



Briefing for the Public Petitions Committee

Petition number: [PE1396](#)

Main Petitioner: Ian Robb, Help for Abandoned Animals in Angus

Subject: The over breeding and abandonment of Staffordshire bull terriers. Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to investigate and prevent the over breeding and abandonment of Staffordshire bull terrier dogs.

Background

Staffordshire bull terriers (SBTs or Staffies) were first recognised as a breed by the Kennel Club in 1935. The [breed standard](#) describes them as smooth coated, muscular, agile dogs of great strength for their size. They are described as courageous, tenacious and reliable, “highly intelligent and affectionate especially with children”. Since there is no requirement to register dog ownership in Scotland, it is not possible to compare the number of SBTs with other breeds. However, registration figures with the Kennel Club show that SBTs are the [sixth most registered breed](#) in the UK.

There have been reports in the press about dog homes being overwhelmed with SBTs. In the Evening News¹, Scottish SPCA Chief Inspector Mike Flynn was reported as stating: “The big increase [in dogs kept] in recent years has been in Staffies and cross Staffies. They are being sold as aggressive dogs, when they aren't really in reality. Often when an owner discovers that, or they can't take care of them, then they are dumped.” He also expressed concerns that dogs might be bred and sold for drug money and that because they were sold so cheaply people were buying them without thinking about the care they needed. At the time of writing over half of the kennels in the SSPCA's Glasgow home were occupied by SBTs. There is also a concern that Pit Bulls might be sold as SBT crosses. Out of the handful of Pit Bull Terriers in SSPCA care, around half were bought by people who genuinely thought they were buying SBT puppies and only later discovered they owned a banned dog².

¹ Evening News (Edinburgh) June 16, 2011, Thursday

² Chief Inspector Mike Flynn, pers. comm..

SBTs are also the most commonly stolen dog in London with a [2006 Metropolitan Police report](#) showing that out of 511 dogs which were stolen 56% were SBTs. The report also described the use of dogs in crime (e.g. robbery, assault) stating that out of 18 crimes committed using identified dog breeds, half were SBTs.

UK Legislation

SBTs are not mentioned specifically in any legislation.

There are four UK Acts relating to dangerous dogs. These are the Dogs Act 1871, the Dangerous Dogs Act 1989 which amends the 1871 Act, the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991, and the Dangerous Dogs (Amendment) Act 1997 which amends the 1991 Act.

Sections 1 and 2 of the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 Act deal with breeds considered dangerous. The breeding, selling, giving and possession of the following breed types is prohibited: Pit Bull Terrier, Japanese Tosa, Filo Brasileiro, Dogo Argentino. Section 3 of the Act deals with threatening behaviour and dog attacks, by any type of dog: anyone allowing a dog to be dangerously out of control in a public place is guilty of an offence.

A House of Lords Bill the [Dog Control Bill](#) is currently under consideration in the UK Parliament. The intention of the bill is to repeal previous Dangerous Dogs Acts and move the emphasis away from problem breeds to focus on owner responsibility. The Bill if passed would apply to England and Wales only.

Scottish Legislation

The [Control of Dogs \(Scotland\) Act 2010](#) which came into force on 26 February 2011 follows on from a Bill introduced by Christine Grahame MSP in 2009 which sought to move towards a focus on “deed not breed” and extend the liability of dog owners where a dog is dangerously out of control to private as well as public places. The Bill as introduced is covered by a [SPICe briefing](#).

The Act introduces Dog Control Notices (DCN) which can be issued to dog owners who allow their pets to become out of control in a public or private place. A DCN will require a dog to be microchipped. It may also include the following actions: muzzling or keeping a dog on a lead; neutering male dogs; keeping the dog away from specific places; attending training courses.

The [Animal Health and Welfare \(Scotland\) Act 2006](#) includes requirements for dog owners. The Act clarifies who should be held responsible for an animal. Causing or allowing others to cause an animal unnecessary suffering is made an offence as is the abandonment of an animal. Owners are also required to ensure animal welfare through considering its needs (e.g. environment, diet). The Scottish Government’s [Code of Practice for the Welfare of Dogs](#), builds on each of the identified needs to give more detailed advice for dog owners.

[The Licensing of Animal Dealers \(Young Cats and Young Dogs\) \(Scotland\) Regulations 2009](#) requires animal dealers to hold a licence though it does not apply to those selling their own pet’s offspring nor the selling of small numbers of kittens or puppies (2 cats or 2 dogs in a 12 month period).

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