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To All MSPs

23 February 2024

Dear Colleague

XL BULLY DOGS – NEW SAFEGUARDS

As you are aware, new safeguards in relation to XL Bully dogs have come into effect today, 23 February. The decision to introduce the new safeguards was not a decision taken lightly and reflected the need to respond to new controls on XL Bully dogs in England and Wales impacting on Scotland.

It is important XL Bully dog owners, and the general public, are aware of what is changing and I would encourage you to use your own communications with constituents to help explain the changes. The weblinks below may be helpful in this regard.

[XL Bully dogs in Scotland - mygov.scot](#)
[Controlling your dog in public - mygov.scot](#)

There are two stages to the new safeguards. Under the relevant legislation, the first new safeguards in effect from 23 February mean that ownership of an XL Bully dog remains legal. However, it is an offence for a person to:

- have an XL Bully in public without a lead and muzzle
- breed or breed from an XL Bully dog
- sell an XL Bully dog
- abandon an XL Bully dog or let it stray
- give away an XL Bully dog

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The second stage of the new rules will mean that from 1 August 2024, it will be an offence to own a XL Bully dog without an exemption. Owners of an XL Bully dog will need to apply for an exemption on or before 31 July 2024 to be able to continue owning their dog. The details of the exemption scheme such as the start date for application, requirements to receive an exemption and also arrangements for compensation for any XL Bully dog owners not wishing to retain their dogs, will be published on the Scottish Government website as further secondary legislation is brought forward.

Meantime, if any of your constituents have any concerns about any dog (no matter the breed) that appears to be 'dangerously out of control', they should in the first instance contact Police Scotland to report this.

Separately, your constituents may also be interested to know that unlike England and Wales, in Scotland we also already have the system of dog control notices (DCNs) which is operated by local authorities.

DCNs are an essential part of helping keep communities safe and requiring responsible dog ownership. This is a proportionate approach for local authorities to use these important powers where needed and focusing on those owners who have allowed their dogs, no matter the breed, to be out of control. Conditions can be added to a DCN such as muzzling in public or keeping a dog on a lead, with such decisions made by local authority officers (i.e. dog wardens).

Should any of your constituents have any concerns about a dog that appears to be 'out of control', they should contact the local authority dog warden team.

I hope this information is helpful and I am happy to engage on these important matters.



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