



Department  
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Catherine McKinnell MP  
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Dear Catherine,

Thank you for your letter of 21 September about several petitions you have received calling for changes to breed-specific legislation.

I recognise that many people oppose the prohibitions on pit bull types contained in the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991, which is reflected by the support these petitions have received. However, since 2005, of the 41 people who died due to dog attacks in England and Wales, seven of the deaths have involved pit bull types. This represents around 1 in 6 incidents, despite our very small population of pit bull types resulting from the current prohibitions. I remain concerned that lifting the restrictions would result in an increase in the breeding and ownership of pit bulls and could result in more tragic dog attacks.

Despite the general prohibition on these types of dog, reforms have been introduced to allow individual prohibited dogs to be kept by their owners if a court determines that the dog is not a danger to the public. In conducting its assessment, the court will consider the temperament of the dog and its past behaviour; whether the proposed keeper is a fit and proper person; and any other relevant circumstances, such as whether the dog can be provided with a suitable environment. If the court considers these criteria to be met, the dog can be listed on the Index of Exempted Dogs and may be kept under strict conditions, including being neutered and being kept on a lead and muzzled in public. Currently there are just under 3,700 dogs on the Index of Exempted Dogs.

I am glad to be able to confirm that the Middlesex University report on responsible dog ownership, which I hope to publish shortly, covers all breeds and types of dog, and that this research involved assessing the evidence base relating to breed specific legislation. The report also considers a range of measures and interventions apart from the prohibition of certain dog types. I look forward to seeing how the report is received, and this will also inform what framework we apply in future to the responsible ownership of dog types. I should note that it is important for our overarching framework to apply to all breeds and types of dogs, because, depending upon the circumstances, it is possible for a dog of any breed or type to act dangerously.

**RT HON GEORGE EUSTICE MP**