

P-05-779 Compulsory scanning of domestic pets for microchips by councils - Correspondence from the Petitioner to the Committee, 07.12.17

Local Authorities do determine their own financial affairs, and contract conditions. The reason we feel Government intervention is needed is simply because certain councils in Wales are not so much as considering introducing microchip readers in to their depots, regardless of the numerous requests of the councils constituents. We have supporters in the 5 target areas who have requested the council look in to adopting this approach, plus there has been numerous independent petitions from locals – Cardiff in particular, yet the councils refuse to listen to residents requests, and simply file the petitions regardless of the number of signatures. Regardless of financial issues, councils do have a responsibility to act upon the concerns of its citizens.

In terms of financial restraints, we feel this is an excuse because all but 5 Welsh councils do currently have this procedure in place, and will agree it is inexpensive to operate. A 1 off cost for a freezer, and microchip readers is the only additional cost required of the councils, of which we have offered to help with previously. An example would be Powys, who only recently introduced this measure. Financial restraints were expressed so we donated scanners to each of their depots, which was received well. The scanners donated would not have exceeded £100, to give you an idea of cost for the 5 depots.

The main point to note is that every local authority in Wales already currently collects animal carcasses from public property. We do not ask for any additions or changes be added to the current operations of collection and disposal, just that the use of scanners becomes a mandatory requirement within the departments for domestic pets, specifically cats.

In terms of disposal, councils do collect carcasses already, and will proceed to do this following regulations set under the Animal By-Products (Enforcement) (Wales) Regulations 2014, the Environment Protection Act 1990, and also follow requirements that need meeting from organisations such as Natural Resources Wales (NRW). Legislation currently set upon councils would not change, nor would any need introducing, as they each already comply with all of the above – regardless of them having a scanning procedure in place or not currently. The introduction of a mandatory scanning approach, would not alter any current legal requirements, nor would any additional ones need to be included. The approach has been adopted, and is working, for the majority of Welsh councils at present, there is no apparent reason why the remaining 5 councils could not also follow the methods set by all the others for the benefit, and mental wellbeing, of residents.

The Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs, and the Animal and Plant Health Agency, do not recognise domestic pets as being placed in either a Category 1 or category 2 ABPs. As low-risk material, there are a much wider range of options for use and disposal compared to higher risk material, which local authorities and their contractors do already comply with current regulations to either landfill or incinerate the carcasses. In terms of bio-security, workers in the waste departments currently will already follow Health and Safety legislation set out for those handling uncontaminated animal by-products.

We do not ask this change, we just ask for the additional use of scanners so the owners have the chance to come forward and either collect them for private burial, which is permitted, or that they are simply notified so as can process their pets fate, and have closure. There would be no increase in cats collected, and the average number of cats collected monthly by councils stands at an average of just 7, of which around 3/4 will be microchipped. This means any burden to workload would be kept to an absolute minimum, in terms of phone calls to notify the owners.

Of the 22 authorities in Wales, just 5 currently do not scan. Should the Welsh Government consider placing a mandatory requirement upon all councils to scan domestic pets collected, we believe it should come in to play with all new waste contracts, giving the remaining 5 councils time to prepare for change. We, and our larger partners, have already agreed to work with those to ensure a smooth and effective roll out, should the councils wish assistance.

We continue to hear of sympathy toward pet owners, but without any action taken this remains just words. Action would signal the Government understands what people's pets mean to them in contemporary times, and respect citizens right to closure should the worst happen to their pet.

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