

Number: WG36669



Welsh Government
Consultation Document

Third Party Sales of Puppies and Kittens

Date of issue: 19 February 2019
Action required: Responses by 17 May 2019

Overview

There are concerns that commercial third-party sales of puppies and kittens may be associated with poorer welfare conditions for the animals compared to when people buy directly from the breeder. For example, the introduction to several new and unfamiliar environments and the increased likelihood of multiple journeys the puppies or kittens have to undertake. All of these have the potential to contribute to an increased risk of disease and a lack of socialisation and habituation for the puppies and kittens.

The Welsh Government wishes to consider whether or not a change of policy and/or the law in Wales would better protect the welfare of puppies and kittens when being sold.

How to respond

Please respond using the questionnaire at the back of this document. Responses can be submitted electronically or through the post. Alternatively, an online form is available on the Welsh Government website at: <https://consultations.gov.wales/>

Further information and related documents

Large print, Braille and alternative language versions of this document are available on request.

Contact details

For further information:

Animal Welfare & Framework Branch
Welsh Government
Cathays Park
Cardiff
CF10 3NQ

email: companionanimalwelfare@gov.wales

General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

The Welsh Government will be data controller for any personal data you provide as part of your response to the consultation. Welsh Ministers have statutory powers they will rely on to process this personal data which will enable them to make informed decisions about how they exercise their public functions. Any response you send us will be seen in full by Welsh Government staff dealing with the issues which this consultation is about or planning future consultations. Where the Welsh Government undertakes further analysis of consultation responses then this work may be commissioned to be carried out by an accredited third party (e.g. a research organisation or a consultancy company). Any such work will only be undertaken under contract. Welsh Government's standard terms and conditions for such contracts set out strict requirements for the processing and safekeeping of personal data.

In order to show that the consultation was carried out properly, the Welsh Government intends to publish a summary of the responses to this document. We may also publish responses in full. Normally, the name and address (or part of the address) of the person or organisation who sent the response are published with the response. If you do not want your name or address published, please tell us this in writing when you send your response. We will then redact them before publishing.

You should also be aware of our responsibilities under Freedom of Information legislation

If your details are published as part of the consultation response then these published reports will be retained indefinitely. Any of your data held otherwise by Welsh Government will be kept for no more than three years.

Your rights

Under the data protection legislation, you have the right:

- to be informed of the personal data held about you and to access it
- to require us to rectify inaccuracies in that data
- to (in certain circumstances) object to or restrict processing
- for (in certain circumstances) your data to be 'erased'
- to (in certain circumstances) data portability
- to lodge a complaint with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) who is our independent regulator for data protection.

For further details about the information the Welsh Government holds and its use, or if you want to exercise your rights under the GDPR, please see contact details below:

Data Protection Officer:

Welsh Government

Cathays Park

CARDIFF

CF10 3NQ

e-mail:

Data.ProtectionOfficer@gov.wales

The contact details for the Information
Commissioner's Office are:

Wycliffe House

Water Lane

Wilmslow

Cheshire

SK9 5AF

Tel: 01625 545 745 or

0303 123 1113

Website: <https://ico.org.uk/>

What are the main issues?

High standards of animal welfare are a priority of the Welsh Government. The Wales Animal Health and Welfare Framework¹ sets out our plan for continuing and lasting improvements in standards of animal health and welfare for kept animals.

Currently, puppies and kittens can either be purchased directly from a breeder (licensed or unlicensed depending on the number of breeding bitches at the premises), via a third-party seller, or from a rescue/rehoming centre. There are no national records of the number of puppies and kittens sold via third-parties.

Commercial third-party sellers are those who are licensed pet sellers; In Wales they will hold a licence under the Pet Animals Act 1951.

There are concerns commercial third-party sales of puppies and kittens may be associated with poorer welfare conditions for the animals compared with direct purchase from the breeder. For example, the introduction to several new and unfamiliar environments, and the increased likelihood of multiple journeys the puppies or kittens have to undertake have the potential to contribute to an increased risk of disease and a lack of socialisation and habituation for the puppies or kittens.

On 19 June 2018 the Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs, Lesley Griffiths, delivered an Oral Statement announcing her commitment to explore options of banning commercial third party sales of puppies and kittens in Wales. On 5 November 2018 the Cabinet Secretary announced a consultation would be launched to gather information on the supply chain and establish where government intervention would have the greatest impact.

Where are we now?

The introduction of the Animal Welfare (Breeding of Dogs)(Wales) Regulations 2014 led the way in the UK in addressing welfare concerns at licensed dog breeding establishments. The Regulations provide for licensing of breeding premises with three or more breeding bitches. However, we do not wish to stand still and will be looking to review our Regulations to ensure they meet the high standards we are expecting. In particular there are still concerns about the welfare standards at some licensed breeding premises and also in the enforcement of the Regulations. The findings from this consultation will help shape future changes but we cannot pre-empt what those changes will be at this point.

There is currently no requirement for people breeding cats to be licensed.

There are 219 licensed dog breeders in Wales.

There are less than 20 licensed pet shops selling puppies and kittens in Wales.

¹ <https://beta.gov.wales/farmed-animal-strategy>

Current position elsewhere in the UK

England

In October 2018 Defra introduced the Animal Welfare (Activities Involving Animals) Regulations 2018. The Regulations introduced new licensing procedures for selling of pets, boarding for cats and dogs, hiring of horses, breeding of dogs and keeping or training animals for exhibition. In February 2018 a call for evidence was launched and this was followed by a four week consultation in August 2018 on plans to introduce a ban on the commercial third-party sales of puppies and kittens in England. The consultation also sought views on the licensing of rehoming and rescue centres to avoid current third party sellers claiming exemption to any possible ban. On 23 December Defra confirmed it will be banning the third party sales of puppies and kittens in England.

Scotland

In September 2018 the Scottish Government launched a consultation to seek views on proposals to introduce new regulations for the licensing of dog, cat and rabbit breeding activities in Scotland.

The consultation considered how thresholds for licensing may be determined depending on the size of the undertaking and how this may work for organisations with multiple premises.

Northern Ireland

During 2018 DAERA reviewed the matter of animal establishments in Northern Ireland, including establishments that sell pets. In 2019, DAERA intends to engage with stakeholders to obtain their views on the future licensing system in Northern Ireland.

Evidence for change

There are a number of ways someone can buy a puppy or kitten from a legal source;

- 1) From a licensed dog breeder (those with at least three breeding bitches)
- 2) From an unlicensed breeder (those with less than three breeding bitches or those breeding cats)
- 3) From a third party seller (someone who has not bred the puppy or kitten themselves)
- 4) From a rescue/rehoming centre.

Unfortunately for both the animal and the buyer/future owner, not all sellers are complying with the welfare needs of these animals and, sadly, there is sometimes a criminal element involved with the animals being used as a commodity with a monetary profit to be made.

When we refer to commercial third party sellers in this document we mean those licensed under the Animals Act 1951.

Whilst animal welfare is a devolved issue, the breeding and pet sales industries in the United Kingdom span all four administrations, and even wider on occasion. A puppy or kitten born in Wales will not necessarily be sold to a new owner in Wales. Therefore, it is essential we gather as much information as possible on the supply chain to ensure any changes in policy or legislation meet the policy objective of raising welfare standards in Wales.

In Wales we will use this first public consultation to help plan a way forward. We are therefore asking you for your opinion and also to provide us with any evidence you may have which may help us better understand the situation.

The emotional draw to purchase a puppy or a kitten is, sometimes, the over-riding reason why people succumb to purchasing an animal from someone they know they should not. Their primary reason for doing so seems to be the welfare of the animal and those selling the animal play on this emotional pull.

If the Welsh Government is to make a difference in Wales we want to ensure there are no loop holes to be exploited by the unscrupulous so your comments are really valuable in shaping next steps.

We welcome views from children and young people, their parents and their educators on how we can improve processes and the conditions of sale to ensure the animal has good welfare and the purchaser has a healthy new animal in their household or workplace.