



THE KENNEL CLUB

A
**VOICE
FOR
DOGS**

**WELSH
MANIFESTO**



FROM THE CHAIRMAN

The Kennel Club offices in Wales and across the UK are filled with dog lovers who work tirelessly to improve the lives of dogs through the services and schemes we offer to all dog owners and those working with dogs. We provide an unparalleled source of education, experience and advice on 'all things dog': breeding, health, acquisition, training, and responsible ownership.

We register around a quarter of a million pedigree dogs each year, as well as approximately 3,500 crossbreed dogs on our companion and activity registers. We are the only welfare organisation to recognise the positive contribution that responsible dog breeders make to society and run the only UKAS accredited breeding scheme which self-regulates around 4,000 breeders. We run Petlog, our microchipping database, which holds details of five million dogs, provide support to 1,700 dog training clubs through our Good Citizen Dog Scheme and accredit dog training instructors via our Kennel Club Accredited Instructors programme.

We are calling on an incoming Welsh Government to further the welfare of dogs in the ways set out in our manifesto. These are the issues for which we want to give a dog a voice, which we hope will be heard.

Graham Hill
Welsh Kennel Club Chairman

OVERVIEW

10 key asks to improve dog health and welfare

1

Increase powers for local authorities enforcing dog breeding offences by allowing them to issue Fixed Penalty Notices and improve training to improve consistency of enforcement.

2

Allow the UKAS accredited Assured Breeder Scheme to self-regulate its members, thereby avoiding duplicated local authority inspections.

3

Introduce a risk-based licensing model to allow local authorities to inspect high risk/less responsible breeders more frequently and issue low risk/responsible breeders longer licences.

4

Incentivise low volume, domestic breeders to breed puppies to ensure a good supply of happy, healthy and well balanced pet dogs and ensure that the licensing system is more proportionate for low volume breeders.

5

Avoid complex and unenforceable registration requirements for high welfare and low volume breeders.

6

Review the Microchipping of Dogs (Wales) Regulations 2015.

7

Educate pet owners on the importance of keeping their dogs' microchip details up to date.

8

End the practice of duplicated registrations to aid reunification, and raise standards of database operators and implanter training providers to ensure a better service for pet owners.

9

Commission behaviour change experts to develop a campaign to reduce the prevalence of livestock worrying by unaccompanied dogs.

10

Assess and promote best practice, non-legislative measures which will empower dog walkers to avoid livestock and conflict on their walks.

RESPONSIBLE BREEDING

Encourage responsible dog breeding

Ensuring there is a good supply of puppies bred by loving, low volume breeders, is of paramount importance. All too often dogs are found in rescue centres owing to poor breeding practices. The Kennel Club is the only welfare organisation to truly recognise the valuable contribution that good breeders make to society and register around 25,000 dogs in Wales each year.

The current Welsh Government is committed to reviewing the Animal Welfare (Breeding of Dogs) (Wales) Regulations 2014 and bringing in a ban on the third party sale of puppies. We very much welcome both of these measures to combat puppy farming and illegal breeding and smuggling, all of which remain rife in Wales, damaging the reputation of many good breeders. **In reviewing Regulations, it is imperative that an incoming Welsh Government strikes the right balance, ensuring that those who regularly breed dogs for commercial gain are meeting appropriate health and welfare standards, whilst encouraging low volume, high welfare breeders to continue to breed.**

Resourcing for local authorities

Currently Welsh dog breeding Regulations are straightforward for breeders and licensing authorities to understand, with the basic premise being that a licence is required if a dog breeder breeds three litters per year or more, or keeps three or more breeding bitches on their premises. When the Regulations were introduced in 2014, they raised licensing requirements to improve the welfare of puppies being bred, and reduced the threshold at which breeders required a licence from five litters per year to three. Based on our registration data, this should have resulted in three times as many breeders being inspected to meet higher welfare standards than previously.

However, these higher standards have not equated to better enforcement. Based on Welsh Government data, Welsh local authorities are currently licensing just 219 dog breeders annually – less than a quarter of what they should be based on our own registration data, which shows 282 Welsh breeders requiring a licence, and the Kennel Club registering one third of puppies bred. **Local authorities are poorly resourced and have limited enforcement powers, which is why puppy farming in Wales remains rife.**

At present, local authorities are under-resourced to carry out proactive or unannounced inspections on the scale required. This is compounded by the fact that most inspections are currently conducted by local authority

officials with limited or no knowledge about animal welfare. **We therefore call on an incoming Welsh Government to improve training available to local authority inspectors to ensure licensing requirements are enforced more consistently, and increase powers available to local authorities so that they are able to issue Fixed Penalty Notices i.e. “on the spot” fines, for dog breeding offences.**



RESPONSIBLE BREEDING

Self-regulation

To aid enforcement further, we propose that a degree of self-regulation is introduced into the system via the **Kennel Club Assured Breeder Scheme**. The scheme gained independent accreditation from UKAS over 10 years ago and self-regulates around 4,000 breeders across the UK, including 165 in Wales. Our assessors inspect on average, 1,200 premises annually across the UK, whereas over half of local authorities carry out five or fewer inspections. The scheme includes making use of breed specific health tests and preventative health measures, and ensures puppies are vet-checked prior to sale.

Evidence from insurance company, Agria, has proven that the requirements of the Assured Breeder Scheme are achieving the aim of ensuring healthier puppies are bred. For dogs which may experience the health issues the Kennel Club Assured Breeder Scheme specifically endeavors to breed away from, those bred by Assured Breeders are 34 per cent less likely to need veterinary treatment, resulting in vet bills that are 27 per cent less for their owners.

Given the high standards set by the scheme, coupled with the fact that local authorities are under-resourced to inspect many breeders in Wales, **we believe that licences for Assured Breeder Scheme members should be issued following an inspection by a Kennel Club trained assessor in order to save local authorities carrying out duplicated inspections on the most responsible breeders.**

Risk-based regulations and star ratings

Providing breeders with a star rating, similar to food hygiene standards, could further assist local authorities with regards to enforcement, by allowing them to issue a higher star rating to a low risk (responsible) breeder, and a low star rating to a higher risk breeder. Instead of inspecting all breeders annually, this would enable local authorities to inspect high risk breeders more frequently than low risk breeders.



A risk-based model rewards the best breeders, incentivises breeders to raise their health and welfare standards and enables already stretched local authorities to focus more on higher risk breeders. Additionally it provides puppy buyers extra peace of mind if purchasing from a higher star breeder.

Registration versus good supply

Maintaining a good supply of happy, healthy puppies is vital in order that puppy buyers are able to easily identify good breeders from which to purchase their puppy. Given this, it is imperative that any review of current breeding Regulations does not deter high welfare, low volume, home-breeders from continuing to breed dogs. Whilst there are suggestions that all breeders should be registered, given local authorities' finite resources we believe the priority should be high volume breeders, many of whom are currently breaching current regulatory requirements. In addition, we believe that this extra burden on breeders breeding just one or two litters per year will result in many stopping breeding. Evidence of this impact is available upon request following the introduction of stringent Regulations in England affecting home breeders breeding just one or two puppies per year, which has resulted in them breeding in excess of 50,000 fewer puppies annually. The shortfall is likely being met by unethical, low welfare puppy farmers and importers.

WE ARE CALLING ON AN INCOMING WELSH GOVERNMENT TO:

- Increase powers for local authorities enforcing dog breeding offences by allowing them to issue Fixed Penalty Notices and better ensure training to improve consistency of enforcement.
- Allow the UKAS accredited Assured Breeder Scheme to self-regulate its members, thereby avoiding duplicated local authority inspections.
- Introduce a risk-based licensing model to allow local authorities to inspect high risk/less responsible breeders more frequently and issue low risk/responsible breeders longer licences.
- Incentivise low volume domestic breeders to breed puppies to ensure a good supply of happy and healthy pet.
- Avoid complex and unenforceable registration requirements for high welfare and low volume breeders.

MICROCHIPPING

Ensure all dogs are microchipped and registered on a compliant database

Microchipping is a safe, cheap and permanent form of identification which, in addition to a collar and tag, helps aid reunification between a lost dog and its owner. **Whilst microchipping is a legal requirement under the Microchipping of Dogs (Wales) Regulations 2015, we believe that the Regulations should be reviewed as a priority by an incoming Welsh Government.**

The Kennel Club is responsible for Petlog, one of the UK's largest microchipping databases – meaning it has met the standards set out in the 2015 Regulations and receives 60,000 calls annually to assist pets and owners being reunited. Whilst the number of stray dogs seized by Councils in Wales has reduced by almost 20 per cent since the current Regulations came into force, the percentage of dogs that cannot be reunited with their owners due to not having a microchip or the microchip details being incorrect is increasing.

Duplicated registrations

Since it became a legal requirement for dog owners to microchip their pets, many more microchip databases have entered the market to take advantage of the business opportunity. Some act unethically, offering a form of service where they will register a chip without checking to see whether the chip is already registered with another database, thereby compromising the reunification prospects. In addition to this it creates a problem for a new keeper i.e. they may find that they are unknowingly non-compliant with the law.

To aid unification we believe that an incoming Welsh Government should ban the practice of duplicated microchip registrations.

Standards of database operators and implanters

Petlog and other leading microchip databases provide a high level of service to their customers, including the

required 24/7 phone line. However it is difficult for dog owners to know which databases are compliant with the 2015 Regulations, since some non-compliant databases make misleading claims, and even compliant databases run their businesses without Welsh Government providing any formal checks and balances on the level of service provided.

Similarly due to the young age at which puppies must be microchipped, it is suspected that incidences of microchips migrating have increased. It is therefore imperative that microchip implanters are trained to a high standard. Yet training companies offering quick and cheap services can establish themselves fairly easily, and as a result do not provide a good enough service. The Welsh Government should provide checks on training being offered to implanters to ensure it is of a high standard.

We believe the Welsh Government should raise standards of database operators and implanter training providers to ensure a better service for pet owners.

WE ARE CALLING ON AN INCOMING WELSH GOVERNMENT TO:

- Review the Microchipping of Dogs (Wales) Regulations 2015.
- Educate pet owners on the importance of keeping their dogs' microchip details up to date.
- End the practice of duplicated registrations to aid reunification, and raise standards of database operators and implanter training providers to ensure a better service for pet owners.

LIVESTOCK WORRYING

Dealing with livestock worrying

Livestock worrying, and the resultant impact on farmers and other stakeholders who deal with the aftermath of an attack, is an issue that the Kennel Club has taken very seriously for a number of years. Though we primarily represent dogs and their owners, we also own a farm with around 1,400 sheep and a breeding herd of 43 Galloway cattle, so we have a dual interest in this matter.

Livestock attacks are a highly emotive issue, and when they occur there is often a clamour to call for a change to the existing legislation. However, knee jerk changes to legislation very rarely achieve improved outcomes. Livestock worrying is a very serious issue, and deserves a considered, thought-through response.

Unaccompanied dogs

Typically, people taking their dogs for a walk in the countryside are most commonly held up as the reason for livestock worrying. As such, many high profile campaigns have been run to try and educate dog walkers of their responsibility to prevent these incidents occurring.

However, while people walking their dogs are the cause of some livestock attacks, police figures repeatedly show the majority of livestock attacks occur from unaccompanied dogs i.e. stray dogs or those allowed to roam. According to statistics from five police forces in England, Scotland and Wales, around seven in ten livestock worrying incidents take place due to unaccompanied dogs. Yet, historically very little has been done to try and deal with this cause of attacks. **We believe that more needs to be done, both in terms of education and refocusing enforcement, on unaccompanied dogs worrying livestock and would call on an incoming Welsh Government to commission behaviour change experts to develop a campaign to reduce the prevalence of livestock worrying by unaccompanied dogs.**

Alternative measures

With regard to the impact of dog walkers, we have been working with partner organisations for a number of years to develop non-legislative best practice to reduce incidents of livestock worrying. Examples include ensuring signage regarding the presence of livestock is accurate and up to date. This enables dog owners to know where they need to keep their dogs on a lead and where they can let their dogs off lead. Whilst a relatively simple step, it has resulted in significant reductions in livestock attacks where trialled.

Likewise some landowners have been working in partnership with local authorities, access user groups and the Health and Safety Executive to offer temporary alternative routes to dog owners, giving them an informed choice to avoid livestock on their walks. The overwhelming majority of dog walkers will avoid livestock if given a choice, especially due the incidences of death and life-changing injuries caused to walkers, most often with dogs, by cattle every year.

We would therefore call on an incoming Welsh Government to assess and promote best practice, non-legislative measures which will empower dog walkers to avoid livestock and conflict on their walks.

WE ARE CALLING ON AN INCOMING WELSH GOVERNMENT TO:

- Commission behaviour change experts to develop a campaign to reduce the prevalence of livestock worrying by unaccompanied dogs.
- Assess and promote best practice, non-legislative measures which will empower dog walkers to avoid livestock and conflict on their walks.



COVID-19 RESPONSE

During the current time, the Kennel Club and Welsh Kennel Club are working to ensure the welfare of dogs and provide up-to-date advice to those involved in breeding dogs, transferring dogs between breeders and new owners, rescuing dogs and training dogs.

During this unique and unprecedented situation, we have been advising responsible breeders to hold off from breeding until lockdown is over, so puppies can be properly socialised and vets can be more easily accessed. Where a mating took place prior to lockdown, we have been providing advice, and liaising with Government authorities, to ensure the safe transfer of puppies. Whereas we normally recommend puppies are seen with their mother and should only be picked up from the breeder premises, at times this has not been possible. Whereas we normally advocate the wide-ranging benefits of dog ownership, we have been advising people not to buy a puppy or dog at this time and instead use this time to do research on what kind of dog would best suit them and their lifestyle.

Despite this, the demand for puppies during lockdown increased drastically, with searches for puppies via the Kennel Club's 'Find a Puppy' tool increasing by 168 per cent from March 23rd until the end of May in comparison to the same period last year. As such we have concerns as to where the supply of puppies will come from if demand remains high and responsible breeders are not breeding.

In addition to providing advice and support for owners, breeders, trainers and other dog businesses, the Kennel Club has set up a Covid-19 emergency relief fund to help support the range of community-based canine organisations, including rescue and training organisations, which require funds at this time in order to prevent the unnecessary suffering of dogs.

Post-lockdown, we also hope to encourage more owners towards our training resources, including the Good Citizen Dog Training Scheme and Kennel Club Accredited Instructors, to try to resolve any behavioural or socialisation issues which may have been caused by the pandemic restrictions, and could result in many more dogs than usual being relinquished.

Throughout this period we have worked as part of the Companion Animal Welfare Group Wales, offering advice so that welfare of puppies was balanced with the protection of human health during the pandemic.

For more information contact:
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