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Consultation – Government response

Licensing of Animal Welfare Establishments, Activities and Exhibits

Government response and next steps to public consultation on the
Licensing of Animal Welfare Establishments, Activities and Exhibits -
Development of a national model for the regulation of animal welfare

June 2025

Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg hefyd / This document is also available in Welsh
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Action Required

This document is for information only.

Further information and related documents

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

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Additional copies

This Government response and copies of all the consultation documentation are published in electronic form only and can be accessed on the Welsh Government's website.

Link to the consultation and summary of responses documentation: [Licensing of animal welfare establishments, activities and exhibits](#)

Contents

Our Response to Consultation	4
Question 1 – next steps	4
Question 2 - next steps.....	5
Question 3 - next steps.....	5
Question 4 - next steps.....	5
Enforcement	6

Our response to the consultation on the licensing of animal welfare establishments, activities and exhibits, and our next steps.

We intend to undertake a phased approach to the introduction of a national model for the regulation of animal welfare.

In partnership with our stakeholders, operational agencies, and the third sector, we will focus on areas where regulation can deliver the greatest benefit, taking into account the evidence, views and information submitted, and the particular issues arising from different types of activity, establishment or exhibit.

We recognise that several consultation responses provided extensive detail, evidencing the perceived benefits of particular regulatory requirements, such as staff-to-animal ratios and inspection frequency. These, alongside all other responses, will be kept on record as we develop proposals further. Proposals will be subject to impact assessments, and we may consult further on specific matters.

Our next steps against each consultation question are set out below.

Question 1 - Animal Welfare Establishments (including Sanctuaries, Rehabilitation and Rehoming Centres)

- **Next Step:** We will develop proposals to consider regulation for animal welfare establishments, to include a possible licensing scheme.

Animal welfare establishments are currently unregulated in Wales and though the Animal Welfare Act 2006 affords some blanket protections, it is not a statutory function of the Welsh Local Authorities. In the absence of adequate, consistent and targeted regulation, local authorities (as the enforcement body) are often constrained in their ability to intervene where needed.

Despite the existence of a [Code of Best Practice for Animal Welfare Establishments](#) instances of severe neglect, mismanagement and overwhelm continue to happen. We will initiate work on the development of a national model to include proposals for the regulation of animal welfare establishments, including rescues, sanctuaries, rehabilitation and rehoming centres. Consideration will also be given to activities such as fostering and animals imported from abroad for rescue or rehoming.

Any legislation and guidance will be developed with the support, experience and expertise of stakeholders, operational bodies, and the third sector. In this way, we hope to produce regulation that is fit for purpose, proportional, clear and consistent. The final version of any legislation and guidance will be subject to some form of consultation, before its implementation, as well as impact assessments.

Question 2 - Animal Activities (including but not limited to pet grooming, doggy day care and boarding, animal trainers and behaviourists, human-animal engagement services, dog walking, livery yards)

- **Next Step:** Pet grooming will be given future consideration in a secondary phase of a national model.

Pet grooming is a skilled activity which requires specialist knowledge and experience to carry out safely. It is common, and still growing throughout Wales, but unregulated. Several qualifications are on offer; however, these are not standardised, and training uptake is inconsistent, with a wide variation in pet grooming operations, from small-scale mobile offerings to large franchises. Many animals will visit a pet groomer more often than any other care giver in their lifetime. Owners need assurance that when seeking to fulfil their pet's grooming needs, the pet will be safely returned, treated with care and not subjected to undue stress.

We acknowledge there are legitimate arguments for regulating other activities under a national model. We will consider these, particularly where there is strong support and clear evidence, for future phases of the national model.

There were arguments that in some instances, licensing may not be the appropriate course of action. For example, on dog walking, maintaining the status quo or introducing light-touch registration was favoured in the majority of responses on this activity, whilst in the case of puppy yoga and cat cafes, the consensus among respondents on these activities was for a ban. Other activities such as livery yards were identified as needing further monitoring and evidence gathering. Proposals for animal activities will be considered further taking into account all evidence and the consultation responses received.

Question 3 - Animal Exhibits (including but not limited to travelling and static birds of prey displays, animals used in educational, health or recreational settings, reindeer at Christmas events)

- **Next Step:** Maintain a watching brief.

There was less engagement on this area, with a wide range of views expressed. These yielded a less cohesive and more polarised evidence base, including some calls for targeted (exhibit specific) or outright ban(s). Whilst many stakeholders remain supportive of licensing or strengthening existing legislation for animal exhibits, some also acknowledged that other areas in the consultation were higher priority. We do not ignore calls for regulatory reform or prohibition. However, as set out in the consultation, the national model is envisioned under a phased approach, and it has been necessary to hone priorities for phase one.

Question 4 - Licensing owners and/or keepers or trainers of racing dogs (including greyhounds) and Question 5 - The consideration of a phased ban on greyhound racing.

- **Next step:** As announced on [18 February 2025](#) by the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs, Huw Irranca-Davies, we are moving to a ban on greyhound racing as soon as practicably possible.

We are setting up an Implementation Group that will provide information and practical advice to the Government. It will represent various stakeholders and provide guidance to ensure the welfare of racing dogs throughout the process, while also supporting efforts to mitigate impacts on the local community and economy.

As part of the [statement on the legislative programme](#), the Counsel General and Minister for Delivery announced on 29 April 2025 that the Government will bring forward legislation during the autumn, to deliver the commitment to ban greyhound racing in Wales.

Overarching Theme – Enforcement (including adequate resourcing, financing and consistency of approach).

Across all questions, a significant proportion of respondents highlighted the importance of effective enforcement, with views mirrored by members of the public, third sector representatives, business owners and operational bodies alike. There was clear consensus that enforcement is key to the successful delivery and ongoing management of any regulation. Respondents called for adequate resourcing, financing and consistency of approach, both in relation to existing and future regulatory requirements.

We recognise the crucial role enforcement will play in the success of the national model and have taken on board concerns raised. We have awarded our local authority enforcement project, [Animal Licensing Wales](#), a significant funding extension for 2025/2026.

This will enable their transformative and [award-winning](#) efforts to continue, driving forward progress for animal health and welfare and significantly improving enforcement across Wales.