

**House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA**

Dear

I am writing to you concerning the Dangerous Dogs Act (DDA) 1991 (as amended) legislation and the welfare of seized dogs.

Dogs thought to be prohibited pit bull types and in contravention of the DDA are usually seized and incarcerated pending breed identification and legal hearings to determine their fate. Over the past year the number of seized dogs held in police appointed kennels has risen sharply, especially in the areas of Merseyside and London.

I would like to know how many dogs have been seized as suspected pit bull types under section one of the DDA and also how many dogs have been seized in this area and are currently held in police custody under section three of the DDA which applies to any dog.

In many cases, it can often take months before hearings come to court and owners are not afforded any visitation rights as the kennel locations are usually not revealed to the owners.

Over the past year there has been an increasing number of cases where dogs have been seized from their homes, held at kennels and then either breed identified and found not to be a prohibited type of dog or later released to their owners via Court order following registration onto the Index of Exempted Dogs.

Some of these dogs have been returned to their owners traumatised and suffering due to physical and psychological damage. Physical damage noted includes; broken teeth, pressure sores, extreme weight loss, tail damage, self mutilation to the extremities, skin complaints and untreated wounds. Several dogs have had their tails amputated due to damage occurring whilst in kennels.

Several dogs have died suddenly whilst held in kennels; some dogs have died due to preventable infection from the deadly disease parvo virus whilst the cause of other deaths has not yet been discovered. One family dog was put to sleep by mistake due to a clerical error.

If a dog is seized and held with minimal opportunities for exercise and daily human and/or canine contact, I believe the effects of isolation on the dog's behaviour can be devastating. The seizure and detention of family pets can create problems with the dog's socialisation; one example would be where a dog is returned following months of isolation and then has problems re-integrating with the dog(s) he previously lived happily alongside within the home.

Impounded dogs often arrive in kennels with no health history collected from their owners although these owners try to pass this information on, there seems to be no set procedures laid down. Pets are removed from their homes and placed into kennels with no knowledge collated from either the owner and/or veterinary surgeon concerning the dog's basic vaccination status, current health/medication requirements, ongoing illness, special needs etc.

When pets are returned to their owners there is often no health information or medical records forwarded to their owners, or the dog's veterinary surgeon, so owners do not know whether their dog has received

any vaccinations, what they were vaccinated against, whether their dog has shown any signs of illness, been injured, needed any medical treatment, been examined by another vet etc.

I believe that pet owners should be able to easily gain regular updates and information concerning their dog's welfare if it is currently in custody. Full health information should have been routinely requested from an owner at the point of seizure and delivered into the hands of those responsible for the dogs care. Full health information including veterinary records should then be routinely handed over to the owner if the dog is released back into their care.

The enforced separation between a pet dog and his family for prolonged periods of time is highly undesirable and upsetting to both pet dog and pet owner. Any dog kept in conditions which are the cause of physical and/or psychological damage, I think, is wholly unacceptable. I don't believe that dogs held as suspected prohibited types or for alleged offences under section three of the Act should receive a lesser degree of care due to their alleged type, alleged owners offence or the fact that they may be destroyed.

I would like to see all kennels currently holding dogs independently investigated at regular intervals and recommendations made, if need be, to ensure that all seized dogs are receiving an appropriate level of care including duties defined under Section 9 (2) of the Animal welfare Act 2006, e.g., a suitable diet, suitable environment, the need to be able to exhibit normal patterns of behaviour and the need to be protected from pain, suffering, injury and disease.

I would also like to bring to your attention the important issue of puppies seized and held pending legal hearings or waiting until they are old enough to be breed identified. It is a fact that early socialisation is essential, yet we have a situation of where puppies have been seized and then held throughout their critical developmental period, in a kennel environment.

Unpleasant experiences or isolation during this time can lead to a pup becoming aggressive, introverted, withdrawn and/or inhibited. Such experiences or solitude can lead to self-mutilation, a fear of people, other animals and noises whilst, at the same time, becoming excessively excitable and lacking in self-control. Pups that aren't exposed to people or other animals during this critical period in their development can become anti-social.

If a puppy is held until it can be breed identified and found not be of a prohibited breed or ordered by a court to be registered on the Index what kind of life can it expect having only ever known a kennel?

I would like to see open discussion on the issue of puppy detention to work out how a puppies developmental needs can be provided for whilst awaiting breed identification or legal hearings.

I believe that leaving pet dogs at home with their owners, providing that certain requirements are met, is an option which should also be discussed further.

Do you know who is responsible for the welfare of a seized dog and whether seized dogs are placed into kennels which are registered establishments, also, who monitors how long dogs are kept in kennels for?

I look forward to your views and reply on this issue.

Yours sincerely