

P-05-951 Impose a legal limit on the maximum number of breeding bitches in licensed dog breeding establishments in Wales – Petitioner to Committee, 01.06.20

Dear Petitions Committee

In response to the Minister's letter I would firstly like to say that I commend the comprehensive nature of the recent review of the Animal Welfare (Dog Breeding) Regulations 2014, by the Wales Animal Health and Welfare Framework Group, and welcome its recommendations.

At the time that I started the petition I was not aware that a review of the regulations was underway.

The only point I would like to make concerns Recommendation 9 in the review:

'...further research is necessary in order to determine whether there would be an animal welfare benefit to capping the number of breeding bitches, and the number of total dogs, housed at a single breeding establishment. Without this it is not possible to determine whether there should be a limit on breeding unit size, or what that limit should be.'

'R9. Further impact assessment, and examination of the evidence, should be carried out in order to determine whether there would be an animal welfare benefit to capping the number of breeding bitches, and the number of total dogs, housed at a single establishment.'

My petition calls for a public consultation to be held by Welsh Government on placing a cap on the number of breeding bitches in a single breeding establishment and I would like to stress that the views of the people of Wales, and particularly the views of residents in my region of West Wales - the heart of the puppy farming industry - are vital to this impact assessment and evidence gathering process. The residents of West Wales, who are in population terms possibly the largest group of 'stakeholders' here, have lived with the negative impacts of large-scale dog breeding for too long. This is evidenced by the number of locally raised petitions and their signatories in the West Wales area, and the number of planning objections to applications to build or expand large scale breeding establishments on the grounds of excess noise, environmental pollutants, and distress to the dogs. Our reputation as a region, and in a larger sense our reputation as a progressive nation, is soiled by this shameful activity.

Finally, I would like to say that the primary motivation of large-scale dog breeders is to make money. They create a market for puppies in order to do this. They will always find loopholes in regulation and legislation unless it is so cut and dried, so black and white, that there is no wiggle room. The pragmatic and humane solution, in my opinion, is to legislate to place a very low cap on the number of breeding bitches in any licensed breeding kennel. I think you will find that if the Welsh Government were to consult with the Welsh public on this proposal, they would agree.

Best wishes

Dinah Mulholland