



Petitions Committee

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Rt Hon George Eustice MP
Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs

21 September 2021

Dear Secretary of State

I am writing in relation to several petitions we have received calling for changes to legislation regarding specific types of dogs. During this Parliament two petitions calling for changes to the prohibitions on dogs under Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 have received the 100,000 signatures required to be considered for debate:

e-petition [300561](#), "Replace Breed Specific Legislation with a new statutory framework" (118,641 signatures)

e-petition [592813](#), "Exempt dogs assessed by experts as safe from breed specific legislation" (123,142 signatures, as of 16 September 2021)

Several other petitions making similar and related requests have also received thousands of signatures:

e-petition [558614](#), "Restrict police powers under the Dangerous Dogs Act" (6,183 signatures)

e-petition [558354](#), "End breed specific legislation" (3,827 signatures)

e-petition [574548](#), "Require 48 hours' notice before a 'dangerous dog' can be destroyed" (2,009 signatures)

We held a debate on e-petition 300561 on Monday 5 July, to which Victoria Prentis MP, the then Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, responded. However, the most recent petition (592813) has continued to attract signatures and became eligible for debate during the summer.

The Government's written responses to e-petitions on this subject, and the Minister's response to the debate we held in July, have made it clear that the Government believes the existing prohibitions on certain types of dog under Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 should remain in place, and that it believes a lifting of

the restrictions on these types of dogs would more likely result in an increase in dog attacks, rather than contributing to any reduction in such incidents.

The Committee agrees that public safety is of paramount importance, but there is also a need to ensure that legislation is proportionate, informed by the evidence, and does not result in unnecessary suffering or destruction of dogs because of their type. It is clear from the substantial support for petitions on this issue that thousands of people believe that current laws are not fit for purpose and need to be reformed, and the Government needs to take this into consideration.

It is also important to note that the most signed petitions on this subject have not called for a blanket revocation of existing dangerous dog legislation, but have called for existing prohibitions to be reformed so that they focus on the behaviour of dogs, and not their type.

We understand that Defra has commissioned further research in collaboration with Middlesex University to look at responsible ownership across all breeds of dog, and that this will consider different approaches and the effectiveness of current dog control measures. However, it is not clear whether this research will look specifically at owners of dog types currently prohibited under the Dangerous Dogs Act.

Given the substantial support for petitions calling for reform of legislation prohibiting certain dog types, I am requesting that you expand your department's work on responsible ownership of dogs to look at establishing a new framework for responsible ownership of dog types currently prohibited under the Dangerous Dogs Act. To inform this your department should commission new research to consider the evidence base for current prohibitions, and alternatives to current prohibitions on certain dog types. This should be published, followed by a Government review of the prohibitions set out in the Dangerous Dogs Act.

I'd be grateful if you could provide a reply to the above request by Thursday 14 October.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Catherine". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Catherine McKinnell MP
Chair of the Petitions Committee