



All-Party Parliamentary Group
for Animal Welfare Sub-Group for Dogs

Review and Recommendations for Developing an Effective England-wide Strategy for Dogs



Photo: RSPCA



Foreword

Dear Colleague,

Parliament has become increasingly aware of, and concerned with, dog-related issues in the last five years. Whether this is about dangerous dogs, irresponsible breeding and trading or cruelty we have seen numerous debates, meetings, parliamentary questions and an e-petition with 111,563 signatures triggering a House of Commons debate in September 2014.¹

Dogs are the most owned companion animal in England and most of us come into contact with them on a daily basis whether it be as simple as walking in the park or seeing a trained dog working alongside the police. There are many roles for dogs from workers to companions and they can have a very beneficial effect on people's lives. However in some cases there can be conflict and it is important we reflect on this and ensure human safety as well as animal welfare. We recognise that dogs are also used in animal research. This is clearly an important issue, however the scope of this report limits our ability to cover this and therefore we have decided to note this as an area the sub-group should consider at a later stage

There is a range of legislation relating to dogs but many argue that it is clear that it is no longer suitable and is not taking into account the latest understanding of dog welfare (and in particular behaviour) as well as the very different place most dogs now have in society to when much of the legislation was passed.

Technology and resources have an impact on how we respond to these issues, for example how dogs are acquired has changed significantly with the internet and international trade as well as reduced resources amongst local government and the police for dealing with the continual problem of stray dogs and dog attacks.

What we need is for all dog owners and carers to be responsible. However, it is fundamental to set out exactly what responsible dog ownership and guardianship should look like. This seems like a simple question, and it is the one that started this piece of work. Yet the answer is complex and it is important that any future strategy recognises the interactions between irresponsible breeding and trade with dog control and animal welfare as well as the many benefits that come from dog ownership.

What I believe this report shows is that there needs to be a clear vision for dogs in England that encourages responsible dog ownership. This vision must also take a holistic approach to the problems and address the often intricate and difficult relationships between people and dogs in a proportionate way that protects both animal welfare and public safety.

¹ Hansard, 4 September 2014, col 449

This report is just a first stage identifying a series of recommendations that I, and the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Animal Welfare hope that the future Government post the 2015 General Election will consider and take forward.

A second phase of work is planned for 2015 where the recommendations will be developed further to provide more detailed approaches. However, it is most significant that the major bodies and organisations who are concerned with dogs have reached agreement on the key issues and drivers. I hope that all the political parties will acknowledge this and commit to working with this sub-group to take the different recommendations forward in the next Parliament.

Thanks need to go to colleagues from all political parties who have provided their views and who continue to recognise the importance of responsible dog ownership for their constituents and the public sector bodies involved. Particular thanks should go to those who sat on the group and spent long hours working on the issues and recommendations, which include Victoria Brownlie, Holly Conway and Denisa Delic (Kennel Club), Sally Burnell and Rachael Gledhill (British Veterinary Association), Rachel Cunningham and Becky Thwaites (Blue Cross), Mike Webb and Ben Sundell (Battersea Dogs & Cats Home), Laura Vallance and Margaret Donnellan (Dogs Trust), Sean Wensley and Vicki Craighill (PDSA) and Claire Robinson and Sam Gaines (RSPCA).

Finally a special thank you should go to Claire Robinson (RSPCA) who provided detailed research and evidence and Marisa Heath (APGAW) for leading this work and writing the final report.

I hope you find this report and the recommendations of interest. The sub-group does not believe that dog issues are party political and therefore I urge all my political colleagues to support this document and commit to implementing it after May 2015.

Yours,

Rob Flello MP
Chairman of APGAW sub-group on Dogs



Summary of recommendations

Dog control

Recommendation 1:

To update and consolidate all relevant dog control legislation so that it is evidence-based and is supported by current scientific understanding. In particular it should move away from the breed-specific approach, protect the welfare of the dogs concerned and focus on early intervention and prevention supported by an effective education programme (see recommendation 2).

Recommendation 2:

All animal welfare organisations, public sector bodies and central government should ensure all messaging in this area is up to date, evidence-based, clear, consistent and accessible and visible. Such information should be positive in its tone rather than the scare-mongering approach some advice currently takes.

Recommendation 3:

Defra needs to urgently identify and endorse a suitable industry standard and independent regulatory body (including qualifications, knowledge, skills and experience) so that the public can be confident in finding and going to a suitable behaviourist or trainer.

Recommendation 4:

All serious and fatal dog bite incidents should be fully investigated including using the services of a suitable, independent behaviourist (see recommendation 3). Understanding the causes of such tragic incidents will help inform the development of updated and consolidated legislation, increase knowledge in this area, as well as aiding effective preventative measures and education programmes (see recommendation 1).

Recommendation 5:

Work needs to be carried out by the public sector, central government and the welfare organisations to identify a sustainable and effective way forward to fund the resources needed for enforcing the law.

Recommendation 6:

All organisations that are empowered to seize dogs must be required to ensure they actively manage the care and welfare of the dogs in their custody. This includes ensuring all their welfare needs are met and where dogs are not coping in a kennel environment, all avenues to protect welfare are explored and where required, a suitably qualified behaviourist is brought in to address the problems. Training is also needed for those responsible for seized dogs to ensure they have a basic knowledge of dog behaviour, welfare and handling to not only protect themselves but also the dog concerned.

Dog breeding, dealing & trading

Recommendation 7:

To recognise that the laws relating to the breeding, dealing and trade in dogs are outdated and need reviewing and updating. This should be done via Regulations and statutory Codes of Practice under the Animal Welfare Act 2006 to implement the points raised above.

Recommendation 8:

Work with interested parties to identify and develop a scheme that could form part of self-regulation providing the scheme's standards and enforcement are sufficiently robust and transparent. Such an approach should still incorporate some form of local government oversight, for example a requirement to inform the Local Authority when an inspection has taken place.

Recommendation 9:

A more consistent approach to licensing and enforcement is needed with clear guidance alongside consistent pricing structure for local authority inspections.

Recommendation 10:

Housing providers should have positive and proportionate pet policies and tenancy agreements and should address the breeding and sale of dogs.

Recommendation 11:

Training is needed for all local authority officers to ensure they have sufficient knowledge of dog welfare and the law and its interrelation with other issues.

Recommendation 12:

Animal and Plant Health Agency should be the primary enforcement body and adopt an intelligence-led enforcement regime at the ports of entry.

Recommendation 13:

The puppy contract should be endorsed by Defra and all responsible breeders and the public informed that use of it is encouraged.

Recommendation 14:

Veterinary surgeons should offer advice to dog owning clients about canine inherited disorders and promote screening programmes. Veterinary organisations should promote this as good practice to the profession and give guidance about where to go for further information such as the tools with the Kennel Club 'Mate Select' or scientific advice offered through VetCompass.

Dog identification

Recommendation 15:

All animal welfare organisations, public sector bodies and central government should ensure all messaging in this area is up to date and clear and consistent.

Recommendation 16:

Work needs to be carried out by the public sector, central government and the welfare organisations to identify a sustainable and effective way forward to fund the resources needed for enforcing the law.

Responsible dog ownership and guardianship

Recommendation 17:

To review and update all dog-related legislation (excluding control and breeding and sale, as dealt with above) and bring forward Regulations under the Animal Welfare Act 2006.

Recommendation 18:

Ensure that the Codes of Practice under the Animal Welfare Act 2006 remain statutory Codes and that their review takes place in 2015, with a particular consideration of the prohibition in the use of aversive training methods.

Recommendation 19:

That the maximum sentences for animal cruelty and fighting should be increased to two years to provide a more consistent approach with other EU countries.

Recommendation 20:

All animal welfare organisations, police and local authorities should seek to find an educational mechanism that allows consistent support and advice to be provided to those who are not meeting the welfare needs of their dogs. Additionally work needs to be done by Defra to identify how it can better promote the Dog Welfare Code of Practice its interpretation and application once it has been reviewed and updated through both formal and informal education routes (see recommendation 18).

Resources

Recommendation 21:

There is an urgent need to identify a means for ensuring there are adequate resources to tackle dog-related issues. Further work in creating some form of regular funding stream that can be ring-fenced for this work is crucial to ensuring an effective and sustainable approach.

Introduction

This report is compiled by a sub-group of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Animal Welfare (APGAW).² The sub-group for dogs is comprised of cross-party politicians and a small group of key stakeholders including Battersea Dogs & Cats Home, the Blue Cross, the British Veterinary Association, Dogs Trust, the Kennel Club, PDSA, and the RSPCA. It was felt best to start the work with a small group of stakeholders, however following the development of the report and recommendations a wider consultation with other interested parties was held to ensure the report was accurate and addressed the issues appropriately.

The sub-group was formed because of the growing interest and awareness amongst politicians of dog-related issues. There appears to be a general consensus amongst politicians that these are important issues which can impact heavily upon their constituencies. Dogs affect the economy both positively and negatively and aside from farm animals, are one of the most significant animals in relation to people with most individuals having some sort of contact with them on a daily basis.

The responsibility for managing many of these issues has been left to 'self-regulation' on the whole with state intervention only in the case of attacks, straying or cruelty. The public has largely been free to own, trade, sell and manage dogs with very little regulation. The politicians involved in the sub-group recognised early on that as the UK population grows and the structure of society changes in relation to that, so does the role of dogs within it. Furthermore, there is a much better understanding of dog welfare and how that relates to human interactions with dogs. We all want to encourage and see more responsible dog ownership and guardianship and it is time to consider what role the state, the public and the charity sector have to play in ensuring this.

To start this piece of work, the sub-group set a clear vision to guide their thinking and discussions. The vision states that:

“For all those responsible for dogs in England to ensure their welfare is maintained at the highest possible standard and to be aware of and have consideration for that dog's interaction with people and animals in their community.”

Information on how that vision was reached can be found under Appendix 1 Methodology.

To give an idea of the estimated costs to the taxpayer of irresponsible dog guardianship Reading University was commissioned to carry out a piece of work for the RSPCA in 2010³ and Table 1 below provides some useful estimates:

Table 1 – estimates for the costs of irresponsible dog ownership

Area	Estimated cost (per annum)
Attacks by dogs on farm livestock	£2.8 million
Attacks by dogs on humans	£4 million
Zoonotic diseases	£10 million
Road traffic accidents	£14 million
Stray dog control service	£46 million
Dog welfare issues (enforcement)	£52 million ⁴
Dangerous dog control (by police)	£3.7 million (acquired post study) ⁵
GRAND TOTAL	£80.5 million⁶

While the data has not been updated since 2010 for inflation, etc it provides the best estimate of costs to taxpayers. It is quite astonishing that irresponsible dog guardianship can cost the taxpayer just over £80 million per year. It should also be noted that the

² www.apgaw.org

³ Upton, M., Bennett, R., Wismore, T., Taylor, N., Hanks, J., Allison, K., and Pflug, S. (2010) Dog licensing and registration in the UK. Reading University. A report to the RSPCA. Economic data taken from returned questionnaires from a sample of dog warden services in the UK.

⁴ These are costs to the RSPCA so represent a minimum figure

⁵ NB. this only covers the costs of kennelling it does not include the costs of police time investigating and prosecuting.
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-16972657> (accessed 13.10.14)

⁶ Does not include the costs for dog welfare enforcement

RSPCA saves the taxpayer a further £52 million per year in its work on dog welfare. With increasingly tighter budgets not just for the public sector but also the charitable sector, prevention and early intervention strategies become ever more important.

Additionally welfare organisations rescue and rehabilitate a large number of dogs each year. Table 2 below sets out the figures for 2013 for five of the organisations who have made up this sub-group. This does not include all the figures for the many other welfare and rehoming organisations.

What is clear is that the topic of 'dogs' is a large area with a large, and varied, number of stakeholders providing a range of opinions and views from welfare and veterinary bodies, through to local authorities and the police, to pet retailers, breeders, and even social workers and postal workers. Only with the involvement of all of these organisations and bodies will the right solutions be found and by combining the resources, knowledge and expertise from these different organisations, the members of the sub-group believe progress can be achieved.

The recommendations within this report are not a wish-list, they are achievable and set out a clear plan to improve dog welfare and deliver public safety. For

too long the key stakeholders have tried to move forward but are hindered by the lack of a joined-up approach, lack of resources, insufficient legislation or inconsistent messaging and education. However we believe that things are changing and there is a desire to work together. People are recognising the need to identify how resources can be found and that some legislation is in need of updating. Consequently, work is starting on ensuring more consistent messaging and meaningful protection of welfare, an example being the Puppy Contract⁹. The sub-group agrees with the Westminster Government that self-regulation can work in some areas but this is conditional on central Government coordinating and directing the standard at which it should be set and that the standard is transparent, proportionate and does not fall below the minimum standards set out in the Animal Welfare Act 2006 (AWA).

Finally, this report is an overview of the key issues and has not gone into detail about process and development of recommendations. The sub-group plan to set out detail at a later time in 2015 for each of the areas. It is hoped that the political parties will accept that action needs to be taken and that this work can act as a roadmap in taking that forward by whoever forms the next Government in Westminster in 2015.

Table 2 – the figures for rescuing, rehoming, treating and prosecuting for dog welfare by 5 of the major welfare organisations.

	Rescued	Rehomed	Treated	Convictions
Battersea Dogs & Cats Home	5,421	3,463	5,421	N/A
Blue Cross	2,583	2,172	18,612	N/A
Dogs Trust	15,239	14,865	N/A	N/A
PDSA	N/A	N/A	230,378	N/A
RSPCA	c. 17,500 ⁷	11,072	98,827	2,505
Grand Total:	at least 40,743	at least 31,572	at least 353,238	2,505

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⁷ Unfortunately this is not a precise figure as not all RSPCA branches return accurate figures on this

⁸ Different rescue centres do not operate the same policies, which explains a difference in rehoming rates. Rescues which operate a non-selective intake policy, and accept dogs irrespective of age, condition or breed, will be able to rehome a smaller proportion of animals than those with a more selective intake, as rescue with a non-selective intake policy will take in a higher number of the most seriously mistreated dogs. This is reflected in the statistics above.

⁹ <http://puppycontract.rspca.org.uk/home> (accessed 13.10.14)



Section 1: Dog Control

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This is an area that has already drawn considerable attention by politicians and is one that impacts not only on animal welfare but also public safety.

Legislation/policy

The sub-group identified that the legal framework for dealing with dog control has been reactive and is complex and confusing with at least nine pieces of legislation dating back to 1871¹⁰. Indeed the recently passed Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014, whilst useful in some respect, has merely added to the list rather than consolidate it and compounds existing confusion amongst enforcers about which piece to use and where. There is additional ambiguity around which organisation is responsible for enforcement of the legislation.

Furthermore, there is a great deal of criticism for the lack of scientific evidence to support the approach of such legislation. This includes not only the breed specific aspects (which prohibits the possession of certain types of dogs) but additionally the measures available for tackling the issues demonstrate a lack of understanding of dog behaviour and in particular dog aggression which is often a misunderstood and very complex issue. The sub-group is concerned that current approaches to the law could put the 'average' dog owner at risk of being prosecuted and believes a more balanced approach is needed.

The legislation pays little attention to the need to protect and ensure good dog welfare. Looking at the statistics¹¹, it has done little to prevent serious incidents (those requiring hospital treatment) or fatalities from occurring thus failing to protect public safety or animal welfare. If we really wish to prevent incidents of aggression then we need to understand why dog related incidents, particularly fatalities, occur. We then

need to develop preventative legislation that takes this information into account as well as produce an effective education programme for all those who care for, or who come into contact with dogs.

There is increasing recognition amongst politicians that the current approach; reactive and breed-specific, is not working and with other countries choosing to repeal breed specific legislation such as the Netherlands, more needs to be done to try and develop a better approach. Such an approach must ensure that all the relevant departments in Westminster work together including Defra, the Home Office, the Ministry of Justice and the Department for Communities and Local Government.

Recommendation 1:

To update and consolidate all relevant dog control legislation so that it is evidence-based and is supported by current scientific understanding. In particular it should move away from the breed-specific approach, protect the welfare of the dogs concerned and focus on early intervention and prevention supported by an effective education programme (see recommendation 2).

Education

The sub-group noted that there is generally a poor understanding of dog behaviour and a lack of knowledge as to the causes of dog aggression, how to manage and resolve it, amongst the public as well as decision makers. Possible causes of aggression include poor breeding practice where health, welfare and temperament are not considered or protected. It can also be caused by inadequate or inappropriate socialisation and habituation of puppies. General knowledge on how to be safe around dogs is poor and can be a contributory factor.

This is all despite there being a wide range of information and advice from the major welfare

¹⁰ Including: Dogs Act 1871, Dogs (Protection of Livestock) Act 1953, Guard Dogs Act 1975, Dangerous Dogs Act 1989, Dangerous Dogs Act 1991, Control of Dogs Order 1992, Dangerous Dogs (Amendment) Act 1997, Animal Welfare Act 2006, Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014

¹¹ <http://www.hscic.gov.uk/article/4722/Dog-bites-hospital-admissions-in-most-deprived-areas-three-times-as-high-as-least-deprived>

organisations and public sector bodies including literature about how to stay safe around dogs from the RSPCA, the Blue Cross, Battersea Dogs & Cats Home, the Kennel Club, PDSA and Dogs Trust¹². However such a wide range of resources may be part of the problem with the presenting of similar information in different ways which confuses the public about what to do. It is clear that the third (or charity) sector can play an important role in educating the public about dog behaviour and how to be safe around dogs but it is imperative that a clear, evidence based and consistent message is delivered by all as well as being supported by suitable behaviourists. This is starting to happen with movements like the Animal Welfare Education Alliance (AWEA)¹³ in which the stakeholders are all actively involved. This approach could then be recognised by the public sector and communication facilitated by central government.

Recommendation 2:

All animal welfare organisations, public sector bodies and central government should ensure all messaging in this area is up to date, evidence-based, clear, consistent and accessible and visible. Such information should be positive in its tone rather than the scare-mongering approach some advice currently takes.

The understanding of dog behaviour and welfare has improved and advanced significantly in the last 10-15 years and is now a well-established science and discipline. Some previously accepted theories and techniques have been shown to be outdated and can place dog welfare at risk making behaviour problems

worse and placing people in danger¹⁴. There are still practitioners that use these theories and techniques and this is compounded by the problem that anyone can still call themselves a 'behaviourist' regardless of their qualifications, knowledge, experience and skills. This has resulted in a plethora of people offering behaviour therapy and training and because there has been no joined up agreement on where to sign-post the public or other industry practitioners there is much confusion. Over recent years, the Animal Behaviour and Training Council (ABTC) has developed, maintains and oversees a range of standards for those in the behaviour therapy and training industry to which the majority of stakeholders have signed up¹⁵. For the standards that have been created by industry to be upheld and recognised, the public needs to be informed of them and there needs to be clear signposting from Government that these bodies offer the highest standard and demonstrate best practice. Additionally the Kennel Club accredits dog trainers, providing a high quality standard of training from accredited instructors and those working towards accreditation. In 2010 the scheme achieved City and Guilds recognition.¹⁶

Recommendation 3:

Defra needs to urgently identify and endorse a suitable industry standard and independent regulatory body (including qualifications, knowledge, skills and experience) so that the public can be confident in finding and going to a suitable behaviourist or trainer.

12 <http://www.rspca.org.uk/adviceandwelfare/pets/dogs/company/children> (accessed 13.10.14) <http://www.bluecross.org.uk/1752-131575/how-to-stay-safe-around-dogs.html> (accessed 13.10.14) <http://www.battersea.org.uk/apex/webarticle?pagelId=169-safetyaroundanimals> (accessed 13.10.14) <http://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/training/safe-and-sound/> (accessed 13.10.14) <http://www.dogstrust.org.uk/az/factsheetsanddownloads/factsheetsafetyanddogsno13.PDF> (accessed 13.10.14)

13 <http://www.peteducationresources.co.uk/about-us/> (accessed 13.10.14)

14 www.dogwelfarecampaign.org.uk (accessed 13.10.14)

15 Animal Behaviour and Training Council members include: British Small Animal Veterinary Association (BSAVA) European College of Veterinary Behaviour Medicine – Companion Animals (ECVBM-CA), British Veterinary Behaviour Association (BVBA), Police Dog Working Group (ACPO PDWG), Royal Army Veterinary Corps, Guide Dogs, Assistance Dogs UK, UK Fire & Rescue International Search & Rescue Team, National Search and Rescue Dogs Association (NSARDA), National Dog Wardens Association (NDWA), Battersea Dogs & Cats Home, Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SSPCA), The Blue Cross, Dogs Trust, Cats Protection, Wood Green, Animal Shelters, UK Register Canine Behaviourists (UKRCB), Association for the Study of Animal Behaviour (ASAB) Accreditation Committee, Association of Pet Behaviour Counsellors (APBC), Association of Pet Dog Trainers UK (APDT UK), International Sheepdog Society (ISDS), World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA), British & Irish Association of Zoos & Aquaria (BIAZA), Performing Animals Welfare Standards International (PAWSI)

16 <http://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/training/kcai/> (accessed 13.10.14)

Despite still being rare, serious and fatal incidents still occur. Yet little has been done up to this point to properly understand why dogs bite in different circumstances and in particular the circumstances around which fatalities result. Research suggests there are a range of factors that may contribute to dog bite related fatalities although each incident is specific to the circumstances¹⁷. Better investigation of dog bite incidents, including fatalities, by those suitably trained to do so would result in greater understanding of the potential triggers which in turn could assist in preventing the more serious incidents from occurring.

Recommendation 4:

All serious¹⁸ and fatal dog bite incidents should be fully investigated including using the services of a suitable, independent behaviourist (see recommendation 3). Understanding the causes of such tragic incidents will help inform the development of updated and consolidated legislation, increase knowledge in this area as well as aiding effective preventative measures and education programmes (see recommendation 1).

Enforcement

The sub-group recognises that a number of different issues of concern have been raised not least the lack of resources for training of frontline officers dealing with dog related issues as well as resources for dealing with complaints and the sharing of intelligence amongst the key enforcers to ensure the most effective approach. This is an on-going problem and a difficult one to solve but one that is likely to continue for some time as public sector budgets face further cuts. The potential for impact on animal welfare and public safety is significant and therefore action is needed to be taken.

Recommendation 5:

Work needs to be carried out by the public sector, central government and the welfare organisations to identify a sustainable and effective way forward to fund the resources needed for enforcing the law.

On the subject of training issues that need to be addressed, they need to include not only those in the legal framework with the understanding of how and when to use current legislation but also dog behaviour, welfare and handling. Additionally there is a need to understand the responsibilities seizing authorities have for seized dogs under the Animal Welfare Act 2006 and how to ensure the welfare needs of dogs are protected in a kennel environment. The RSPCA in conjunction with the Chartered Institute for Environmental Health (CIEH) have already produced good practice guides in both these areas for local authorities and the police to use and they have been warmly received.¹⁹

Recommendation 6:

All organisations that are empowered to seize dogs must be required to ensure they actively manage the care and welfare of the dogs in their custody. This includes ensuring all their welfare needs are met and where dogs are not coping in a kennel environment, all avenues to protect welfare are explored and where required a suitably qualified behaviourist is brought into address the problems. Training is also needed for those responsible for seized dogs to ensure they have a basic knowledge of dog behaviour, welfare and handling to not only protect themselves but also the dog concerned.

¹⁷ Patronek G. J., Sacks, J.J., Delise K. M., Cleary D. V., Marder A. R. [2013] Co-occurrence of potentially preventable factors in 256 dog bite-related fatalities in the United States (2000-2009). *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*. 243(12), 1726-1736

¹⁸ By this we mean any incidents that are life changing

¹⁹ RSPCA and CIEH, A good practice guide for enforcement bodies – meeting the welfare needs of seized dogs in a kennel environment, 2012
RSPCA, CIEH, NDWA, All Wales Dog Warden Technical Panel, Guidance for handling dogs, 2013.



Section 2: Dog Breeding, Dealing and Trading

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With an estimated 9 to 10 million²⁰ in the UK, living in 31% of households²¹, dogs are clearly being bred, sold and traded on a daily basis. There are no figures on the amount of puppies being bred, imported, traded and sold but it is likely to be a significant number and the impact of this can be felt not just in terms of animal welfare but also resources for the public sector and rehoming organisations. The Kennel Club alone registers 235,000 puppies a year²². This excludes all the unregistered and imported dogs and puppies which are the majority. Indeed Kennel Club research shows that 1 in 4 puppies may have come from a puppy farm situation having been acquired via the internet, a newspaper advert or pet shops.²³

The way in which all dogs are bred and reared affects their health, welfare and behaviour throughout life. Poor breeding practices such as 'puppy farms' and 'back-street' breeders often see low concern for animal welfare with the focus instead on profit. Many of these puppies may suffer from disease and/or parasite infestation, will not be health checked, will be poorly socialised and also may have been transported and kept in poor conditions. These issues can all have a long term impact on the health and welfare of the puppies leading to pain and suffering, increased chance of showing fearful and aggressive behaviour and distress for the owner. The practice of 'puppy farms' and 'back-street' breeders are of great concern to all of the stakeholders, the public and politicians as demonstrated by the House of Commons debate in September 2014.²⁴ PDSA research has identified that

worryingly 22% of people would get a puppy from a puppy farm.²⁵ It is the most serious end of the problem and urgently needs to be tackled.

Additionally, the importation of puppies and dogs from other countries seems to be an increasing problem. This importation can have serious health and welfare issues for the animals concerned owing to the conditions in which they may have been kept and transported. There are two systems for the movement in dogs across Europe; one for commercial purpose and one for personal²⁶. There are real fears that loopholes in the PETS (Pet Travel Scheme) are being exploited by unscrupulous dealers and traders to meet demands for 'designer dogs' and popular breeds. For example in 2012 (when the quarantine rules were further relaxed) imports into the UK of dogs (under PETS) from Hungary increased on the previous year by 450%, from Romania by 1150% and from Lithuania by 507%²⁷. This means there must be buyers for these dogs and that many members of the public are obtaining puppies that have been imported. This needs urgent attention as many of these will come from Eastern European puppy farms where welfare standards are often very low.

There are also breeders who follow bad breeding practice resulting in low welfare, often because of a lack of knowledge and guidance rather than clear negligence or cruelty. This can be caused because the choices relating to good welfare begin with the selection of sire and dam before the puppy even exists. There has been growing concern increasingly backed up by science that some exaggerated physical characteristics are causing welfare problems perpetuated from parents to offspring. There are also problems caused by specific inherited diseases passed on through the gene pool owing to complex issues

20 Murray, J.K., Browne, W.J., Roberts, M.A., Whitmarsh, A., Gruffydd-Jones, T.J., 2010. Number and ownership profiles of cats and dogs in the UK. *Vet. Rec.* 166, 163-168.

21 *ibid*

22 <http://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/registration/breed-registration-statistics/> (accessed 13.10.14)

23 <http://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/our-resources/kennel-club-campaigns/puppy-farming/puppy-awareness-week/> (accessed 13.10.14)

24 Hansard, 4 September 2014, col 449

25 PDSA Animal Wellbeing Report 2013 (page 6)

26 PETS <https://www.gov.uk/pet-travel-information-for-pet-owners>

27 RSPCA, 2014, Pushing at an Open Door - how the present UK controls on rabies are failing

including a lack of genetic diversity, inbreeding and ill-informed breeding choices.²⁸ The puppies resulting from this bad or ill-informed breeding practice can experience many health and welfare problems in their later life and this again causes suffering for the dogs and distress to the owners.

Of course, it is fair to state that there are breeders who are very experienced, well informed and who work with their vets, join schemes that seek to promote better practice and ensure they inform potential buyers on how to look after the puppy. These are the ones that we should support but the nature of how puppies are sold and traded has changed enormously. According to the Minister, George Eustice MP, pet shops now account for about 2% of puppies sold²⁹ which means the problems are not easily solved or trackable. The sub-group is extremely concerned about the failure to adequately regulate the breeding, dealing and trading of dogs which allows puppy farming, importation of puppies and 'back-street' breeders to flourish whilst not supporting the responsible and careful breeders who spend more money and time ensuring healthy and socialised puppies.

Legislation/policy

The legal framework surrounding the breeding of dogs is quite limited. The two main pieces of legislation are the Breeding of Dogs Act 1973 and the Breeding and Sale of Dogs (Welfare) Act 1999 which set out a licensing regime for local authorities to license dog breeding establishments within their jurisdiction. The legislation pays little attention to animal welfare requirements and does not currently contain all of the provisions we would expect to be included in order to meet the welfare needs of dogs as set out under the Animal Welfare Act 2006 (AWA). In addition, one of the major criticisms of it by enforcers is its lack of clarity over what constitutes a licensable breeding establishment. These pieces of legislation were due to be considered for review and update as Regulations

under the Animal Welfare Act when it was passed in 2006. Unfortunately this has not happened to date.

There is also the Pet Animals Act 1951 dating back in excess of 60 years which controls the sale of animals in pet shops and again provides a licensing regime implemented by local authorities. Indeed there is consumer legislation (for example the Sale of Goods Act 1979) that provides some protection for those buying products and it has been argued that the acquisition of dogs or puppies should be treated in a similar way.

It is fair to say that the legislation in this area has not kept pace with the improved understanding of animal welfare and the requirements under the AWA or advances in technology, such as advertising on the internet. With the advent of online selling the internet is a major medium through which breeders, dealers and traders advertise and sell puppies and kittens. Research has indicated that 78% of people would consider getting a pet from the internet before visiting the animal.³⁰ Indeed because of the increasing concern about this, the Pet Advertising Advisory Group (PAAG), was set up and has developed standards for adverts for websites³¹. PAAG is improving the quality of advertising and therefore has an impact on what the consumer sees thus influencing behaviour but it does not prevent poor practice nor impulse and irresponsible buying.

There is a need for a legal framework that encourages the following:

- correct enforcement on the number of commercial litters produced before a licence is required,
- more emphasis on ensuring health and welfare of all dogs, including both adults and puppies at breeding establishments
- selection of healthy breeding stock
- traceability of all dogs back to their breeder

²⁸ Bateson, P. 2010, *Independent Inquiry into Dog Breeding*

²⁹ Hansard, 4 September 2014, col 492

³⁰ PDSA Animal Wellbeing Report 2013 (page 28)

³¹ <http://paag.org.uk/>

- improved guidance and training (including resources) for enforcers
- tighter enforcement of pet travel rules coordinated by central government rather than expected from ferry companies and other private or charity organisations
- better controls over how dogs and puppies are traded, dealt and acquired to ensure their welfare at all times

We believe this could be delivered through new Regulations under the Animal Welfare Act 2006 which would help to ensure animal welfare is at the heart of any approach. Such Regulations could provide a legal framework for the breeding, dealing and trading of pet animals. Attached to these Regulations could be species-specific statutory Codes of Practice that provide further detail concerning different animals, in this case dogs.

Recommendation 7:

To recognise that the laws relating to the breeding, dealing and trade in dogs are outdated and need reviewing and updating. This should be done via Regulations and statutory Codes of Practice under the Animal Welfare Act 2006 to implement the points raised above.

Enforcement

It has become accepted in the farming industry that there are different assurance schemes that work as self-regulation with standards set out within their rules, for example 'Red Tractor', the 'Soil Association' and 'Freedom Food' (now known as 'RSPCA Assured') which is a non-industry farm assurance scheme dedicated to farm welfare. Of course, there is some criticism of this approach as it can be inconsistent and relies on industry to oversee it as well as different schemes setting different standards leading to a lack of understanding by the public. However, there is an

opportunity, and more significantly a need, to develop this way of working to see if it can be adapted for the breeding of pets, in this case dogs. There would need to be a robust system of checking including spot checks, and a decision made on how breaches are to be dealt with.

At present there is one such model already in existence which is the Kennel Club's Assured Breeder Scheme (ABS), accredited by UKAS³². This is a scheme which is currently subsidized by the Kennel Club as it costs £200 to maintain each member over a 3 year period and charges only £30 a year membership. However, thought could be given to developing it so that any money coming back supports further inspection processes to ensure higher standards.

Additionally there is the Standard for Breeding³³ from the Advisory Council on the Welfare Issues of Dog Breeding (a very respected body) which sets out alternative standards to the ABS. The sub-group believes both models should be considered further to explore what opportunities there are for developing some form of self-regulation.

Recommendation 8:

Work with interested parties to identify and develop a scheme that could form part of self-regulation providing the scheme's standards and enforcement are sufficiently robust and transparent. Such an approach should still incorporate some form of local government oversight, for example a requirement to update the local authority that an inspection has taken place.

Enforcement of the current legislation varies significantly around the country and the charges local authorities set for inspections of breeding establishments and pet shops vary significantly too³⁴. It was pointed out by the Minister, George Eustice MP, that the "Breeding and Sale of Dogs Act states that anyone carrying on the business of breeding and

³² The United Kingdom Accreditation Service is the sole national accreditation body recognised by government to assess, against internationally agreed standards, organisations that provide certification, testing, inspection and calibration services.

³³ www.dogadvisorycouncil.com/resources/breeding-standard-final-pdf (accessed 17.11.14)

³⁴ Dr Fiona Cooke PhD research 'The application, implementation, enforcement and development of companion animal welfare in local authorities in Great Britain' University of Aberdeen.

selling puppies must have a licence, irrespective of the number of litters.”³⁵ 97% of vets and 91% of owners are of the opinion that anyone breeding puppies should be licensed and regulated to meet certain standards.³⁶ However, owing to complex wording within the Act, local authorities have misinterpreted this and only licence those with 5 litters and above. It seems that there is a lot that can be done by simply clarifying the existing legislation to local authority inspectors and ensuring consistency across the councils. The sub-group welcomes the letter of clarification³⁷ sent to local authorities by Defra on this issue.

Recommendation 9:

A more consistent approach to licensing and enforcement is needed with clear guidance alongside consistent pricing structure for local authority inspections.

As mentioned previously there are some opportunist breeders who try to make money from the litters they produce. In some cases this can be from those living in local authority or social housing. Social housing providers can play an important role in addressing this issue by discouraging breeding and selling of dogs from properties as well as encouraging neutering. There is already good practice in this area and both the RSPCA³⁸ and Dogs Trust³⁹ have produced advice on it.

Recommendation 10:

Housing providers should have positive and proportionate pet policies and tenancy agreements that address the breeding and sale of dogs.

A major problem is that many local authorities simply do not know how many licensable establishments they have within their area. Additionally many of those tasked with licensing such establishments may have little or no training in animal welfare. It is a welcome step forward that the Chartered Institute for

Environmental Health has updated its Model Licensing Conditions on both pet shop licensing⁴⁰ and dog breeding establishments⁴¹. However more could be done with training and guidance about the law and also understanding animal welfare needs. This could be funded by the more consistent pricing structure for inspections as mentioned above.

Recommendation 11:

Training and guidance is needed for all local authority officers to ensure they have sufficient knowledge of dog welfare and the law and its interrelation with other issues.

Despite revisions to the EU Pet Travel Regulations, concerns remains that commercial traders will evade controls at the border from either continuing to incorrectly declare puppies to be sold or rehomed as non-commercial and bringing in five puppies per person. It is still of concern that those checking (the carriers) entry of animals into the UK are merely performing a perfunctory check between the microchip and associated paperwork rather than the Animal and Plant Health Agency taking the lead enforcement role.

Recommendation 12:

Animal and Plant Health Agency should be the primary enforcement body and adopt an intelligence-led enforcement regime at the ports of entry.

Education

There are a number of different audiences for which education is relevant, not least the puppy-buying public, but also breeders, dealers and traders themselves and vets and enforcers.

Educating the public may not be as easy or effective as first thought. In 2011 the RSPCA commissioned a poll which revealed that 1 in 5 people who bought a puppy no longer have their dog three years later. As a result,

³⁵ Hansard, 4 September 2014, col 492

³⁶ PDSA Animal Wellbeing Report 2013 (page 31)

³⁷ Defra, Letter to all Chief Executives, Environmental Health Officers, etc Definition of licensed dog breeding establishment, additional conditions for pet shops, dealing with irresponsible dog ownership, 13 November 2014

³⁸ <http://www.politicalanimal.org.uk/area/local-government/pets-in-housing> (accessed 13.10.14)

³⁹ http://www.dogstrust.org.uk/az/p/petsandhousing/#.U_YRu8VdXh4 (accessed 13.10.14)

⁴⁰ <http://www.cieh.org/policy/default.aspx?id=47608> (accessed 13.10.14)

⁴¹ <http://www.cieh.org/WorkArea/showcontent.aspx?id=50814> (accessed 13.10.14)

they commissioned research to gain insights into how people acquire puppies and the reasons for relinquishment to identify opportunities for influencing puppy buyers at the pre-purchase stage. The conclusions of the research revealed that there are overriding factors to buying a puppy which influence buyers decision making.

The decision making process, which is either deeply ingrained (i.e. triggered by a childhood memory or experience) or a strong impulse decision (celebrity/media/lifestyle influence/ease of purchase), coupled with the overwhelming 'cute' factor can override all rational thinking, therefore often proving pre-purchase education messages as ineffective. It was also found that there was a strong correlation between impulse purchase and early relinquishment with the perception and reality of dog ownership being very different.

Therefore, while it is important to maintain a level of education on puppy buying and responsible dog ownership, without considerable financial investment, such campaigns will only work for the more responsible dog owners who would be unlikely to purchase a puppy from an unscrupulous source to begin with and do not account for the majority of people who purchase puppies.

One area where education (and protection) for both buyers and sellers could be effective is through wider use of the puppy contract⁴². The buyer would benefit from a contract of sale and buying guidance to assist them in avoiding irresponsible breeders and rogue traders. For responsible breeders and the sellers, the contract is a record of the thought and attention they have devoted to their puppies' breeding and care.⁴³ This information will enable the buyer to ask certain questions and test the seller's willingness to provide the information required in that contract and puppy information pack. Additionally the use of the puppy

contract may assist with providing greater assurance about any self-regulation scheme.

Recommendation 13:

The puppy contract should be endorsed by Defra and all responsible breeders and the public consistently informed that use of it is encouraged.

Many individuals breeding, dealing and trading dogs are doing so without full consideration of all relevant information, often because they are unaware of it rather than ignoring it. The key experts in this field are often veterinary surgeons who are qualified to advise and guide people. Proper advice should be taken during the process of selecting breeding stock and breeding from them by seeking a veterinary surgeon who is competent in providing knowledge of genetics, inherited disorders and the relevant screening tests and exaggerated conformations. Additionally, for registered pedigree dogs, breeders can use tools offered by the Kennel Club such as DNA profiling but it is recognised that many breeders are not engaged with any membership or welfare bodies and so the veterinary surgeon may be the only potential source of information on health and welfare. This is supported by PDSA research which shows that veterinary surgeons are still the main source of pet care advice for three quarters of pet owners, with nearly half of all owners now also using the Internet and a quarter asking friends and family.

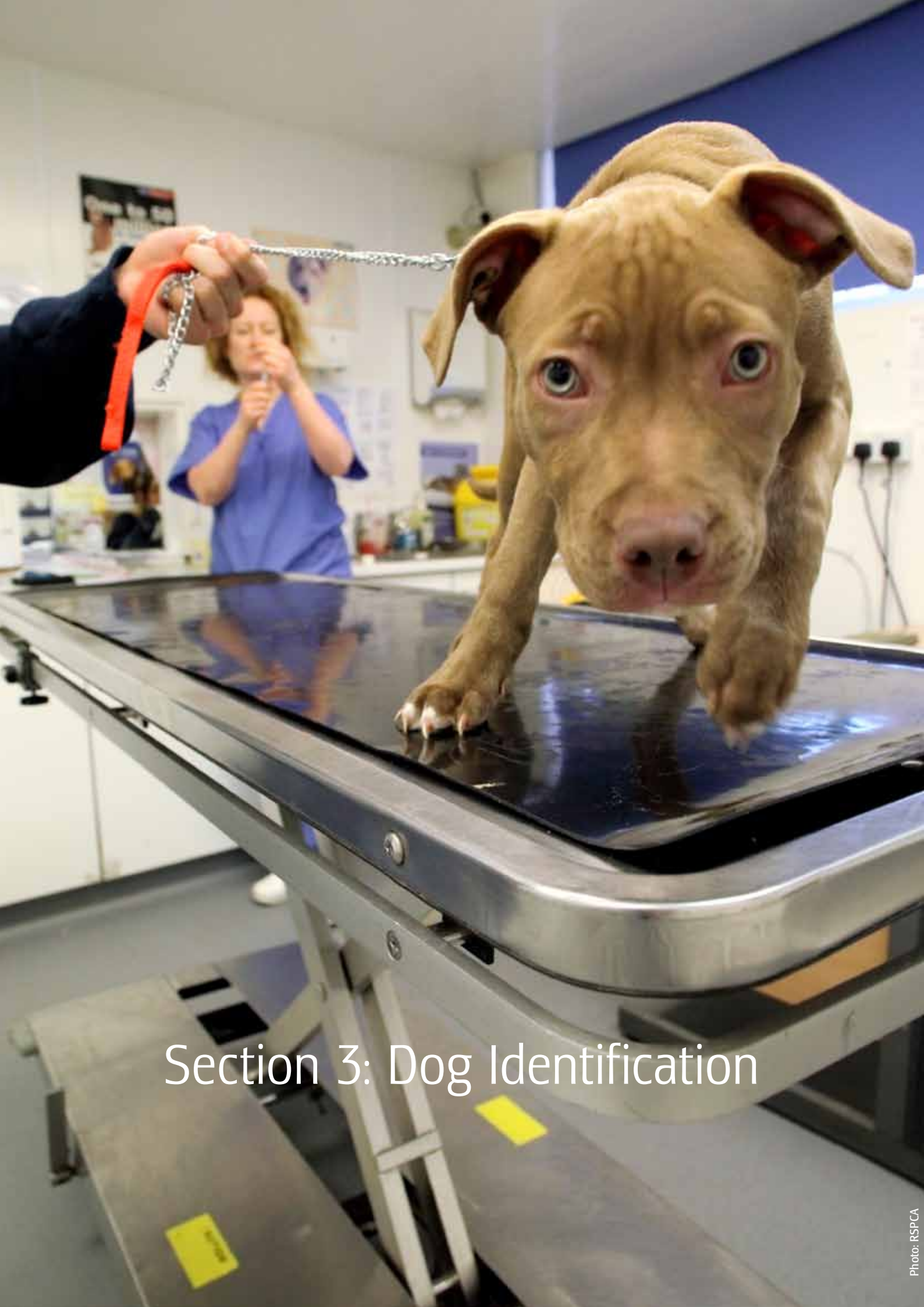
Recommendation 14:

Veterinary surgeons should offer advice to dog owning clients about canine inherited disorders and promote screening programmes. Veterinary organisations should promote this as good practice to the profession and give guidance about where to go for further information such as the tools with the Kennel Club 'Mate Select' or scientific advice offered through VetCompass.⁴⁴

⁴² www.puppycontract.org.uk (accessed 13.10.14)

⁴³ The Assured Breeders Scheme run by The Kennel Club already requires all of their registered breeders to use a contract which seeks to educate buyers on the standards that breeders should meet.

⁴⁴ <http://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/services/public/mateselect/> (accessed 13.10.14) <http://www.rvc.ac.uk/vetcompass>, (accessed 13.10.14)



Section 3: Dog Identification

Section 3: Dog Identification

Dogs unfortunately can be abandoned or stray from their homes and it is local authorities who have a statutory responsibility to provide a stray dog service⁴⁵. According to the Dog Rescue Federation report between 30th September 2012 and 30th September 2013 an estimated 116,141 were handled by local authorities in the UK⁴⁶. 34% of these dogs are passed onto rehoming organisations. The welfare of stray dogs is another important issue and while some local authorities are taking positive steps to ensure the welfare of these dogs⁴⁷, the level of service and care provided varies across the country.

One of the major problems for local authorities is not being able to identify dog owners and so delays can result in reuniting the dog with its owner and for the dog, resulting in an extended stay in kennels. This can not only impact on animal welfare but also be costly to the local authority.

Legislation/policy:

The law on dog identification is due to change in the next couple of years and this is something the welfare organisations on the sub-group have welcomed. All dog owners will be required to have their dogs microchipped in England and Wales. This permanent identification and registration will mean there is a link between a dog and its owner and should assist with reuniting lost or stray animals with their families.

The Westminster Government has just published the proposed Regulations.⁴⁸ The sub-group believes that microchipping is an important tool for traceability, especially with being able to trace dogs back to their original breeders. The success of these proposals will

very much rely on owners keeping their details up to date on the various databases as without this it may not be as helpful as intended.

Education:

Getting the message across to all dog owners to ensure their puppy or dog is microchipped and that they keep their details up to date on the databases is crucial to the success of this development and veterinary organisations and animal welfare charities will play a key role in getting this across.

Recommendation 15:

All animal welfare organisations, public sector bodies and central government should ensure all messaging in this area is up to date and clear and consistent.

Enforcement:

The Government in Westminster has already stated that they do not expect enforcement of this new legislation to be proactive and that it will be 'light touch' in nature, i.e. encourage compliance rather than prosecute.⁴⁹ Enforcement is expected to largely fall to local authorities, who, with increasingly restricted budgets, may find it difficult to have the resources to tackle non-compliance.

The sub-group is concerned at the lack of resources available to tackle this and the other dog-related issues in an effective and meaningful way. While we hope that education will assist with ensuring compliance in the majority of cases, it is important that there are resources available to deal with the minority who do not comply.

Recommendation 16:

Work needs to be carried out by the public sector, central government and the welfare organisations to identify a sustainable and effective way forward to fund the resources needed for enforcing the law.

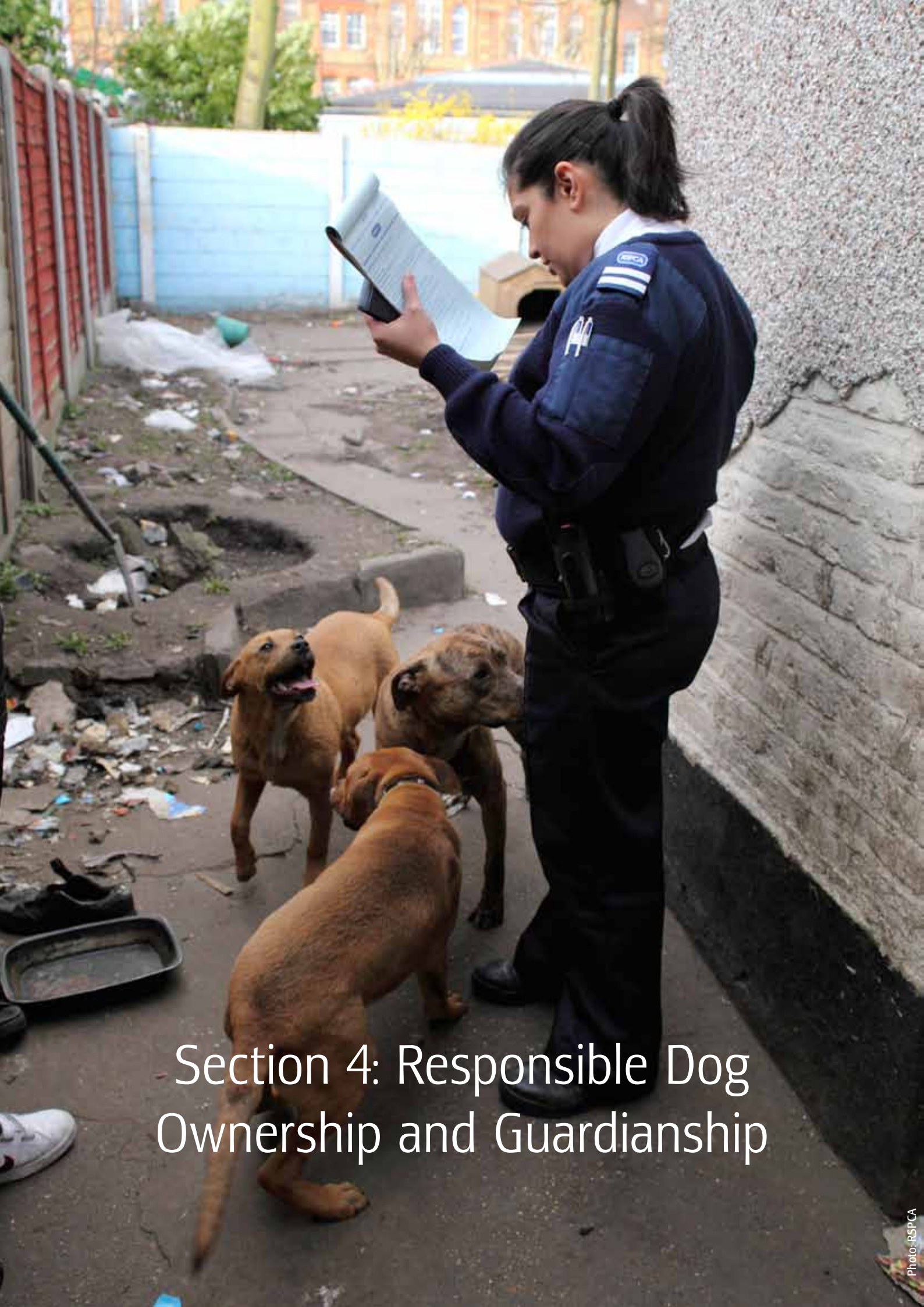
⁴⁵ s149(i) Environmental Protection Act 1990

⁴⁶ www.dogrescuefederation.org (accessed 13.10.14)

⁴⁷ See for example the winners of the RSPCA Community Animal Welfare Footprint Award scheme for provision of a stray dog service <http://www.politicalanimal.org.uk/area/local-government/community-animal-welfare-footprints> (accessed 14.10.14)

⁴⁸ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukdsi/2014/9780111122501/contents (accessed 17.11.14)

⁴⁹ Q385, EFRA Select Committee, Minutes of Evidence, HC575



Section 4: Responsible Dog Ownership and Guardianship

Section 4: Responsible Dog Ownership and Guardianship

The concerns addressed on Dog Control, Breeding, Dealing and Trade and Identification are all relevant to this section. Being a responsible owner or guardian completes the circle of issues and could actually prevent and tackle some of the previous problems identified. We have specifically chosen to use the term 'guardian' as it has a wider meaning than just owner and includes those who have responsibility for, or care, or control over dogs.

Being a responsible owner or guardian means thinking carefully before acquiring a dog and doing so in such a way that protects its welfare as well as, where relevant, its parents, caring for it so its present and future welfare needs are met, training and controlling it appropriately and ensuring it receives appropriate veterinary treatment as needed. This should be done throughout all the dog's different life stages. Responsibility of a dog should be assumed whether it is the owner or someone working with dogs or using them for the purposes of sport e.g. greyhounds, the police and military, those who are caring for dogs such as veterinarians, boarding establishments, and those who rehome dogs.

A dog's welfare needs will be the same regardless of the situation or purpose they are being kept although how those needs are provided for may vary. Unfortunately not all understand, accept, or apply the welfare needs and this is an area where work could be progressed.

Legislation/Policy

There are a number of pieces of legislation relating to how dogs are managed or cared for that were due to be updated when the Animal Welfare Act was passed

in 2006 (AWA) as mentioned previously including the breeding legislation, boarding establishments and pet vending legislation. All these were to be reviewed and updated as Regulations under the 2006 Act. Additionally the Welfare Of Racing Greyhounds Regulations 2010 are due for review in 2015. There is a general consensus that the updates and reviews would still be a useful and important exercise to do to improve animal welfare and bring the rules governing these areas into line with the AWA.

Recommendation 17:

To review and update all dog-related legislation (excluding control and breeding and sale, as dealt with above) and bring forward Regulations under the Animal Welfare Act 2006.

The Welfare of Dogs Code of Practice is due for review in 2015 as part of a wider review of all Codes of Practice under the AWA. These statutory Codes are important to help explain, using the latest scientific understanding and evidence, what the duty of care means. They have a dual role in terms of setting out statutory guidance but also providing a clear educational tool for all those responsible for dogs. However, with only 38% of owners sampled in 2013 being familiar with the AWA and the five welfare needs contained within it⁵⁰, awareness, interpretation and application of these Codes needs to be significantly improved (see below).

Aversive training methods⁵¹, such as the use of pinch or prong collars and electronic shock training devices (ETDs) are not suitable equipment with which to train or modify the behaviour of dogs and their sale and use is contrary to guidance provided in the Defra Codes of Practice for the welfare of dogs⁵². They can have a negative impact on animal welfare, pose risk to human safety and in some cases make problems worse. In addition, they are completely unnecessary to modify the behaviour of dogs. This is an issue on

50 PDSA Animal Wellbeing Report 2013.(page 27)

51 Aversive training techniques are based on the principle of applying something painful or frightening to reduce the likelihood of an unwanted behaviour occurring again.

52 All dogs should be trained to behave well, ideally from a young age. Only use positive reward-based training. Avoid harsh, potentially painful or frightening training methods.

which many organisations have previously shown agreement and the Welsh Government has already banned the use of ETDs.⁵³

Recommendation 18:

Ensure that the Codes of Practice under the Animal Welfare Act 2006 remain statutory Codes and that their review takes place in 2015, with a particular consideration of the prohibition in the use of aversive training methods.

Aside from irresponsible behaviour, there is the issue of deliberate cruelty toward dogs for which measures like the Code of Practice or Regulations will have no effect. The public has concerns about the prison sentences given to those found guilty of cruelty⁵⁴ and animal fighting⁵⁵. At present the penalty is a maximum of six months which in comparison with other countries is relatively low. Countries such as Germany set a maximum of three years for animal cruelty as does the Czech Republic and Romania whilst France sets two years. The UK actually has one of the shortest custodial sentences for cruelty in the EU.

Recommendation 19:

That the maximum sentences for animal cruelty and fighting should be increased to two years to provide a more consistent approach with other EU countries.

Enforcement

Research has shown that despite 60% of local authorities appointing inspectors under the AWA, only 17% in England are dealing with animal welfare issues on a daily basis.⁵⁶ This indicates an inconsistent approach to animal welfare enforcement and a potentially under-utilised resource.

The majority of enforcement carried out in this area is done by the RSPCA. It is fair to say there are different approaches to the relevant legislation and increasingly restricted resources to take action. A wider understanding of when enforcement is required and

best practice across the enforcement bodies would assist in tackling the problems relating to irresponsible dog ownership and cruelty cases but of course there are resource implications to this. This is considered under Section 5.

Education

Education and prevention is key to reducing the costs of enforcement and improving animal welfare. Under both the AWA and the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 'Notices' can be issued to those responsible for dogs advising them of what they should do to better improve their knowledge and skills or the control of their dog. These notices can help educate irresponsible owners and should be used as prevention measures for more serious incidents that may occur.

There is a problem with a lack of understanding, interpretation and application of the Dog Welfare Code of Practice by individual dog owners and also across the various dog sectors e.g. working dog owners, boarding establishments and breeding establishments. Advice and information underpinned by the Code should be clear and consistent and provided by all those involved in this issue. Only 38% of owners are even aware of the Animal Welfare Act (2006), let alone familiar with the Codes of Practice enshrined within it.⁵⁷

Recommendation 20:

All animal welfare organisations, police and local authorities should seek to find an educational mechanism that allows consistent support and advice to be provided to those who are not meeting the welfare needs of their dogs. Additionally work needs to be done by Defra to identify how it can better promote the Dog Welfare Code of Practice its interpretation and application once it has been reviewed and updated through both formal and informal education routes (see recommendation 18).

⁵³ www.dogwelfarecampaign.org.uk (accessed 13.10.14)

⁵⁴ Section 4 Animal Welfare Act 2006

⁵⁵ Section 8 Animal Welfare Act 2006

⁵⁶ Dr Fiona Cooke PhD research 'The application, implementation, enforcement and development of companion animal welfare in local authorities in Great Britain' University of Aberdeen.

⁵⁷ PDSA Animal Wellbeing Report 2013 p.14



Section 5: Resources

Section 5: Resources

The costs of dog ownership are often much more than people estimate with PDSA's Pet Wellbeing figures estimating the life-time cost to be between £16,000 and £31,000 depending on the dog size.⁵⁸ YouGov research for PDSA showed that only 10% of dog owners were anywhere near estimating the lifetime cost of their dog correctly.⁵⁹ It is important that dog owners understand and accept that having a dog and looking after it responsibly will cost them a considerable amount to which they must be able to commit on a regular basis. Failure to get this message across means abandoned and neglected dogs which then has a financial impact on local government, the police and charities. Our main focus within this report is improving dog welfare which we believe will save public money in the long-run.

In terms of costing for the recommendations set out within this report, the agreement of messages and education of the public is largely cost neutral to the Government as the third sector can do this with assistance for delivery and endorsement. The consolidation of dog control legislation would fall on central Government but some of this work could be outsourced to a certain extent via consultation. The Regulations needed under the Animal Welfare Act 2006, such as breeding and sale will take less resource than primary legislation and in the long-term could deliver savings.

As mentioned previously in the report, the recently released Cooke report⁶⁰ does reveal that the local authorities that have inspectors under the AWA may not be utilising them in the best way for enforcement

of the current legislation. This needs to be looked at further alongside the point about ensuring adequate training and clear guidance for the local authorities.

However, the main issue of ensuring existing legislation works still comes down to funding within local government and the police. There are simply not enough dog or animal welfare wardens in local authorities or specialist police officers whose full time role is dealing with dogs. This coupled with a lack of investment in training to ensure they have the necessary skills and up to date knowledge compounds the problem. If this strategy is to be effective then it is essential there are sufficient resources and funding identified for the public sector.

Ideas already suggested include reinstating the dog licence, having an annual registration scheme or to have some form of levy placed on items all dog owners purchase, for example dog food. Each of these ideas need more detailed analysis and each have pros and cons. A lot more work needs to be done on this area to identify a sustainable funding stream and ensure any money raised is in effect 'ring-fenced' for animal welfare work and not simply placed in the wider coffers.

Recommendation 21:

There is an urgent need to identify a means for ensuring there are adequate resources to tackle dog-related issues. Further work in creating some form of regular funding stream that can be ring-fenced for this work is crucial to ensuring an effective and sustainable approach.

⁵⁸ PDSA Animal Wellbeing Report 2013 p.29

⁵⁹ *ibid.*

⁶⁰ Dr Fiona Cooke PhD research 'The application, implementation, enforcement and development of companion animal welfare in local authorities in Great Britain' University of Aberdeen.

Conclusion

What is clearly evident is that a number of politicians, veterinary professionals, breeders, and charities are fully committed to working on the improvement of dog welfare and, as long as they work together, results will be gained. Dogs are a central part of English society and it would be a great pity if they were ever to be feared, marginalised or seen as a problem.

Suggestions such as a registration scheme or a levy on dog products may seem at first unpersuasive. However the sub-group believes that all responsible dog owners would be prepared to consider a contribution that would ensure good welfare for all dogs across the country and that this should be explored further. No dog lover wants to see stray dogs on their streets or dogs facing horrendous welfare problems caused by bad breeding being left without any intervention. This usually comes from charities and rescue centres which are finding their resources stretched because as the numbers increase,

the funds decrease. Dog owners could be reluctant to pay what they may see as a fine for owning a dog if that money was not ring fenced and went into a central pot but if they were assured that their contribution would protect dogs and reduce dog attacks and irresponsible ownership, then there would be obvious benefits to it. With the high number of dog owners, keepers and carers in England, any registration or levy would be very small.

This report is only the outline of the ways in which to achieve the vision set out at the beginning. Dogs will continue to feature in the mailbags of politicians and in the media for good and bad reasons. They will, of course, continue to feature in the lives of all of us who love dogs everyday. For that reason the dialogue will also continue and we will consult on and develop more detailed strategies in each of these areas. We want to be assured that England delivers the very best welfare standards and the future for dogs is one in which they continue to live in our communities safely.





Appendix I

Methodology

The All-Party Parliamentary Group for Animal Welfare (APGAW) created a sub-group at the end of 2013 that was tasked with developing an England-wide strategy for tackling dog issues following members raising a range of different but related concerns. The aim was for the resulting report and recommendations to be presented to the main political parties to consider and accept as part of their policy making process.

The sub-group was chaired by Angela Smith MP (Lab, Penistone and Stocksbridge) from December 2013–April 2014 and Rob Ffello MP (Lab, Stoke-on-Trent South) from April 2014–December 2014 when the report was completed. The vice-chair was Neil Parish MP (Con, Tiverton and Honiton). Other political members of the political group were Huw Irranca Davies MP, Jackie Doyle-Price MP, Julie Hilling MP, Martin Horwood MP and Andrew Stephenson MP. A number of additional Members of Parliament were consulted and provided views throughout the process of developing this strategy.

To assist with the development of the strategy the following organisations were members of the sub-group: Battersea Dogs & Cats Home, the Blue Cross, the British Veterinary Association, Dogs Trust, the Kennel Club, PDSA and the RSPCA. Other key stakeholders have also been consulted and had opportunities to comment on the proposals as the report has developed (for a full list please see Annex II at the end of this document).

The sub-group met every six weeks to discuss the issues raised and agree possible solutions to the problems as well as seek further information and advice from the wider dog-related community.

The sub-group agreed a vision at an early stage and it is hoped this report attempts to deliver on this vision:

“For all those responsible for dogs in England to ensure their welfare is maintained at the highest possible standard and to be aware of and have consideration for that dogs interaction with people and animals in their community.”

By this, the sub-group was keen to refer to all people who are owners, or care for, have control or manage dogs in England, whether permanently or on a temporary basis. This includes a wide range of people who have different interactions with dogs, and is not limited to the following examples; pet owners, those who provide services to pet owners, those who work dogs, rescue organisations, dog breeders, etc.

It was felt that the strategy should have a clear yet ambitious vision underpinned by the key piece of legislation concerning animal welfare – the Animal Welfare Act 2006. Section 9 of the Act requires those responsible for an animal (in this case a dog) to take reasonable steps in all the circumstances to ensure that the welfare needs of the animal (dog) are met to the extent required by good practice. The Act goes on to identify those welfare needs as including:

- need for a suitable environment,
- need for a suitable diet,
- need to be able to exhibit normal behaviour patterns,
- any need to be housed with, or apart from, other animals, and
- need to be protected from pain, suffering, injury and disease.

To assist with understanding what each of these needs mean in practice for people there is a statutory Code of Practice for ensuring the welfare of dogs in England. The sub-group believes the Code of Practice is an

excellent document and although due for review in 2015 should continue to be statutory and used more effectively as the basis for all educational materials to reinforce the message of the 2006 Act.

The sub-group believes that section 9 of the Act provides an excellent framework for developing such a strategy as any regulatory or policy regime government (at both a local and national level) would need to reflect these principles.

The sub-group has attempted to scope out a range of dog-related issues and looked at a number of different opportunities and barriers to improving them. After the initial scoping exercise it was felt that the issues largely fell under four main headings; dog control, dog breeding, dealing and trading, responsible dog ownership, and dog identification.

The group then considered a range of areas in relation to these. These ranged from legislative and policy, education, enforcement, resources as well as opportunities and barriers for them all. See Appendix II for the scoping table setting this out.

Appendix II

The following table aims to set out an overview and assessment of the key dog-related issues. The aim being it will help inform the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Animal Welfare to develop an England-wide strategy for dogs.

Issues:

1. Dog control – this includes breed specific legislation, dangerous dogs, dog attacks.
2. Dog breeding, dealing and trade – this includes health and welfare of puppies and dogs, backstreet breeders/dealers/puppy farms/etc, imports as well as sales (including on the internet)
3. Dog identification – this includes compulsory microchipping, registration, stray dogs etc.
4. Responsible dog guardianship – this includes behaviour and training (including methods), care, vet treatment, owners, handlers, etc.
5. Resources – how will this be funded?

Issue/area	Legislative/policy issues	Educational issues	Enforcement issues	Resource issues	Opportunities	Barriers
Dog control	<p>Breed specific legislation failure to resolve the problem of dog attacks on people and animals.</p> <p>Given the widespread political acceptance of the failure of BSL to achieve its initial safety objectives and the iniquities it presents, more action is required to improve effectiveness of regulation</p> <p>Lack of legislative overview bringing together control and welfare.</p> <p>Complex and confusing legislation needing clear consolidation Includes: Dogs Act 1871, Dogs (Protection of Livestock) Act 1953, Guard Dogs Act 1975, Dangerous Dogs Act 1989, Environmental Protection Act 1990, Dangerous Dogs Act 1991, Control of Dogs Order 1992, Dangerous Dogs (Amendment) Act 1997, Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005, Animal Welfare Act 2006, Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014</p>	<p>Lack of understanding of dog behaviour and in particular dog aggression by decision makers.</p> <p>Poor understanding of causes of dog aggression and how to manage/resolve it.</p> <p>Failure to ensure breeding is conducted with health, welfare and temperament as priority</p> <p>Failure to socialise puppies and young dogs properly *reference puppy socialisation plan here or in opportunities?</p> <p>Failure to understand the legal requirements concerning dogs (by both public and authorities).</p> <p>Failure to understand how to look after and control a dog properly and humanely in accordance with the AWA 2006 and other legislation, including understanding of how a puppy grows and changes for those taking on young dogs.</p>	<p>Failure to ensure the welfare needs of the animal (s9 Animal Welfare Act).</p> <p>Inability of police and local authority officers to take preventative action</p> <p>Difficulties and inconsistencies with identifying prohibited 'types'.</p> <p>Confusion by enforcement bodies over who is responsible where and when.</p>	<p>Not enough dog wardens or police officers.</p> <p>Lack of funding to train officers as required</p> <p>Cost to sector and local councils to educate owners and provide information.</p> <p>Cost to enforcement bodies of enforcing the legislation (especially re kennelling).</p> <p>Lack of will to tackle the issue comprehensively by some politicians and decision makers.</p> <p>Limited resources for charities and need to find a way to avoid duplication of work.</p>	<p>Recognition within Parliament that DDA is not working effectively.</p> <p>The potential to link identification, breeding and control together.</p> <p>Chance to create a fairer, more considered legislative dog control framework</p>	<p>Lack of training and resources available or police and local authorities.</p> <p>Need to ensure clear and consistent messaging from all partners.</p> <p>Continual cuts to resources in public sector.</p> <p>The need to link issues relating to Defra and animal welfare with issues relating to Local Government & Communities as well as Home Office.</p>

Issue/area	Legislative/policy issues	Educational issues	Enforcement issues	Resource issues	Opportunities	Barriers
Dog breeding, dealing and trade including internet and international)	<p>Overbreeding of dogs and legislation not fit for purpose for addressing breeding practice</p> <p>Overpopulation – numbers of dogs being rehomed by charities.</p> <p>Numbers of stray dogs being euthanased in various places due to lack of good homes.</p> <p>Increase in adverts selling puppies, especially on the internet.</p> <p>Licence only required for 5+ litters per annum (or if operating a business which difficult to prove) meaning huge numbers not requiring any sort of inspection or standard to breed.</p> <p>Poor enforcement of PETS legislation and the associated loophole that has facilitated the illegal trade in puppies into the UK.</p> <p>Due to imports of puppies from other countries any legislation in England must go hand in hand with legislation in Europe otherwise people could still be buying poorly socialised/bred puppies.</p>	<p>Educating and working with stakeholders to avoid breeding practices which lead to exaggerated conformation and hereditary disease and disorders in all dogs.</p> <p>Encouraging public to think more before they buy and to only purchase puppies from reputable sources which prioritise health and welfare. Ensure messaging is consistent and clear with positive signposting rather than just scaremongering. teaching would-be owners the importance of seeing puppies with their mother and the right questions to ask of sellers etc.</p> <p>Puppy Contract and Puppy Information Pack.</p> <p>Education for enforcers so they can better use current/future legislation in this area.</p>	<p>Enforcement of licensing varies between LAs.</p> <p>Councils only inspect those breeding 5+ litters owing to resource issues.</p> <p>No breeding standards to set guidelines and encourage breeders to improve practices.</p> <p>Ports, ferry companies and general enforcement of travel scheme conditions</p> <p>Trading Standards activity varies per area</p>	<p>Licensing inspection often falls to local authorities who do not always have the knowledge or resources to carry out inspections.</p> <p>Limited funding and resources to enforce the travel scheme conditions</p> <p>Different local authorities dedicate differing amounts of funding for their Trading Standards teams.</p>	<p>The Animal Health Trust and Kennel Club Canine Genetics Centre can provide useful statistics.</p> <p>European Commission study into trade in puppies and kittens is currently taking place.</p> <p>Welsh Government is expected to legislate on this later in the year.</p> <p>Puppy Contract and Puppy Information Pack.</p> <p>There is increased interest in this issue from some politicians.</p> <p>CIEH update on model licensing conditions</p> <p>Canine and Feline Sector Group Rabies and PETS working group.</p> <p>Pet Advertising Advisory Group minimum standards for online advertising websites (here or in opportunities tab).</p>	<p>Difficult to get figures. Unlicensed trade makes it impossible to get accurate figures.</p> <p>Difficulty to get recognition of scale of problem by some breeders and take responsibility for improving situation.</p> <p>Continual cuts to resources in public sector.</p> <p>Need to ensure clear and consistent messaging from all partners.</p> <p>Government's lack of acknowledgement of the increased risks since the PETS changes alongside decreased quarantine capacity.</p> <p>Bound by European regulation – could not secure a continued derogation so forced to fall in line with the rest of Europe.</p>

Issue/area	Legislative/policy issues	Educational issues	Enforcement issues	Resource issues	Opportunities	Barriers
Responsible dog guardianship	<p>Meeting the 5 welfare needs under the AWA (s9).</p> <p>Use of aversive training devices, Shock collars, prong collars, are contrary to the CoP</p> <p>Prohibiting their use would address this.</p> <p>Safety around dogs – School programmes, Kennel Club Safe and Sound Scheme etc.</p>	<p>Poor understanding of the Dog Code of Practice and what it means both for public and enforcement bodies – all those who interact with dogs.</p> <p>Need to ensure a consistent message is given by charities and enforcement bodies</p> <p>– Via the Education Alliance?</p> <p>– National Curriculum? Staying safe around dogs and/or animal welfare??</p> <p>Wider awareness of dog behaviour and body language across the public.</p>	<p>Lack of understanding and use of AWA by enforcement bodies and thus burden of enforcement falls largely on RSPCA.</p>	<p>Lack of training and resources for enforcement bodies.</p> <p>Limited resources for RSPCA and others.</p>	<p>Shock collars are banned in Wales and there is currently significant activity around other aversive methods within dog owning population.</p> <p>Media appear increasingly interested in dog issues so opportunities for awareness raising are available.</p> <p>Some research available which prioritises welfare issues in dogs so may help with areas to focus on.</p> <p>Major stakeholders promote the Animal Welfare Act so working together, could ensure consistency in approach.</p> <p>Animal Behaviour and Training Council made significant head way in regulating behaviourists and trainers, just need to get a recognised standard from Defra.</p> <p>Responsible Dog Ownership events attended/run by all of the major welfare organisations. Working with council's to encourage greater communication and engagement with the dog owning community.</p>	<p>Agreement needed from varying stakeholders to signpost the trainers and behaviourists who meet recognised standards</p> <p>Lobby against the collars within Parliament</p> <p>Lack of recognition by some decision makers on the need to ensure an up to date and consistent approach to dog welfare and advice.</p>

Issue/area	Legislative/policy issues	Educational issues	Enforcement issues	Resource issues	Opportunities	Barriers
Dog identification	<p>Compulsory microchipping has been agreed for England and Wales. Need to ensure it is updated and amended when owner or address changes to work.</p> <p>Consideration of a registration scheme.</p> <p>Need harmonised databases within Europe to provide proper traceability.</p> <p>Encouragement of membership with the European Pet Network</p> <p>Increase in strays.</p>	<p>Need to ensure clear and consistent messaging for the public on this issue from all partners.</p> <p>Need to ensure enforcement bodies understand rules.</p>	<p>With continual cut backs in the public sector will local authorities be able to enforce compulsory microchipping regulations?</p> <p>A registration scheme (licensing) did not succeed previously. Issues with the lack of guaranteed ringfencing of funds</p>	<p>Lack of dog wardens to check micro-chips and no suggestion that wardens will be expected to actively scan.</p> <p>Funding and resource questions in relation to mandatory registration.</p>	<p>Issues such as dog theft are on the rise, a stronger linking and identification system could be welcomed by responsible dog owners and stakeholders.</p> <p>Could help bring together more information on dog ownership in the UK to create a clearer picture</p> <p>May reduce number of stray dogs and help dogs be reunited with their owners.</p> <p>Other stakeholders could be involved in enforcement.</p> <p>Opportunities to input into the accompanying guidance of the regulations.</p>	<p>Some fragmentation of views on idea of introducing fees for dog ownership</p> <p>Lack of single reunification number/resource. No easy/universal access to central database.</p> <p>Risk of owners bristling against compulsory microchipping if message is not properly disseminated that it is about registration not tracking.</p>

Appendix III

The following provides a list of people and organisations who have been given an opportunity to comment on the draft report and recommendations during a month long consultation period from 17th October – 17th November 2014. However, it should be noted the document has been shared wider as we have received responses from other organisations and individuals.

- All associate members of APGAW
- All MPs
- All Lords
- Association of Chief Police Officers
- Police Federation
- National Dog Warden Association
- Local Government Association
- Chartered Institute for Environmental Health
- Association of Police and Crime Commissioners
- Dog Rescue Federation
- Canine and Feline Sector Group
- Advisory Council on the Welfare Issues of Dog Breeding.

Appendix IV – Issues raised in response to consultation on recommendations

The aim of the consultation was two fold; firstly to ensure there was general consensus for the recommendations set out in the report and, secondly, to identify any issues that may have been overlooked and should be included.

Of the 32 people/organisations who responded to the consultation only 6 stated they either slightly or strongly disagreed with any of the recommendations. The majority strongly agreed with the majority of the recommendations with some slightly agreeing and only a few holding no view either way (see table below for breakdown). Of those who slightly (8) or strongly (3) disagreed with the recommendations they centred around the following recommendations and the majority of points were with regard to wording and interpretation. Hopefully the clarification of some of the wording in the revised text will assist with this.

- Recommendation 2: 1 slightly disagreed
- Recommendation 4: 1 strongly disagreed
- Recommendation 5: 1 slightly disagreed
- Recommendation 8: 1 slightly disagreed and 1 strongly disagreed
- Recommendation 10: 1 slightly disagree
- Recommendation 11: 1 strongly disagreed
- Recommendation 12: 1 slightly disagree
- Recommendation 13: 1 slightly disagreed
- Recommendation 16: 1 slightly disagreed
- Recommendation 20: 1 slightly disagree

Thus based on the responses received the APGAW is satisfied that there is general consensus for this approach and that the sub-group will move forward to phase two of this piece of work.

Table 1: Support or otherwise for each of the recommendations

Recommendation number	Strongly agree	Slightly agree	No view either way	Slightly disagree	Strongly disagree
1	29	2	1	0	0
2	28	2	1	1	0
3	22	7	3	0	0
4	25	5	1	0	1
5	23	5	3	1	0
6	26	5	1	0	0
7	27	3	2	0	0
8	18	10	2	1	1
9	26	4	2	0	0
10	27	2	2	1	0
11	27	2	2	0	1
12	27	2	2	1	0
13	20	8	3	1	0
14	20	9	3	0	0
15	27	3	2	0	0
16	24	5	2	1	0
17	26	3	3	0	0
18	25	3	4	0	0
19	25	4	3	0	0
20	26	4	1	1	0
21	26	4	2	0	0

With regard to the second aim of the survey; identifying issues not covered the APGAW is satisfied that the recommendations and text in the document sufficiently cover the areas raised in the responses. The aim of this report was to provide a general overview and not to go into detail on any of the areas. However some of the points raised in the consultation may be useful for discussion in the second phase of this work – where more detailed analysis will be taken for each area. Therefore we have listed the main points raised to use as a reference point when we start the second phase.

Issues raised in the consultation:

- NDWA: Dog licensing for England – with ring-fenced money that can be used by local dog wardens to promote responsible dog ownership.
- Pet owner: Identification of who or what body should be enforcing this legislation.
- Cavalier Campaign & Dog Breeding Reform Group: Breed-related genetic disorders and exaggerated features are serious welfare concerns of dogs. Need for education in schools.
- Chancepoxies Animal Welfare: Use of compulsory microchipping to make it a dog registration scheme that can provide funding for enforcement and education. Do not forget security dogs.
- Vet: More effective mechanism for vets to report suspected animal cruelty without breaching client confidentiality. How will microchipping legislation be enforced?
- Individual: Concerns over marginalisation of dogs (and their owners) with new dog control legislation.
- Individual: Real need for new legislation that bans the pet shop sales of puppies and only allows them to be sold where the mother and father can be seen.
- HAT UK: Concerned about making Codes of Practice non-statutory and the Assured Breeder Scheme, all breeders and sellers should be licensed and need much tougher penalties for cruelty and fighting.
- IFAW: Need to ensure there is adequate protection of wildlife from irresponsible dog owners and their dogs.
- Neapolitan Mastiff Aid: veterinary surgeons should not be commenting on animal behaviour unless they are qualified and registered with the ABTC.
- Pet Industry Federation: there is a need for a review of the Boarding Establishments Act 1963 to address the issue of home boarding and day creches.
- Dog Theft Action: question whether self-regulation will work and enforcement needs to be effective and robust.
- Dog Rescue Federation: more work is need to understand why people breed, sell and abandon dogs and for also ensuring their welfare when they are in kennels and what happens to them after that. Vets could play a role in educating the public. Concerns over the costs of some behaviourists and trainers.
- Veterinary surgeon: Investigation to implement better strategies for reducing impulse buying. Better and more engaging education for the public about the true costs of dog ownership.
- League Against Cruel Sports: Make education about dog welfare etc compulsory part of the National Curriculum. Greater consideration needed about how and who the resources come from.
- Individual: Need stronger measures in place to reduce number of puppies being bred and ensure all breeders are licensed.
- Canine Action UK: Need to prohibit the selling of dogs through third parties, e.g. pet shops.

- Dog Union: See compulsory scanning included as part of compulsory microchipping and dog theft seen as a crime.
- Mayhew Animal Centre: Central Gov to take more responsibility for public education campaigns and not leave it to the charities. Tighter regulation over the sale of pets. Self-regulation of breed organisations is ineffective.
- The Good Dog Partnership: need for one body to regulate behaviourists and trainers, however it is important that all those who need such services can access them.
- Petsitters Alliance: have a self-regulatory registration scheme for pet sitters.
- BSAVA: believe there should be a strategy for the whole of the UK and it is important when dealing with enforcement that openness and transparency are paramount (e.g. inspections of dog breeders). Have some concerns over the legal definition of 'guardianship' which are worth clarifying.
- NAVS: include section on dogs used in animal research and seek prohibition of breeding them for this in the UK.
- the Kennel Club: when discussing education about breeding look at using the ABS as well as the puppy contract.

