



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

WRITTEN STATEMENT BY THE WELSH ASSEMBLY GOVERNMENT

Title: Consultation on the Animal Welfare (Breeding of Dogs) (Wales) Regulations 2011 – interim outcomes

Date: 8 March 2011

By: Elin Jones, Minister for Rural Affairs

Members will be aware that last October I launched a consultation on proposals to change dog breeding legislation in Wales. The consultation sparked considerable interest amongst a wide range of groups and we received over 500 responses. Many people have given serious thought to the proposed legislation and made constructive comments, and I am grateful for their input.

The draft Regulations and consultation document were themselves the product of a considerable amount of work across a number of groups. I established a Task and Finish Group on dog breeding with representatives from the veterinary profession, local authorities, welfare organisations and the Kennel Club. Their recommendations formed the basis of the consultation document and draft Regulations. The Companion Animal Welfare Enhancement Scheme also funded two projects which identified gaps in the legislative process and licensing regime.

The central proposals in the consultation document and draft Regulations were:

- Changes to qualifying criteria for licensing including the number of breeding bitches, number of litters in a 12 month period and the advertising of 10 or more puppies for sale in a year;
- Staff:dog ratio with a suggested maximum ratio of 20 dogs per full time attendant, and

- Mandatory microchipping of all puppies prior to sale or rehoming.

My officials have now completed an initial analysis of the responses and these will be placed on the Welsh Assembly Government website at <http://www.wales.gov.uk/animalwelfare>. Whilst we received a wide range of responses there were some clear overall messages:

- there is general consensus that welfare of dog breeding has a high priority and that irresponsible breeding in so called “puppy farms” should be brought to an end;
- the welfare of all breeding dogs (stud dogs and bitches) and their offspring is paramount;
- there are concerns over whether the legislation as currently drafted is sufficiently targeted to control dog breeding businesses, that some of the criteria for being licensed was too narrow.
- there is strong support for microchipping to become compulsory, but there are issues that need to be clarified such as the impact of compulsory microchipping in Wales on legitimate trade to England.

Given the responses we have received, I have asked my officials to work with the dog breeding and welfare sectors in order to bring forward amended legislation. The Welsh Assembly Government is committed to improving the welfare standards of animals and I know there is cross-party support for this. My priority is to ensure that we get the legislation right. Given the timescale needed to do this, it will not be possible to bring forward the final draft legislation within this government term. I have instructed officials to continue to work on a co-operative basis in developing the final draft Regulations in preparation for early action by a new government should they wish.