2016.
8. For further media queries, please contact Defra press office on 020 8225 7618 or 020 8026 3005.

[**Government response: New child car seat rules: no change for existing**](#)

[booster seats](#)

From:

First published:

2 February 2017

Part of:

Existing booster seats and cushions are not affected by new rules coming into force by March 2017.

By 1 March 2017 new rules are being introduced across Europe that will change how backless booster seats (booster cushions) are made.

The new rules mean that manufacturers aren't allowed to introduce new models of backless booster seats for children shorter than 125cm or weighing less than 22kg.

Existing seats not affected by new rules

The change doesn't affect existing models of seats or cushions and doesn't mean that they are unsafe or illegal – though parents are still being encouraged to make sure they know the [rules for using child car seats](#).

The change to the technical standards means that the range of products available on the market are better suited for younger children.

[Press release: Quarter of people would not call 999 at the first signs of stroke](#)

Public Health England (PHE) today (2 February 2017) launches its annual Act FAST campaign to remind people of the main symptoms of stroke and the importance of calling 999 immediately if they notice any single one of the symptoms in themselves or others.

Stroke kills over 40,000 people a year and leaves around two-thirds of stroke survivors with a disability.

Research shows that 24% of people would wait to call an ambulance because they wrongly believe that they need to see 2 or more symptoms of stroke to be sure. Other barriers to dialling 999 include feeling that they need

permission to act on behalf of others.

As part of the campaign, new films will encourage everyone – whether they are a stranger in the street, a family member at home or the person themselves – not to hesitate and make the call immediately when they see any of the main stroke symptoms:

- Face – has their face fallen on one side? Can they smile?
- Arms – can they raise both their arms and keep them there?
- Speech – is their speech slurred?

Radio DJ Mark Goodier, who had a stroke last November, and TV presenter Anna Richardson, whose father had a stroke, tell their personal stories alongside people who have survived stroke – some who have recovered well and others who have been left with life-changing disabilities.

The stories show how disability can be greatly reduced if people react quickly to any of the signs of a stroke – urging people to act fast and call 999.

Professor Kevin Fenton, PHE's National Director for Health and Wellbeing, said:

Stroke is one of the leading causes of death in the country, and the faster someone experiencing a stroke gets emergency treatment, the more chance that person has of surviving and avoiding serious disability.

It is crucial to Act FAST when you see any single one of the symptoms of stroke, and do not delay making that all-important 999 call.

Dr Lasana Harris, Experimental and Social Psychologist, University College London, said:

We always look to make sense of a situation and even if someone appears to be having a stroke we may worry about causing offence or mutual embarrassment. If no one else acts, then we ourselves may not see it as an emergency.

However, the imagined consequences of action are minor compared to the consequences of inaction when someone is having a stroke. So act first and worry later.

Juliet Bouverie, Chief Executive, Stroke Association said:

We know people recognise the signs of stroke but they aren't taking the right action at the right time. A stroke is a brain attack and acting fast makes a huge difference.

You are more likely to survive a stroke and make a better recovery if you call 999 on spotting any one of the symptoms. The quicker you act the more of the person you save.

Background

1. Download the Act FAST campaign videos and pictures from [dropbox](#).
2. The Act FAST campaign will run nationally from 2 February to 31 March 2017. The campaign includes advertising on TV, radio, bus interior posters and digital, supporting PR and a social media drive. A separate strand of activity will specifically target BME audiences as African, African-Caribbean and South Asian communities have a higher incidence of stroke. Website: www.nhs.uk/actfast Twitter: [@ActFAST999](https://twitter.com/ActFAST999), Facebook: www.facebook.com/ActFAST999.
3. The Act FAST campaign:
 - Face – has their face fallen on one side? Can they smile?
 - Arms – can they raise both their arms and keep them there?
 - Speech – is their speech slurred?
 - Time – to call 999 if you see any single one of these signs
4. Additional symptoms of stroke and mini stroke can include:
 - sudden loss of vision or blurred vision in one or both eyes
 - sudden weakness or numbness on one side of the body
 - sudden memory loss or confusion
 - sudden dizziness, unsteadiness or a sudden fall, especially with any of the other symptoms
5. Professor Tony Rudd, National Clinical Director for Stroke at NHS England, said “NHS stroke care and survival are now at record levels, stroke is very treatable but every minute counts. Knowing when to call 999 when you see any single one of the signs will make a significant difference to someone’s recovery and rehabilitation.”
6. A stroke is a brain attack that happens when the blood supply to the brain is cut off, caused by a clot or bleeding in the brain. There are around 100,000 strokes in the UK every year and it is the leading cause of severe adult disability. There are over 1.2 million people in the UK living with the effects of stroke. A mini stroke is also known as a transient ischaemic attack (TIA). It is caused by a temporary disruption in the blood supply to part of the brain.
7. [Public Health England](#) exists to protect and improve the nation’s health and wellbeing, and reduce health inequalities. It does this through world-class science, knowledge and intelligence, advocacy, partnerships and the delivery of specialist public health services. PHE is an operationally autonomous executive agency of the Department of Health. Follow us on Twitter: [@PHE_uk](https://twitter.com/PHE_uk) and Facebook: www.facebook.com/PublicHealthEngland.
8. “[Stroke Association](#) is a charity. We believe in life after stroke and together we can conquer stroke. We work directly with stroke survivors and their families and carers, with health and social care professionals and with scientists and researchers. We campaign to improve stroke care and support people to make the best recovery they can. We fund research to develop new treatments and ways of preventing stroke. The Stroke

Helpline (0303 303 3100) provides information and support on stroke.”

For further information, images or interviews please contact:

[Press release: Minister for the Middle East statement on settlement units in the West Bank](#)

From:

First published:

1 February 2017

Part of:

Minister for the Middle East Tobias Ellwood statement on the Israeli Government’s announcement to build 3,000 settlement units in the West Bank.

Minister for the Middle East Tobias Ellwood said:

The announcement of further settlement units in the West Bank is part of a growing trend which we condemn. We have consistently been clear that settlements are illegal under international law, and not conducive to peace. This spike in settlement activity undermines trust and makes a two state solution – with an Israel that is safe from terrorism and a Palestinian state that is viable and sovereign – much harder to achieve.

Further information

[News story: Kestrel close encounter](#)

From:

First published:

1 February 2017

Part of:

A kestrel has taken a shine to a Highways England CCTV camera stand on junction 11a of the M5.

With their pointed wings and long tails, kestrels are a familiar sight along UK motorways and main roads as they use thermals from the road to hover while they look for prey.

Now one of them has discovered their perfect perch – on a Highways England CCTV camera stand.

[Kestrel video](#)

Our Traffic Officers Leigh Goodchild and Steve Dyas first spotted this cheeky kestrel while monitoring traffic flows in October 2016. Since then they have been treated to frequent sightings – and have grown fond of their new friend.

We have released this video to coincide with the RSPB's [Big School Bird Watch](#), which encourages pupils to get closer to nature by counting birds at set times.

Kestrels are on the RSPB amber list of protected species, with only around 46,000 breeding pairs estimated to be in the UK. They are most recognisable in their characteristic hovering hunting mode but also like to find a high perch where they can stay on the lookout for prey.

Our CCTV camera platform seems to fit the bill. Traffic Officer Leigh said:

On one occasion she returned with half a mouse, which she promptly swallowed tail and all!

She's rather obsessed with her own image but her inquisitiveness has given us some good close-ups.

She's squawked and attacked the lens a few times as well. When that happens we discourage her from hurting herself by tilting the camera skywards.

Her visits certainly brighten up our day and make a change from the traffic.