



**Environment, Food
and Rural Affairs
Committee**

The Lord Douglas-Miller OBE
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
London
By email

30 January, 2024

Dear Minister,

The Government's ban on XL Bully dogs

In December I wrote to you regarding the Government's ban on XL Bully dogs and received your response on 18 January 2024. My Committee is grateful for your detailed reply within the time requested.

A key concern raised in our letter relating to the neutering of XL bully dogs for exemptions purposes under the ban. We recommended that the Department extend the deadline for neutering large dogs that are under seven months of age on 31 January 2024, to the end of June 2025.

We were disappointed to receive the Department's response setting out that puppies born ahead of the ban on breeding and sale will be at least 12 months old when they need to be presented for neutering.

As we raised, if a large breed dog is neutered too young, this may increase their risk of developmental orthopaedic problems, alongside other medical conditions. A growing body of scientific evidence recommends waiting until 18 months.

As you will be aware, the British Veterinary Association has written to the Chief Veterinary Officer, highlighting the need for an extension to current neutering

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deadlines, under which many dogs will be neutered before the recommended age of 18 months.

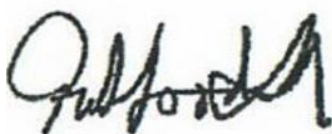
We strongly recommend that the XL Bully optimal minimum neutering age be extended to 18 months by extending the deadline for neutering registered dogs that are under seven months of age on 31 January 2024, to the end of June 2025. This would be a small change, of just a 6-month extension for dogs that will be on a leash and muzzled in public, with long-term health benefits for these dogs. It would also ensure the veterinary profession can be better prepared to manage the number of dogs which will fall within the ban. As the British Veterinary Association highlighted, there are no clear estimates of the number of dogs that might fall within the ban – estimates range between 10,000 and 50,000.

In our letter of 14 December, we also asked what steps the Department is taking to allow owners to deregister their dog, so they are not required to adhere to the conditions of the ban in instances where they inadvertently registered it as an XL Bully. We ask the Department to set out, as soon as possible, its plans for the deregistering process, and where details of responsibility for adjudicating in cases of dispute will fall.

We are also grateful for the correction of the record in your letter.

Given the urgency of this matter, the Committee asks that you provide a reply addressing the above points by 9 February.

Yours sincerely



**Rt Hon Sir Robert Goodwill MP
Chair, Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee**

cc Professor Christine Middlemiss, Chief Veterinary Officer