

RSPCA: Poll shows 2 out of 3 dog owners back new dog licence

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New figures revealed today show huge public backing for the introduction of a licence to tackle a range of dog welfare problems which plague the country.

In a survey commissioned by the charity, 2 out of 3 dog owners (66%)* asked said that they would be in favour of a licence scheme. The RSPCA will be submitting these results in response to the consultation on dangerous dog legislation recently launched by the UK government.

In addition, 76% of all the people asked said that a dog licence should be enforced in England to help curb problems such as 'puppy farms', stray dogs, stolen dogs and animal abandonments.

The RSPCA believes that a licence would be hugely beneficial in addressing many animal welfare concerns stemming from overbreeding of dogs to a lack of traceable ownership.

Reading University carried out research on behalf of the RSPCA and have released their findings which clearly show that an affordable and well-enforced dog licensing scheme could provide funding for a range of issues, most of which are currently funded poorly by central and local government.

Professor Emeritus Martin Upton from Reading University's school of agriculture, policy and development, said: "Our study into the potential costs and benefits of dog licencing and registration found that such a scheme could greatly contribute to responsible dog ownership and animal welfare."

The findings are also backed up by the results of the recent Bateson report into dog breeding which called for urgent action to be taken to safeguard animal welfare.

Head of external affairs David Bowles said: "The RSPCA has been seriously considering a dog licence scheme as we feel it would provide an effective mechanism for tackling a whole raft of dog welfare problems.

"The income should be ring-fenced and ploughed into services such as an effective local dog warden service which could make a real difference to both dogs and their owners at a local level.

"An annual scheme would also help to ensure that contact details of owners are kept up to date so they can be reunited with their pet more easily if it is lost or stolen."

It is possible that a reduction in the licence fee could apply for more responsible dog owners such as those who have their pets neutered.

Similar schemes operate in 23 countries throughout Europe and also in parts of Australia and New Zealand. They have proven success rates in reducing problems with disease, enforcing microchipping and neutering and in turn encouraging responsible pet ownership.

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Notes:

Interviews are available by contacting the press office on 0300 123 0244/0288 or press@rspca.org.uk

The TNS poll commissioned by the RSPCA asked 1,017 adults between the ages of 16-64 in Great Britain in February 2010.

The poll asked 334 dog owners and 683 non-dog owners for their views.

*76% of the total people asked and 66% of dog owners asked are in favour of the reintroduction of a dog licence.

A total of 771 people asked were in favour of a licence, 145 people asked were against it and 101 people asked did not know.

The government's plans would only effect legislation in England. The Welsh Assembly would be responsible for enforcing a policy in Wales.

Other useful statistics:

The costs to the health service of dog attacks on people were valued at £3.3 million in England in 2009, according to Hospital Episode Statistics 2009.

Attacks on livestock were valued at £2.2 million in England during 2009 by the Economists Advisory Group's 1998 report to the RSPCA and Kennel Club – adjusted for inflation.

Costs arising from road traffic accidents involving dogs in Britain during 2008 were valued at £14.6 million by the Department for Transport.

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