



RSPCA Briefing Licensing of Animal Activities

Licensing of animal activities in Wales

On 2 March 2021, the Welsh Government re-laid The Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (Wales) Regulations 2021 following a "small but important error" in the previous set introduced.

Under the proposals, anyone who wants to sell pets in Wales has to meet minimum animal welfare standards for the first time, with a new licensing scheme introduced for pet sellers. This establishes that puppies or kittens under six months of age not bred by the licence holder cannot be sold. The law also states that puppies, kittens, ferrets or rabbits cannot be sold until they are at least eight weeks of age - while local authorities across Wales will need to provide more data about the numbers of licenced premises in a locality; ensuring increased understanding of the animal welfare picture across the country. The re-laid, updated regulations also - welcomingly - seek to address a loophole, whereby a breeder of puppies or kittens will no longer be able to transport the animals to a new setting and sell them - as this must now be done from the premises they were bred.

However, RSPCA Cymru had been hopeful that the re-laid Regulations would provide an expected exemption for animal rescue and rehoming organisations to find new homes for younger puppies and kittens - but this appears to have not been addressed. As the Regulations currently stand, animal rescues would need to be licensed and no animal charity in Wales would be able to rehome kittens or puppies until they're six months of age, which could mean many young animals spend months in boarding waiting for the date they can be legally rehomed. This may also decrease the amount of boarding space many animal rescue centres have available.

The RSPCA, and other animal rescue and rehoming organisations, routinely rescue kittens and puppies well under the age of six months. While we would not rehome any kitten or puppy until they were at-least eight weeks of age, the Regulations as laid prevent us rehoming any cat or dog under the age of six months. We are now urgently seeking clarification from the Welsh Government as to their intentions for these puppies and kittens.

RSPCA Cymru and Animal Welfare Network for Wales have long campaigned for the regulation of animal sanctuaries, rescues and centres - but have favoured standalone regulations designed specifically for animal welfare establishments. Rescue centres are NOT third party sellers - and without an exemption, rescued puppies and kittens in this sector risk being caught up by legislation designed to deal with something very different."

Further to this key concern, the RSPCA remains disappointed that the Regulations did not go further than England's version of 'Lucy's Law' which was implemented in April 2020 - despite previous assurances to the contrary¹. Other animal activities remain unlicensed in Wales, or are subject to a regulatory framework which is decades old - such as animal boarding; which was updated in England in 2018, but in Wales still remains subject to the Animal Boarding Establishments Act 1963. Licensing for many animal activities has been standardised in England since 2018 - yet the limited scope of these new regulations in Wales could be regarded as a missed opportunity to provide a consistent framework for local authorities, greater protection for animals and reassurances for pet owners who use such services.

The re-laid Animal Welfare (LAIA) (Wales) Regulations 2021 will be debated on 23 March - and key assurances are needed before this vote. Further information on dog breeding legislation in Wales can be found in this [briefing](#).

Questions to consider:

1) *Is the Welsh Government's intention for rescue and rehoming centres to be licensed under the the Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (Wales) Regulations 2021, and can any assurances be provided that such centres can continue to rehome puppies and kittens under the age of six months rescued from situations of cruelty and neglect?*

2) *If animal rescue and rehoming organisations in Wales are not exempt under the Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (Wales) Regulations 2021, can the Welsh Government outline what support will be made available to ensure that they can continue to rehome animals rescued from situations of cruelty and neglect?*

3) *Given the Welsh Government has described the Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (Wales) Regulations 2021 as a vehicle for further change, what further additions do they intend to make to the Regulations, and when?*

¹ The Record, Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee, 10 December 2020