



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

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# Animal Welfare Plan for Wales: year 2 Progress report

Update on progress made during the second year of the plan.

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# Introduction

Our **Animal Welfare Plan for Wales (AWPW)** was published 4 November 2021. It sets out how we will deliver our four **Programme for Government** commitments and other priorities for animal welfare.

Our ambition is for all animals in Wales to have a good quality of life. This is a strategic objective of our **Wales Animal Health and Welfare Framework**, which forms the foundations upon which our five-year Animal Welfare Plan has been developed.

The following provides an update on progress made during its second year. **Summary report of progress made in the first year.**

## Summary

We have made good progress on delivering our priorities for animal welfare:

- Animal Welfare enforcement and licensing policy continues to progress with a call for evidence completed in 2023 to establish if existing regulation remained sufficient.
- We launched a 12-week consultation on the licensing of animal welfare establishments, activities and exhibits on 08 December 2023. This supports our work to develop a National Model to improve the regulation of animal welfare.
- The Local Authority Enforcement project, rebranded Animal Licensing Wales, is now well established with 11 regional enforcement officers, two support officers and two system coordinators in place.
- As of December 2023, four training courses have been delivered to 58 officers across all Local Authorities in Wales, with 14 of these officers

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completing the additional requirements to meet the qualification for pet sellers.

- Following a **consultation** on our proposals, we are on target to introduce regulations which will require CCTV in slaughterhouses, in all areas where there are live animals present, in spring 2024.
- We have been working with other governments to examine the use of enriched cages for laying hens and farrowing crates for pigs.
- The Animal Welfare (Livestock Exports) Bill was introduced to the UK Parliament in December. The Minister agreed in principle to a ban on live export for slaughter or fattening to extend to Wales and laid a **Legislative Consent Memorandum**, for the provisions which fall within the legislative competence of the Senedd, on 19 December. The Bill is progressing quickly and completed the House of Commons stages unamended.
- We continue to work with the UK and Scottish Governments on proposals to improve animal welfare during transport, including extensive engagement with industry experts and animal welfare organisations.
- In October 2023 we held a multi-agency Summit on Responsible Dog Ownership hosted by the Minister for Rural Affairs and North Wales, and Trefnydd and the Chief Veterinary Officer (CVO) Wales. A series of follow-up workshops on Responsible Dog Breeding & Ownership are being arranged, with the first held in February 2024. **Written Statement detailing the outcomes of the summit.**

# Section 1: Programme for Government Commitments

## PfG Commitment 1: Develop a national model for regulation of animal welfare, introducing registration for animal welfare establishments, commercial breeders for pets or for shooting, and animal exhibits

- In the first half of year two we concluded a period of evidence gathering, having written to Local Authorities and key third sector organisations in Wales via the Animal Welfare Network for Wales (AWNW) and Companion Animal Welfare Group Wales (CAWGW), to establish whether existing legislation was fit for purpose.
- The responses to this call for evidence helped us to prepare a document outlining where legislation needed strengthening. This identified certain activities and establishments, including dog groomers and walkers, animal behaviourists, greyhound trainers, sanctuaries, rescue centres and bird of prey exhibits.
- Following close work with our animal welfare networks and Local Authorities, we launched a **12-week public consultation** on 8 December 2023, titled the Licensing of animal welfare establishment, activities and exhibits. The consultation closes 01 March 2024 and forms the first stage of the development of a National Model for the regulation of animal welfare.
- The rebranded 'Animal Licensing Wales' Local Authority enforcement project is now well established and has developed a co-operative approach to standards, enforcement practices and advice on the statutory guidance supporting existing legislation.
- The Local Authority Enforcement Project has helped support inspections at dog breeding premises and driven positive progress:
  - Training has been delivered to 58 officers across all Local Authorities;

- Eleven regional inspectors, two support officers and two system administrators have completed training and taken up posts.

## **PfG Commitment 2: Improve the qualifications for animal welfare inspectors to raise their professional status**

- Our Animal Licensing Project has developed a process for extending and strengthening the training for all Local Authority licensing enforcement officers, to be broadened as new licensing regulations are introduced.
- To date 11 regional enforcement officers, two support officers and two system coordinators have taken up posts, creating a higher level of expertise to support Local Authorities with more complex cases.
- Grant funding has been secured for a further three years with the inspectors in post having real impact. Officers have undertaken 391 inspections leading to 58 Improvement Notices under the Animal Welfare Act 2006 being served

## **PfG Commitment 3: Require CCTV in all slaughterhouses**

- We have consulted on proposals to require CCTV in all approved slaughterhouses in areas where live animals are present. We wanted to understand the impacts our commitment will have on individual business, particularly our smaller slaughterhouses which provide an essential service to farmers and contribute to sustainable, locally integrated food supply chains.
- A [summary of responses](#) to the consultation was published in May 2023. There were 16,014 responses. This included 71 individual responses and 15,943 identical responses as part of a campaign by the RSPCA. 86% of individual respondents and 100% of the campaign respondents agree CCTV cameras should be installed in slaughterhouses.
- We are on target to introduce regulations to require CCTV in all

slaughterhouses in spring 2024.

- We have worked closely with the Food Standards Agency (FSA) which monitors and enforces animal welfare regulations in slaughterhouses. The FSA will make use of CCTV as part of its existing enforcement role at slaughterhouses.

## **PfG Commitment 4: Restrict the use of cages for Farmed Animals**

- We are working with other administrations to consider how we can further improve our already high standards of farmed animal welfare by examining the use of enriched cages for laying hens and farrowing crates for pigs.
- We are looking at how and where they are used, alongside the welfare impacts of existing and alternative systems. We are very mindful of the impact on industry, given the challenges the pig and poultry sectors are currently facing. We also have to consider the commercial availability of alternative systems, impacts on consumers, the environment and trade.
- The Animal Welfare Committee Work Plan for 2023 to 2024 includes a project to look at the welfare standards for keeping laying hens in non-cage systems without range access (barn systems).

## **Section 2: Ongoing, Wales-based Policy Work**

### **Statutory Guidance for the Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (Wales) Regulations 2021**

- Our [statutory guidance](#) for pet sales was published in 2021.
- As of September 2023, Welsh Government funding has enabled four training courses to be delivered to 58 officers across all Local Authorities and

provided material with the licensing requirements for pet sellers.

- Animal Licensing Wales will work in partnership with Welsh Government, Local Authorities, and other interested parties to further develop individual modules for the different areas of animal licensing as they develop.

## **Make further updates to statutory Guidance for the Animal Welfare (Breeding of Dogs) (Wales) Regulations 2014**

- Animal Licensing Wales delivered a workshop with licensed breeders in June 2023. The workshop gathered feedback and suggestions regarding the practicality and feasibility of potential improvements to the current guidance.
- This work is complementing the recommendations from the Responsible Dog Ownership Summit and follow up workshops.

## **Licensing of Animal Exhibits and Animal Establishments**

- We launched our consultation on the licensing of animal welfare establishments, activities and exhibits on 08 December 2023. The consultation will run for 12-weeks and ends 01 March 2024.
- We continue to field significant interest in greyhound racing and in recognition of this have included questions to gather further information in the above consultation.
- Once the consultation is concluded we intend to consider all public responses received, in combination with the targeted call for evidence (carried out with Local Authorities and Third Sector Organisations via AWWN and CAWW), to determine licensing priorities.
- This consultation forms part of the first phase of the development of a National Model for the regulation of animal welfare. It is envisioned the National Model would extend licensing to currently unlicensed animal-related



activities and update the licensing framework for other minimally regulated activities.

## Microchipping of Dogs and Cats

- Work on responsible dog ownership has highlighted issues with the current microchipping scheme for dogs. Proposals to extend compulsory microchipping to include kittens and cats in Wales will be considered once the current legislation and database infrastructure is considered effective.

## Codes of Practice

- Our codes are intended to encourage all those who are responsible for animals to adopt the highest standards of husbandry. They explain what a person needs to do to meet the standards of care the law requires.
- We have established a Working Group with the other UK administrations to align and update our codes of practice.

## Section 3: UK/GB Policy Collaboration

### Fallen Animal Welfare (Kept Animals) Bill

- The Animal Welfare (Kept Animals) Bill aimed to deliver important reforms across farmed, companion and other kept animals and was a significant area of work in Year 2 of the AWP. Unfortunately, the Bill fell in May 2023.
- We are working with UK Government to progress elements of the Bill, including the live export, puppy smuggling and livestock worrying elements.

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## Welfare in Transport

- The Animal Welfare (Livestock Exports) Bill was introduced to the UK Parliament in December. The Minister for Rural Affairs agreed in principle for the ban on live export for slaughter or fattening to extend to Wales and laid a **Legislative Consent Memorandum** on 19 December. The Bill is progressing quickly and completed the House of Commons stages, unamended.
- We share the view animals should only be transported when necessary and journey durations should be minimised. Exports for purposes other than slaughter or fattening, such as for breeding or competitions and shows, will continue to be permitted. Poultry are not in scope of the ban.
- Evidence has shown very long journeys can cause heat stress, dehydration, and physical injuries in transported animals.
- We continue to work with the UK and Scottish Governments on proposals to improve animal welfare during transport. There has been significant engagement with stakeholders, including industry experts and animal welfare organisations.

## Section 4: Other work not included in the AWPW

### XL Bully Ban

- In September 2023, the Prime Minister announced urgent work to define and ban American bully XL dogs following a spate of attacks.
- The UK Government subsequently amended the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 to add XL Bullies to the list of banned breeds in England and Wales.
- From 31 December 2023 all owners of XL Bully breed types have had to

comply with strict conditions. This includes ensuring they put their dog on a lead and muzzle in public, and do not breed, sell, exchange, gift or abandon their dog.

- From the 1<sup>st</sup> February 2024 it became an offence to be in possession of an XL Bully type dog if an exemption for the dog hasn't been granted.
- We recognise the need for action in this area but are also aware that any dog is capable of showing aggression.
- In October 2023 the Minister for Rural Affairs and North Wales, and Trefnydd and CVO Wales hosted a summit on Responsible Dog Ownership: Action on Dangerous Dogs. Local Authority and Police representatives, Third Sector members and experts attended to discuss specific issues around ownership, which is key to ensuring dogs are properly cared for, trained and controlled.
- Recommendations from the Summit workshop session included:
  - How Police Forces prioritise and report dog-related incidents
  - Update and future-proof Dog Breeding Regulations
  - Introduce formal recording of dog attacks/livestock worrying.
  - Consider dog control notices.
  - Identify post-March 2024 funding for the Wales-wide Serious Organised Crime Illegal Breeding (CABAL) Investigation and Intelligence work.
  - A follow up workshop was held in February to reconvene participants and further events will take place throughout 2024 to ensure momentum isn't lost.

## **Welfare of Animals at the Time of Killing**

- We continue to work with the other UK administrations on a reform plan for welfare at slaughter following Defra's post-implementation Review of the Welfare of Animals at the Time of Killing (England) Regulations 2015 (WATOK England).
- The Animal Welfare Committee Work Plan for 2023 to 2024 includes the following projects:

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- High Expansion Nitrogen Foam Delivery Systems for depopulation of poultry flocks affected by notifiable disease in the UK.
- Equines at slaughter - assessing ongoing research on behavioural issues around preslaughter handling of equines in slaughterhouses.

## Engagement with the Animal Welfare Committee

The **Animal Welfare Committee** (AWC) advises Governments on the welfare of farmed, companion and wild animals kept by people.

We commission and agree research alongside the other devolved Governments. Recent published AWC opinion papers include:

- **Opinion on the implications of castration and tail docking for the welfare of lambs.**
- **Update to the 2014 Farm Animal Welfare Committee (FAWC) opinion on the welfare of farmed fish at the time of killing.**
- **Opinion on alternatives to culling newly hatched chicks in the egg and poultry industries.**
- **Opinion on the space requirements for snakes in vivaria within pet selling establishments.**

## Castration and tail-docking of lambs

- The Animal Welfare Committee (AWC) was asked to consider the welfare implications of castration and tail-docking of lambs. As currently practised, both cause a welfare harm that includes immediate and ongoing pain. Sheep farmers should consider carefully if either procedure is necessary, in discussion with their veterinary surgeon. If necessary for welfare or management purposes, then these procedures must be carried out in accordance with the law.

- When the method used for castration or tail-docking is the application of a rubber ring or other device to constrict the flow of blood to the scrotum or tail, the procedure may only be carried out on an animal aged not more than seven days.
- We have been working with Defra and the Scottish Government to consider AWC's conclusions and recommendations, as well as research by Scotland's Rural College on new prototype devices. We are seeking consistent policy across GB to achieve the highest welfare outcomes for lambs.

## Welsh Government outreach and communication campaigns

We have published seasonal and topical material and supported wider animal welfare campaigns including livestock worrying, caring for pets and livestock in extreme weather and responsible pet ownership.

Our presence at the Royal Welsh Show 2023 centred on responsible pet ownership and sought to engage members of the public through a range of activities and the provision of information leaflets and child-friendly education materials. Working alongside Animal Licensing Wales, we covered subjects such as choosing the right dog breed for your circumstances, illegal dog breeding, enforcement, and responsible ownership.

As part of this campaign, we published dedicated web pages on [responsible dog ownership](#) and [responsible cat ownership](#). We worked with our third sector colleagues to signpost to relevant material, including Dogs Trust, Blue Cross, the RSPCA, and Cat's Protection.

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