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# Scoping Research on the Sourcing of Pet Dogs From Illegal Importation and Puppy Farms 2016-17



AGRICULTURE, ENVIRONMENT AND MARINE



# SCOPING RESEARCH ON THE SOURCING OF PET DOGS FROM ILLEGAL IMPORTATION AND PUPPY FARMS 2016-2017

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# Executive Summary

## Background and context

Dogs are the most popular companion animals in the UK<sup>1</sup>; for many people, they offer companionship, support and a special emotional bond. For others, however, dogs are a lucrative source of income<sup>2</sup>. Evidence from key national and international animal welfare non-government organisations [NGO], supports stakeholder (such as the British Veterinary Association [BVA] 2014) concerns that the illegal and irresponsible puppy breeding and trade are escalating. Central to these concerns are the UK and international large-scale commercial breeders and the largely uncontrolled third party online traders who now appear to dominate the puppy trade: effectively creating a sea change in UK puppy trade.

The aim of this report is to present existing and new empirical evidence on the scale, nature and value of the illegal and irresponsible puppy trade, with a particular focus on the role of breeders, traders, consumers and enforcement agencies in the trade. We aimed to answer two central questions:

- What are the nature, extent and value of legal and illegal puppy sales in the UK?
- What improvements can be made at each part of the trade to help prevent the international illegal trade of puppies and unregistered puppy farms?

In order to answer these research questions and thus propose interventions and solutions to improve the status quo, a mixed-methods research design was employed consisting of a literature review, collection and analysis of 12 weeks of online puppy advertisement data in Scotland, data collection from Trading Standards Scotland and TRACES (the Trade Control and Expert System), 12 expert interviews, 53 stakeholder surveys and 40 focus groups including a total of 160 puppy owners.

## Prevalence and nature of the trade

The UK puppy trade is made up of legally regulated, legally unregulated, illegal and irresponsible breeding and sales. It is difficult to distinguish these different types of trade, thereby making it impossible to accurately quantify the scale of the UK puppy trade. Estimates of the value of the trade, the total numbers of puppies bred and sold, or the number of active breeders and sellers and those who are acting unscrupulously or illegally are problematic. A snapshot of the online trade found almost 1,500 advertisements of puppies for sale in Scotland from seven websites over a 12 week period. This equated to at least 4,074 puppies estimated to be worth over £3.3 million with the average price per puppy £817.88. Extrapolating this amount to an entire year indicates the value of the puppy trade in Scotland is a conservative £13 million considering the snapshot only monitored seven websites.

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<sup>1</sup> According to the Pet Food Manufacturers' Association (2017) there are more UK households with dogs (24%) than any other pet.

<sup>2</sup> The IBF International Consulting (2015) report valued the EU trade in dogs and cats to be worth 1.3 billion Euro.

According to the empirical data, those profiting from the puppy trade are a mixture of individuals selling litters, hobby breeders, and small and large commercial enterprises. Across these groups, there are examples of good practice (such as complying with PAAG minimum standards, vetting perspective buyers), evidence of unscrupulous breeders and traders (for example, irresponsible breeding, rearing and sales practices) and illegal activities (such as importing commercial dogs as pets or using fraudulent passports). The irresponsible and illegal trade was identified across the UK, although the geographic location of each country resulted in different trends in each (for example, Wales and Scotland were the point of destination for trade from Ireland, while England receives trade from mainland Europe).

International trade through UK ports and trade facilitated through the internet were two areas identified in the data, which provide avenues for decreasing the irresponsible and illegal puppy trade and increasing the accuracy of data regarding the prevalence and nature of the trade. Both the existing literature and interviewees assert that further understanding of the prevalence and nature of the problem is essential in order to respond appropriately. This could be accomplished through the development of a process which collates and makes better use of available databases and more accurately records both the legal and known illegal trade. This would need to be widely accessible and shared between formal and informal agencies and stakeholders. Clarity on the value of the legal and illegal trade should assist enforcement agencies such as Local Authorities [LAs] to allocate appropriate resources to monitor and enforce the trade – the limitations of current resources were emphasised throughout the literature and the empirical data. Furthermore, puppy consumers present a critical opportunity for addressing the nature and prevalence of this trade. First time buyers and people acting on impulse or with limited research often inadvertently fuel and engage in the illegal and irresponsible trade. However, even conscientious consumers may purchase from unscrupulous traders due to the complex, fluid and grey nature of the market. Consumers would benefit from formal data (with sensitive information removed) being shared in the public domain. This would help to assist in educating consumers and stakeholders about the prevalence and nature of the irresponsible and illegal puppy trade, to enable them to circumvent these aspects of the trade.

## **Consumer behaviour in the trade**

The internet is the principal source of information, as well as the main conduit for consumers purchasing puppies. Interviewed consumers reported being overwhelmed and confused by the scale of the online trade, but nonetheless believed purchases through online advertisements to be more reliable and regulated than is the case. While the internet is the main conduit for the illegal and irresponsible trade, it also provides multiple opportunities for potential interventions. Both existing literature and interviewees suggest that formal regulation and monitoring (rather than the current ad-hoc approach or self-monitoring) of websites advertising puppies (and other live animals) for sale, will positively impact on consumers' and traders' behaviour. The Electronic Commerce (EC Directive) Regulations 2002 indicates that some level of regulation is required of all online

advertising sites, referred to within as an 'information society service', however, it is important to recognise that there are extensive limitations in regulating websites outside of the UK who can (and do) offer puppies for sale to UK consumers. The internet can facilitate a single 'go-to' website or web application to assist in improving consumer purchasing experiences and behaviour. This could entail accurate information about breeders/sellers, advice and support on how to purchase and raise a puppy, and an avenue to report suspicious sales. At present there are many websites (such as those provided by NGOs and government agencies) which provide assistance and advice and some online advertising agencies provide links to these, however, consumers were uncertain which one to use, especially when faced with conflicting information.

Overall, there is a need for wide-scale education on the irresponsible and illegal puppy trade. For example, the national curriculum provides opportunities to discuss animal welfare needs (such as the five freedoms) with young people, focus on responsible purchasing of puppies during these sessions would help educate the consumers of tomorrow. While schools and teachers could be encouraged to include this in their lesson plan, it is important to ensure such educational measures are evaluated to ensure they are influencing responsible purchasing and ownership. Both consumers and stakeholders referred to media programmes as a key source of their understanding of the illegal puppy trade. Thereby, consumer awareness can be enhanced through further campaigns involving the national press, social media, and TV programmes (such as soap operas and documentaries) with celebrity endorsements. These mediums must highlight the animal welfare and personal harms characteristic of the trade, the criminality involved in the trade and how to be a responsible consumer. Furthermore, informing consumers of their purchasing rights will help them to report illegal and irresponsible behaviour in the trade. It is essential for consumers to understand the significant consequences of the trade in order to motivate them to engage responsibly.

## **Responses to the trade**

Current responses to the illegal and irresponsible puppy trade consist of formal legislation and informal programmes undertaken by law enforcement, NGOs and other stakeholders. While some responses are UK-wide (such as the Pet Travel Scheme [PTS] and Operation Delphin) most formal regulation and informal programmes are individually focused on Scotland, England or Wales (or combination thereof – see page 14 for overview of relevant legislation). Both the existing literature and empirical data question the ability of current legislation and enforcement to respond to the aforementioned seachange in the puppy trade. These concerns are in part due to 'out of date' legislation (for example, The Pet Animals Act 1951) and inconsistencies between devolved sale and trade regulations. With regard to the latter, the puppy trade is not only a national, but an international problem, which would benefit from a united approach from within and without the UK. Weaknesses in one location (for example, the Irish and Northern Irish border) will negatively impact on the whole UK trade. The UK exit from the European Union provides an opportunity to review international legislation related

to the trade. The Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee (England) has recently commissioned a review of the regulations relating to companion animal welfare, including the breeding and sale of pets (House of Commons 2017). A similar review would be useful in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to identify regulations which need to be updated in line with changes to the nature of the trade. For instance, although the commercial sale of puppies is regulated in Scotland, England, Wales and Northern Ireland, both the literature and empirical data identifies this is not enforced with regard to online advertisements for sale, that is, there is little (or no) enforcement of non-licensed online traders. Although anyone selling puppies as a business requires a license (under the Pet Animals Act 1951), enforcement is usually focused on fixed premises. Online sales, according to the majority of interviewees, are not similarly monitored and enforced. Furthermore, online sellers are not currently required to provide their licensing details as part of their advertisement. According to DEFRA (personal correspondence) the ongoing review of the animal activities licensing system will update the licensing system in England and emphasise that online sellers are required to comply with these conditions – including providing licensing details on advertisements. A similar review across the UK would be beneficial. PTS regulations also provide openings for the illegal trade with regard to the number of dogs each person may accompany (up to five) and the limited traceability processes for dogs arriving from overseas. For example, while PTS requires dogs to be microchipped, the regulations do not require registration of the microchip, thereby preventing traceability. While compulsory microchipping and registration is regulated across the UK, each country authorises different database providers. There is a perception that a single centralised UK database (ideally feeding into an EU database) would facilitate a fuller movement recording system, of the sort that exists for cattle and sheep.

Animal welfare can be compromised at each stage of the trade, including post sale or seizure. Harms include, but are not restricted to, inappropriate breeding (sometimes to produce particular physical features), living and transportation conditions, health and behavioural problems and abandonment and euthanasia post purchase. In order for traders to cut costs, animal welfare is frequently sacrificed; profits are enhanced even when a large percentage of animals die as a result of these conditions. According to interviewees, informal responses to the trade often have the greatest impact on these welfare harms. Formal responses, in contrast, can inadvertently exacerbate welfare problems, for example, puppies can be ‘disposed of’ when seized, spend months in quarantine or years in kennelling facilities awaiting trial of their owners. Enhancing the welfare of victims of the trade must be central to the responses in place. Both the existing literature and empirical data identify the licensing and inspection of breeders and sellers as laissez-faire in most LAs, suggesting there is little protection for dogs involved and many opportunities for the development of unregistered puppy farms. Many LAs have experienced financial and staff cuts and do not have the resources necessary to prioritise inspections and/or investigations. In some areas, such as Scotland, NGOs assist formal agencies with enforcement – significant benefits have been identified where such multi-agency partnerships exist. While other partnerships – such as between DEFRA and some carriers at English ports – were viewed by respondents as ineffective. Prosecutions and sentencing using the current puppy trade



regulations were viewed as inadequate. The rewards available from engaging in the illegal trade are not consistent with the penalties in legislation, consequently they are unlikely to act as a deterrent. Furthermore, the number of convictions across the UK for puppy trade offences were believed to be inconsistent with the nature and scale of the illegal trade. Further use of legislation and sanctions, for example, focusing on tax evasion and organised crime, was believed to be a 'more robust' response to serious and frequent offenders. Finally, consumers, are pivotal in the puppy trade, in particular, responses must work to reduce the size of the market, through reducing consumer demand, enhancing consumer awareness and decreasing opportunities for illegal sellers to engage with consumers.

A detailed summary of recommendations arising from this report may be found at page 85.

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# Introduction

Dogs are the most popular companion animals in the UK (PFMA 2017); for many, they offer companionship, support and a special emotional bond. For others, however, dogs are a lucrative source of income (IBF International Consulting 2015). Evidence from key national and international animal welfare non-governmental organisations [NGOs]<sup>3</sup>, supports stakeholder (such as the British Veterinary Association [BVA] 2014) concerns that illegal and irresponsible puppy breeding and trade are escalating. Central to these concerns are the large-scale industrial and international commercial breeders now characteristic of the breeding industry and the third party online traders who dominate the UK puppy trade: effectively a sea change in UK puppy trade in the last decade.

With the introduction of the Pet Travel Scheme [PTS] in 2012 the requirements for travel with companion animals within the EU became cheaper and easier, whilst maintaining public and animal health. Commercial and non-commercial movement and trade of companion animals from EU countries has thereafter markedly increased (Dogs Trust 2014). Simultaneously, stakeholders have identified UK-bred puppies coming from large-scale legal and illegal breeding establishments. The development of 'industrial'-style puppy breeding establishments (also referred to as puppy 'farms' or 'mills', and canine commercial breeding establishments [CBE]) in the UK and abroad suggest that: first, legitimate and registered breeders cannot provide enough puppies to satisfy UK consumer demand; second, puppies have become a lucrative and vigorous commodity for trade – both nationally and internationally; and third, the nature of the trade has changed significantly, with fewer puppies now being sold from pet shops (less than 5 percent according to the RSPCA (2016)), with the majority now advertised online and then purchased in person or purchased from classified advertisements. Problems inherent in puppy breeding and sales are extensive and encompass all parts of the trade, including commercial breeding, selective breeding, online and international trade, and trade at markets and from third parties (Calder 2014).

The harmful consequences of these changes are widespread – impacting the breeding dogs, their progeny, animal health and welfare, dog traders, consumers, public health and the economy. Holzer (2009:2) identifies puppy mills as “by far, the most inhumane kind of dog breeding that exists today in the United States [US] and elsewhere in the world”. According to Yeates and Bowles (2017) the harms associated include poor care, poor mate-selections and non-compliance with laws designed to maintain a standard of animal welfare (Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006 and equivalent legislation in England and Wales) and minimise disease transfer (Balai Directive - Council Directive 92/65/EEC4). These harms cause animal welfare problems in the short term (for example, infectious disease) and in later life (for example, behavioural issues and inherited health disorders). Consequently, Burger (2014) and McMillan et al. (2011) found puppies raised in

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<sup>3</sup> For example, Dogs Trust 2014 and 2015; FOUR PAWS International 2013; International Fund for Animal Welfare [IFAW] 2012; PDSA 2016; Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals [RSPCA] 2016

<sup>4</sup> <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv%3AI12012>

these establishments are more likely to suffer from illnesses and be poorly socialised. According to an EU study, 42 percent of legitimate dog traders identified the illegal trade as the main threat to their business (IBF International Consulting et al. 2015).

The literature, providing evidence of the scale, nature and harms involved in the UK puppy trade, is detailed further in Appendix II. This literature identifies three types of UK puppy trade - a legal regulated trade, a legal unregulated trade (that is, those who breed less than five/three litters of puppies a year in England and Scotland/Wales and NI) and an illegal puppy trade. It is currently impossible to accurately estimate the scale of each category, as it is often difficult to distinguish one type from another. Trade is illegal if it breaches the regulations detailed in Table 1.

**Table 1: Summary of UK puppy trade legislation**

Types of Illegal Behaviour	Legislation Regulating Behaviour
Breeding more than five/three litters a year without a licence or excessively breeding bitches or selling puppies at less than eight weeks of age	Breeding of Dogs Act 1973 (England and Scotland); Breeding and Sale of Dogs (Welfare) Act 1999 (England and Scotland); Animal Welfare (Breeding of Dogs) (Wales) Regulations 2014; The Welfare of Animals (Dog Breeding Establishments and Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations (NI) 2013
Importing puppies from unregistered premises, and/or without the correct paperwork, treatment or transport conditions	Balai Directive 92/65/EEC
Travelling abroad with puppies under age, and/or without the correct paperwork, treatment or transport conditions Travelling with puppies under PTS with the intension of selling or transferring ownership	Regulation (EU) No 576/2013 on the non-commercial movement of pet animals; Non-Commercial Movement of Pet Animals Order 2011 (Amendment) Order 2014 Non-Commercial Movement of Pet Animals Order (Northern Ireland) 2011 (Statutory Rules of Northern Ireland)
Selling puppies without a sales licence	Pet Animals Act 1951; Licensing of Animal Dealers (Scotland) Regulations 2009; Pet Shop Regulations (NI) 2000
Selling puppies without appropriate identification	Microchipping of Dogs (England) Regulations 2014; Microchipping of Dogs (Wales) Regulations 2015; Microchipping of Dogs (Scotland) Regulations 2016; Dog Licensing and Identification Regulations (NI) 2012
Animal welfare requirements on the appropriate treatment and conditions in which dogs should be kept	Animal Welfare Act 2006 (England and Wales); Animal Health and Welfare Act (Scotland) 2006; Welfare of Animals Act (NI) 2011.
Failure to declare income from the puppy trade	Taxes Management Act 1970; Finance Act 2008; Customs & Excise Management Act (CEMA) 1979.
Fraudulently selling a puppy	The Consumer Rights Act 2015.

Other than requiring consumers to ensure the welfare of their puppies after purchase, consumer behaviour is not regulated. Consumer behaviour is key to the irresponsible and illegal nature of the current trade - specifically, without capricious and impulsive buyers demanding young 'fashionable' dogs, large-scale commercial breeding establishments and illegal trade would not be profitable. Adjustments to consumer demand will directly impact on the nature and scale of supply. In

response to consumer demand, NGOs and enforcement agencies have developed a number of initiatives and projects based on prevention, education and enforcement of the puppy trade. For example:

- The Kennel Club [KC] – Assured Breeder Scheme (see Case Study Box 7)
- PDSA – Paw report
- Dogs Trust – Generation Pup
- SSPCA and RSPCA - Operation Delphin's multi-agency partnership
- Pet Advertisement Advisory Group [PAAG] – Monitoring and advising online sales advertising companies
- Puppy Love – Online educational campaign

Consumer motivation to buy certain dogs and how they go about doing so has yet to be investigated in depth in the UK context. Consequently, this project has sought to explore consumer motivations and behaviours as a key step to identifying improvements to the puppy trade. Thereby, this research project set out to explore the following key questions:

1. What are the nature, extent and value of legal and illegal puppy sales in the UK?
2. What improvements can be made at each part of the trade to help prevent the international illegal trade of puppies and unregistered puppy farms?

## **Aim of the Report**

The aim of this report is to present existing and new empirical evidence on the scale, nature and value of the illegal and irresponsible puppy trade, with a particular focus on the role of breeders, traders, consumers and enforcement agencies in the trade. The report is divided into 4 parts. Part A introduces the research project and methodology employed to investigate the puppy trade. Part B presents the findings from the empirical research which unites the experiences and suggestions of key experts, stakeholders and consumers of the puppy trade. This section is presented broadly in line with the key issues identified in the literature review, which included i) the prevalence and nature of the puppy trade, ii) understanding consumer behaviour in the puppy trade, iii) regulation of the puppy trade, iv) the impact of non-compliance and non-regulation in the puppy trade, v) recommendations. Part C outlines the main conclusions of the report. Part D highlights the proposed recommendations and solutions for responding to the illegal and irresponsible puppy trade.

# Methodology

In order to answer the project questions and thus propose interventions and solutions to improve the status quo, a mixed-methods research design was employed. This section provides a brief summary of the research design (methods and sample).

## Methods

The research began by creating an annotated bibliography (see Appendix I) and a comprehensive literature review (see Appendix II). The materials reviewed included academic and grey literature from the UK, but also the wider European community and the US. From this previous research and consultations with the Scottish Government and the project steering committee (BSAVA, Dogs Trust, and the SSPCA) a multi-method approach was adopted to collect empirical data, a summary of which is provided in Table 2 and below:

**Table 2: Summary of Methods**

Stage	Method	Location	Outcome
1	Expert Interviews	UK and Ireland	12 Interviews with 14 participants
2	Online Advertisement Data	Scotland	12 weeks, 7 websites
3	Economic Data	Scotland, England and Wales	TRACES and Trading Standards interview
3	Stakeholder Survey	Scotland*	53 participants
4	Consumer Focus Groups	Scotland, England and Wales	40 focus groups, 160 participants

\*a small number of respondents were based in England.

1. The expert interviews asked a small selection of experts (n = 12) to comment on the nature, extent and value of the illegal puppy trade and possible ways of reducing this trade (see Appendix III for the interview schedule). The experts were identified as those persons who have specialist knowledge and/or direct experience in responding to the puppy trade. These included interviews with six NGOs, two veterinarians, three government employees and a breeding standards organisation.
2. Simultaneously, from October 2016, seven key websites (Craigslist, Dogs & Puppies UK, Epupz, Freeads, Gumtree, Pets for Homes and Pets Viva Street), advertising puppies online in Scottish localities were monitored for 12 weeks. All advertisements in Scotland were recorded, with the following data collected whenever possible: website name, local authority location, breed, number in the litter, sex of the puppies, price per puppy and in total, phone number, name of the seller, KC registered, Local Authority [LA] registered and any other information. Not all advertisements contained all of this information (name of the seller was frequently not given) or were not specific

enough (no information related to KC or LA registration). The number in the litter and the sex of the puppies were also not always clear. In advertisements where 'pups' plural were advertised, but there was not a specific number given, we assumed there were at least two – one male and one female. Since we used two puppies as the standard in the cases with not enough information, it is likely that our recorded number of total puppies for sale in the 12-week period monitored is lower than the actual number that were for sale.

3. To supplement the online advertisement data and to further understand the economics of the puppy trade, we also requested data regarding trade of puppies from the Animal and Plant Health Agency [APHA] TRACES database and from Trading Standards Scotland. TRACES (the Trade Control and Expert System) is a European network linking veterinary authorities and commercial entities, by electronically tracking the movement of live animals and animal products for which veterinary health certificates are issued. The data found in TRACES can only provide insight into legal movement of dogs for commercial purposes and identified transgressions within this trade. Trading Standards Scotland is the agency tasked with taking complaints should purchasers of puppies feel that there is something wrong with the purchase and/or seller.
4. Subsequently, an online survey was designed to capture the wealth of experience and insights from key stakeholders. Predominantly, this included people working in a related field (for example, dog walkers, groomers, trainers, boarders and veterinarians) in order to learn about their experiences of dealing with consumers and their puppies who may have come from irresponsible or illegal sources (see Appendix IV). To distribute the survey, we created a database of all those professionals in Scotland found through a Google search and recorded their contact information. We emailed over 400 individuals and organisations the link to the survey. Additionally, the survey was advertised in the newsletter of the British Small Animal Veterinary Association [BSAVA] in January of 2017 reaching several thousand veterinarians.
5. Drawing upon the economic and online advertisement data, expert interviews and online survey, we also undertook consumer focus groups aimed at people who were thinking of buying a puppy or who had bought a puppy within the last two years. Forty focus groups were conducted: 20 in Scotland, 16 in England and 4 in Wales. Nine of these focus groups were conducted online (from a range of locations). For Scotland, we chose our focus group locations based upon the highest amount of online advertisements taking place in combination with areas of higher population. For the focus groups in England and Wales, we based our location selection on the literature, population centres and guidance from the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA). In order to recruit participants in the 40 locations, the final question in the survey asked if people were interested in participating in focus groups. We emailed or telephoned over 400 professionals from the aforementioned stakeholder database to ask for their help in recruiting their customers.

A Facebook page (fb.me/puppyresearch) was created explaining and advertising the project, which was used to engage with key stakeholders and their clients online and was used to promote the focus groups to a cross-section of the population. The Facebook page was shared by key NGOs, community interest groups and professionals through a variety of social media outlets. By the 15<sup>th</sup> of March 2017 the Facebook page had reached 108,000 people and had been engaged with 2,000 times. The page was also used as a platform to raise awareness of the issues in the puppy trade. Interested participants could contact the research team through Facebook, Twitter, email and a dedicated research mobile phone. Posters and flyers detailing this contact information were sent to organisations and businesses willing to help. For example, flyers were sent to nine branches of the PDSA for them to advertise the research and focus groups in their clinics. The focus groups facilitated discussions around how consumers choose their specific dog (that is, breed, age, gender), where they located information and guidance prior to purchase, their experience when purchasing and their suggestions about how to improve buying (see Appendix V for a more detailed focus group guide).

An overview of participant sample and demographics is provided in Table 3.

**Table 3: Summary of Participant Demographics**

Method	Participant Details
Expert Interview	12 interviews with 14 experts from key agencies across the UK: 6 interviews with national NGOs. 4 interviews involved government bodies responsible for enforcing the puppy trade, 2 interviews involved veterinarians, one of whom was also an adviser for an international micro-chipping database provider.
Online Survey	53 respondents predominantly from Glasgow <sup>5</sup> : 15 (30.6%) identified as 'other' indicating they were owners, behaviourists, veterinary nurses and staff of rescue centres 13 (26.5%) dog walkers/carers 11 (22.4%) veterinarians 9 (18.4%) trainers 1 (2.1%) breeder 0 dog groomers
Focus Group	Focus groups conducted in Scotland (20), England (16) and Wales (4): 160 participants - Scotland (70), England (72) and Wales (14). Average focus group involved four, however, five focus groups involved only one person. 25 conducted face-to-face 15 conducted over the phone, online or through written communication. Mostly female (n = 119) and aged over thirty <sup>6</sup> . Lower representation of those aged 29 and under <sup>7</sup> .

<sup>5</sup> Presumably, most respondents were from Glasgow as it is the largest city in Scotland and had the most stakeholders.

<sup>6</sup> The limited number of males as focus group participants can be explained by the fact that many of the female owners purchased a dog with their male partners. However, the female owner was more likely to lead in the search and purchase and thereby choose to represent the couple in the research.

<sup>7</sup> We expected to have a higher portion of younger consumers as the research was advertised extensively on social media. It is not possible to identify how representative the sample is of the overall puppy consumer population.



## Research Limitations

While the experts consulted for this research came from a range of professions, the purposive sample is small and was identified through availability and snowballing sampling, consequently, the findings should be read to represent the values and experiences of a small number of experts. Furthermore, as half of the experts represented animal welfare NGOs, the findings emphasise NGO viewpoints and perspectives. Both the survey and the focus groups are limited by selection bias. It is likely that only those people concerned about dog welfare chose to participate. While our focus groups involved a wide range of consumers of the puppy trade – those who bought through ‘assured’ breeders, registered breeders, friends, backroom breeders, online traders and illegal traders - those who had inadvertently or purposefully bought puppies from irresponsible and/or illegal sources were underrepresented in our sample. Participation was voluntary and due to the sensitive and emotional nature of the topic, those who engaged with questionable actions or who experienced the death of their puppies were less keen to participate. That is not to say our participants had no experiences with the darker side of the puppy trade, but in general we did not reach a significant portion of puppy consumers who have experienced the darkest side of the puppy trade. Despite these limitations, the data collected provide a useful insight into the influences on and buying patterns of consumers and evidences that behavioural change is required across the spectrum of buyers.

## Findings

The following section provides an overview of the findings generated from analysis of the online and economic research, expert interviews, stakeholder survey, and focus groups data. The analysis is presented in line with the research aims and the key areas identified in the literature review as outlined above. Findings are collated from each data source to provide a discussion on the:

- prevalence of the puppy trade
- nature of the puppy trade
- consumer behaviour in the trade
- regulation of the trade
- impact of the trade

Quotations from experts, stakeholders and focus group participants are provided to evidence the findings (see italicised text), these are distinguished in the text

through the following key: expert interviews [EI], stakeholders survey [SS], focus group [FG]. At the end of each section a summary of the suggestions made by interviewees, focus groups and survey respondents is provided.

## Prevalence

### Legal and Illegal Trade

All experts identified the lack of accurate data on both the legal and illegal trade as problematic. Although there are many sources of data available, most are based on estimates, which reside with a variety of agencies, who do not share their data. Consequently, a complete picture of the trade is not available. Furthermore, both experts and consumers in the trade find it difficult to distinguish the legal and illegal trade. As such, we cannot rely on recorded offences, prosecutions or victim complaints' data, as these are seen to significantly underreport the problem. There is, according to some experts, often little to separate the legal and illegal trade, which makes identifying the prevalence of either impossible. Partially, this confusion relates to current regulations, which are perceived to compromise the welfare of the dogs involved (e.g. through industrial-sized breeding establishments and irresponsible breeding, which results in inherited diseases and disorders), with some illegal traders reportedly providing better standards of care and consideration for their dogs.

*“It’s often very difficult to distinguish between what’s legal and what’s illegal... just because they give you a licence doesn’t mean to say that you’re legal. What that means is you’ve got a piece of paper that says you’ve got a licence but it doesn’t mean to say that you’re not compromising welfare” [E12].*

*“There’s not been a single puppy farm that we’ve gone into that hasn’t been in breach of the Animal Welfare Act or the old 1973 act, the Breeding of Dogs. Not one, and we’ve been in unlicensed farms that have been far, far better conditions than licensed farms, so, you know, you put them all together, throw them up in the air and what comes down, there’s not a fig to pick between them” [E16].*

This issue was echoed by focus group participants:

*“I mean, I don’t know what the legal definition of a puppy farm is but to me, this is a mass production of puppies and, you know, maybe the puppies aren’t ripped off the mum too early but it doesn’t look ethical or responsible to me” [FG13].*

Consequently, two NGO experts concluded that:

*“I wrestled for a while ... is this just about documentation? Is this really just about dogs that don’t have the necessary documentation? But what I actually found was once I’d looked into it, the industry, the industry is built on the foundations of compromising dogs, bitches and pups from start to finish and there is significant and very, very serious animal health issues throughout the whole industry, and that’s why I have no issues or confusion at all about the [NGO organisation] dealing with this” [E11].*

Experts concur that an accurate assessment on the scale and nature of the trade (both legal and illegal) is currently impossible. Developing accurate means to record the trade was identified as the first requirement in responding to the trade. As one Government agent noted:

*The councils ... a lot of them are completely unsighted as to just the scale of what is a multi-million pound industry under their nose [E14].*

Without accurate data on the trade, experts noted various sources that provided partial estimates on the scale and value of the trade, trade offences and related harms. The following sources of information on the trade were identified:

- Trading Standard’s data, which includes consumer complaints,
- Local Authorities’ licensing and complaints databases,
- HMRC’s breeder/trader tax records, tax offences and intelligence database,
- TRACES international commercial imports database,
- APHA’s rabies or other animal health-related risk information,
- KC registrations, sales and complaints databases,
- Commercial Organisation (e.g. transport) client databases,
- Microchip and Insurance companies’ client databases,
- Royal Veterinary College [RVC] national database recording clinical codes of animal illness,
- Various websites’ online advertisements,
- NGO surveys and client databases,
- DEFRA and Border Forces’ seizures and offences.

These data are crucial in estimating the prevalence and nature of the trade. For example, through HMRC intelligence data, one expert was able to confirm *“the HMRC is satisfied that there is a credible risk of Tax Evasion within the puppy/kitten breeding and selling industry”* [E10]. The RVC database can identify trends and clinical significances of health conditions associated with the puppy trade across the UK [E11]. The KC registrations database can clarify how many breeders should be LA registered, while the LA database confirms how many breeders are registered and the number of complaints and non-compliance issues identified. NGO surveys and databases are also of value as they provide prevalence data from professionals (for example, *“79% of veterinary professionals report they’ve seen an increase in the number of pets imported from abroad...in the last 12 months. 89% report they’ve seen an increase in pet sales from adverts from the*

internet in the last 2 years”) and consumers (for example, “50% would get a pet from an online advert on a classified website”) [E11]. The same NGO expert used the data available to estimate annual UK sales of between 800,000 and 1.3 million puppies [E11]. Others suggested the organised nature of the illegal puppy trade must be considered when estimating the trade. For example, one suggested it was now similar in scale to the drugs trade:

*R - So do you get a sense, then, of the scale of the problem?*

*P - It's huge. It's the new drugs money. It's that big.*

*R - So you think that the puppy trade is now on the scale of the drugs trade, essentially?*

*P - Yes. It's taking it over... [E16]*

One NGO Inspector emphasised that when legislating for the trade 12 years ago the regulations did not provide for this kind or scale of trade. That there has been a significant increase in the scale of the legal and illegal trade was supported by all experts. While there are many variables which will influence the scale and nature of the trade - including the future impact of ‘Brexit’ on the soft Irish border - consumer demand was identified repeatedly as the cause of this increase due to the UK not producing “enough of the right sorts of puppies” [E12] and “a shortage of good quality French bulldogs” [E16].

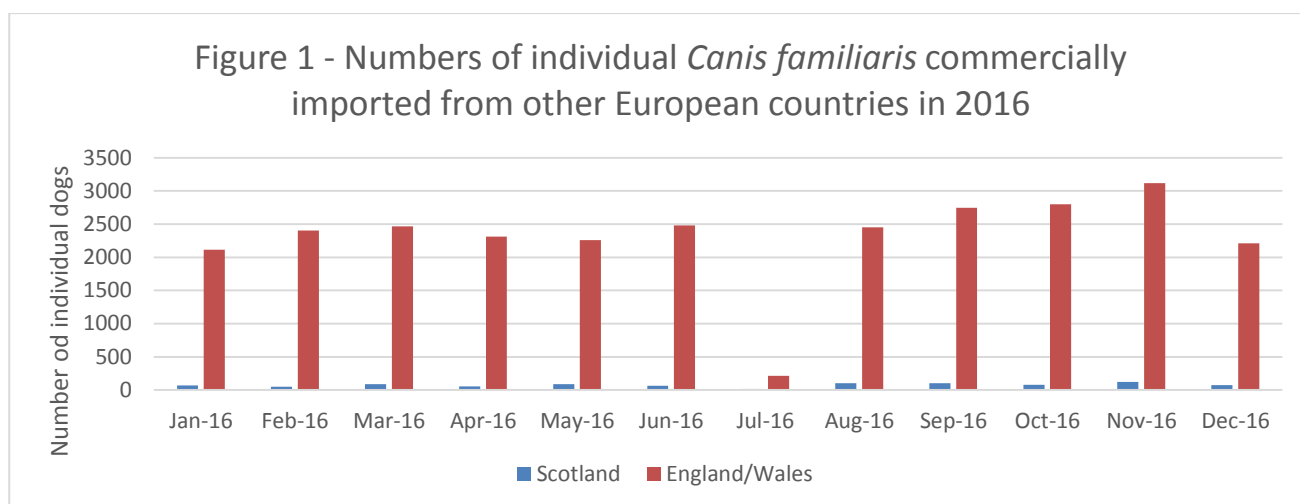
Respondents to the online survey provided a snapshot on the prevalence of the trade across Scotland, based on practitioners’ engagement with consumers:

- A majority felt the illegal puppy trade (Illegal imports, exports and breeding – Question 6) was a problem in their locality – 21 people (42.9%) agreed and 19 (38.8%) strongly agreed.
- A majority also indicated (Question 7) that illegal imports for the whole of Scotland in the last year had increased (16/32.7%) or significantly increased (14/28.6%). In the last five years, illegal imports were also thought to have increased (14/28.6%) or significantly increased (21/42.9%) (Question 9).
- In terms of illegal breeding (Question 8), 17 respondents (34.7%) felt it had increased in the whole of Scotland over the last year and 12 people (24.5%) felt it had significantly increased. Question 10 asked about illegal breeding in the last five years and again a majority of respondents said it had increased (13/26.5%) or significantly increased (17/34.7%).
- Thirty per cent of respondents were unable to identify an increase or decrease of illegal importing and breeding (Questions 7-10). Likewise, most (30/61.2%) could not estimate the number of puppies smuggled into their local area, though 11 people (22.4%) said it was over 250 puppies (Question 11).
- When asked how often respondents were concerned that a puppy they were working with may have been smuggled (Question 14), a majority of the responses indicated that this was a concern either at least monthly (15/30.6%) or at least quarterly (15/30.6%). Only one person responded this was a daily concern.

- In terms of illegal breeding (Question 15), again, at least monthly (15/30.6%) and at least quarterly (13/26.5%) were the majority answers.
- Respondents were also asked (Question 12) what percentage they thought of illegally imported puppies goes undetected. Twenty-four (45%) and 13 (26.5%) respondents felt it was 75 percent or between 51 and 75 percent respectively.

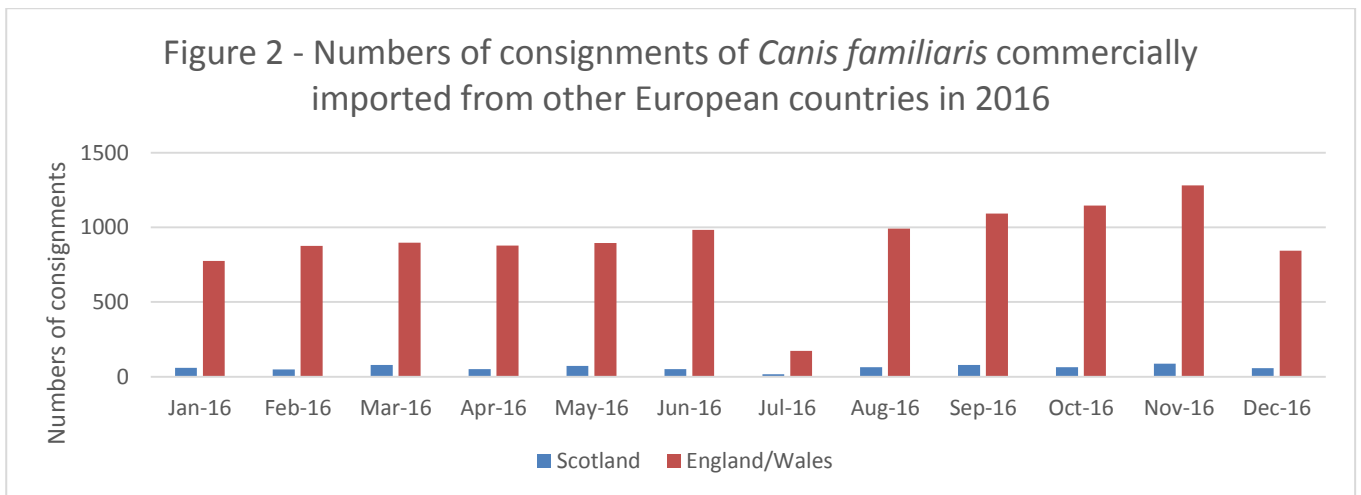
### **Legal Commercial Imports**

The TRACES database provides some information about the legal commercial importation of dogs. Figure 1 below shows the number of individual *Canis familiaris* (pet dogs) that were brought into England, Scotland and Wales in 2016 for commercial purposes (these figures include organised “rescue” of dogs by NGOs) and therefore does not include dogs brought through the Pet Travel Scheme [PTS]<sup>8</sup>. The data do not indicate the age or breed of the dog, or any further information, so there is no way to know if they are puppies or rescue dogs. The total number of dogs imported to Scotland was 909 whereas 27,564 dogs were imported to England and Wales. The number of consignments is also recorded as seen in Figure 2. Seven hundred and thirty one consignments were imported to Scotland and 10,827 into England and Wales.



Source: TRACES database

<sup>8</sup> The Pet Travel Scheme regulates the movement of companion dogs (and other animals) between EU member states. It was updated in the UK in 2012.



Source: TRACES database

Table 4 breaks down the European countries from where the dogs were exported. Romania is the highest (10,812 dogs; 3,112 consignments) followed by Ireland (8,737 dogs; 2,970 consignments). APHA shared that 47 of the consignments to Scotland were deemed unsatisfactory. According to APHA (personal communication), unsatisfactory means the consignment was non-compliant, which could be for a variety of reasons. There might be errors on the health certificate of the dogs, the dogs may not have complied with the relevant animal health trade requirements, or the importer may not have notified APHA of the import 24 hours prior to the consignments arrival in the UK (which is a violation of the correct import procedures).

**Table 4: European countries exporting dogs to England, Scotland and Wales**

Country	Consignment	No.	Country	Consignment	No.	Country	Consignment	No.
Bulgaria	72	389	Finland	4	4	Malta	5	5
Switzerland	5	5	France	6	28	Netherlands	18	127
Cyprus	2335	2716	UK	3	5	Poland	94	377
Czech	21	27	Greece	87	106	Portugal	8	141
Germany	4	4	Croatia	126	182	Romania	3112	10812
Denmark	1	1	Hungary	365	1803	Slovenia	5	6
Estonia	1	1	Ireland	2970	8737	Slovakia	7	29
Spain	2303	2948	Italy	6	20			

Source: TRACES database

### Data availability and reliability

Experts also cautioned the use of available data, identifying errors and problems in the reliability of this data. For example, one expert indicated that when the Irish government trade database indicated approximately 3,000 puppies were being transported commercially to the UK, he was able to “*directly follow over 52,000 pups to the UK every year and that was the ones we knew about*” [EI5]. Similarly,

Trading Standards Scotland recorded 118 puppy farming and puppy health complaints between November 2015 and 2016 [E11], a figure significantly lower than would be expected given the estimated scale of the illegal and irresponsible puppy trade. In the absence of reliable and complete information, stakeholders and consumers use a variety of sources to inform their understanding of the trade. For example, while online stakeholders responding to the survey, for the most part, felt they were reasonably well (20/40.8%), well (14/28.6%) or very well (10/20.4%) informed (Question 4), their knowledge on prevalence and nature (Question 13) is a mixture of anecdotal and evidence-based information (34/70.8%). Their knowledge stemmed from the media, research they had read, informal communication with colleagues, information from membership in professional bodies or networks, and from owners of illegally bred or traded puppies, amongst other sources (Question 5). Although the benefits of data sharing among agencies was echoed by all experts, there are currently many barriers to doing so: “*there are sensitivities so I think there is naturally, although it’s frustrating, a bit of reluctance to share data*” [E12]. This expert also provided an example of how international trade and related offences are underreported and under recorded, due to the reliance on commercial organisations to enforce regulations at the borders:

*...as you know Euro Tunnel by far carry the most dogs across from mainland Europe. There has been a change in staff there and what we’ve noticed as a result of that is the reports coming in from Euro Tunnel have dropped off, so it’s very much been dependent on personal relationships. And that’s a huge worry because I don’t believe it’s dropped off that much particularly like I say, with the gains to be made and given that we’re building up to Christmas, I just think they’re not being picked up so there’s a big issue there* [E12].

Any estimates on the scale of the trade provided herein must be considered with the above limitations in mind.

## Value of the Trade

Through the analysis of online advertisement data over a 12-week monitoring period for this project, 1,497 advertisements in Scotland were identified. Approximately 4,074 puppies were for sale. The total value of the puppies advertised is estimated to be a minimum of £3,332,073.00, with the approximate average cost of a puppy estimated at £817.88. Over 25 percent of the advertisements were for four small or toy breeds (see Table 5 page 33). Extrapolating these figures to cover a full year suggests an approximate minimum of 17,680 puppies being advertised for sale, with a total value of approximately £13 million. It should be kept in mind that the period reviewed may not reflect other quarters due to the apparent increased scale of advertising prior to Christmas. However, it is also the case that where information was not fully available (e.g. price or number of puppies) estimations were purposely minimal to avoid over-inflating sales volumes and values. It was not possible to determine what portion of

the trade is illegitimate. However, the analysis demonstrates the viability of the trade in Scotland alone, and the profits available for willing offenders.

The value of the trade was an important consideration for each expert – with examples provided of offenders earning a couple of thousand in one trip smuggling puppies from Ireland, to £26,000 bringing in 12 puppies from Eastern European countries using the PTS (and smuggling others in the same vehicle), to in excess of £100,000 earned annually bringing in five puppies a week using PTS. Overall the profits available to offenders are considerable:

*I know the figures that have been presented to PAAG by HMRC are phenomenal - dogs, you know, puppies being traded to thousands of pounds, so it's certainly not a small financial commitment for people [E11].*

Consequently, the value of the trade was compared with and linked to other organised illegal trade, by the experts:

*And the trade has moved on as well, because it's not just for profit from the pups, what you're getting is you're getting serious and organised criminals that are using the puppy trade as a way to launder the proceeds of conventional criminality. So if you're importing drugs or selling guns or doing whatever and you've got all these, what used to be tanning studios or nail bars or whatever, they're now using the front of selling pups. So when they do get detected and they've got X amount of hundreds and thousands in the bank they say that they've earned that money from puppy trading, but in actual fact it's from the conventional criminality [E14].*

So whilst the exact value of the illegal and irresponsible puppy trade remains an unknown, our evidence suggests that it is prevalent and highly lucrative trade, which warrants further research and targeted interventions.

### **Summary of Respondent Suggestions regards the Prevalence of the Trade**

1. Develop a process to accurately record the legal and the known illegal trade, which facilitates cross-agency data sharing between formal and informal agencies. This approach could initially be piloted at the regional level.
2. Provide anonymised formal data (e.g. HMRC, LA) for the public domain to help educate consumers and stakeholders on the nature and scale of the trade.
3. Review regulations which oversee the puppy trade to ensure the legal and illegal trade are discernible and provide clarification on these to stakeholders and consumers.

## **Nature**

Experts suggested failures to legislate and regulate the legal trade appropriately (discussed in Suggestions below) facilitates and encourages the illegal trade. Furthermore, this provides a crossover between the nature of the legal and illegal



trade. This can occur due to loopholes - for example, as mentioned above, under PTS it is legal to bring up to five dogs with you to the UK from abroad. Consequently, three people in one vehicle can transport up to 15 dogs, but is not identified as commercial trade. Although this falls within the letter of the law, the transportation of 15 dogs is likely to be for commercial purposes and is clearly inconsistent with the spirit of the law. Furthermore, in licensing UK breeders, after the initial inspection, regulation is neither consistent nor certain according to the experts, which exposes dogs to harms similar to, or in some cases worse than the illegal trade:

*These dogs, these animals need human interaction and then nobody goes near it for another year, by which time, all the nice wee fancy beds are all returned to wherever they were borrowed from and the dogs are on sawdust. It's all an illusion at the beginning...we know that when annual inspections come round for the re-licensing, they're pre-announced, so things are, in some cases, tidied up, overstock are moved out and hidden. It all goes on [in the legal trade] [E16].*

The problems identified in the illegal trade are not, according to the experts, specific to Scotland or the UK more generally, it is a European-wide issue: “we are secretariat for XXX<sup>9</sup>, so we have members from most EU member states, over 60 members now from across the EU and again, they're experiencing these issues as well” [E12]. In terms of the nature of the puppy trade, it is important to distinguish the domestic UK trade from that from abroad.

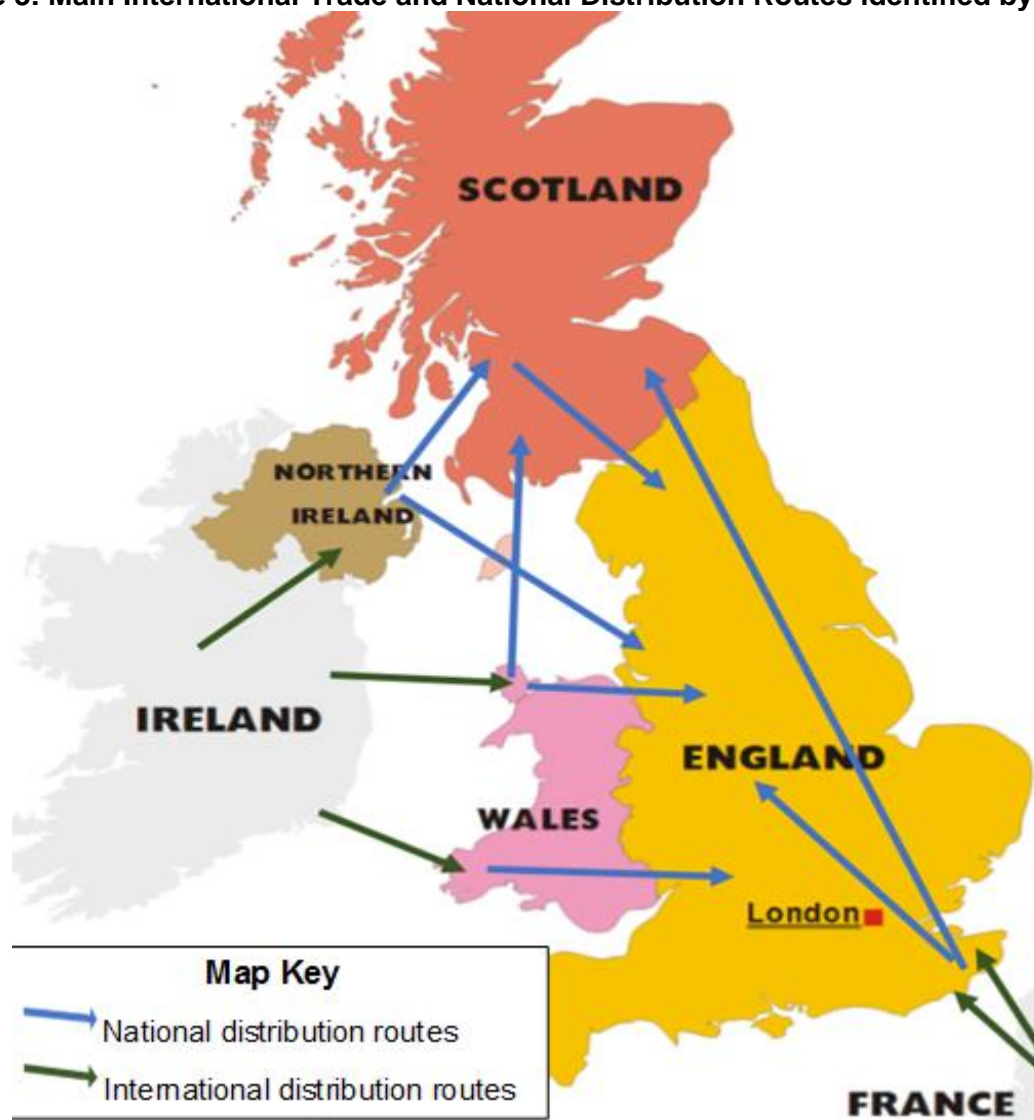
## Imports

The key overseas trade routes identified by experts are detailed in Figure 3. These include ports in England (that is, Dover and the Channel Tunnel) for Central and Eastern European trade and ports in Wales (Holyhead, Fishguard/Pembroke) and the border in Northern Ireland (across the border) for Irish trade. While there was some mention of mainland European trade also coming through Ireland to avoid enforcement elsewhere, this was seldom identified in practice. However, one veterinary expert expressed his concern that this illegal trade could escalate as a result of the UK leaving the EU – as the Irish border becomes the ‘soft’ option for puppies traded from mainland Europe to the UK. Specific breeds were linked to different entry points – “all your bull breeds are coming from eastern Europe, French bulldogs and the like, and all your cockapoos, cavapoos, cavachons; they're all coming from Irish puppy farms” [E14].

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<sup>9</sup> Organisation name removed to ensure anonymity.

Figure 3: Main International Trade and National Distribution Routes identified by Experts



Puppies entering the UK at these points are then distributed across the country to key locations, predominantly large cities linked to the national trade, as detailed in Figure 3. Consequently, puppies entering Scotland and England may be arriving from Ireland or mainland Europe. While puppies entering Northern Ireland and Wales, in the main, have arrived from Ireland.

The surveyed stakeholders understanding of how illegal puppies enter Scotland was consistent with the expert testimony. Their answers are relevant to the UK as a whole (Question 19), suggesting there are cross-country distribution networks in place. The ferry from Northern Ireland to Scotland was identified as the main route (41 respondents) with other routes being ferries from Ireland to Scotland (39 respondents) [although there are currently no direct ferries from Ireland to Scotland], ferries from the continent to England (35 respondents), from Ireland to Wales and through the Channel Tunnel. Although not identified by the experts, (Question 19a), survey participants indicated that planes from Eastern Europe were also routes of smuggling.

Experts explained that the nature of these distribution networks has changed as the trade has become more organised and sophisticated.

*So puppies are basically coming in from Central and Eastern Europe, but that's your starting point, but these puppies will be distributed right across the country. The individuals involved are becoming very clever... Certainly we're aware that some of the service stations down in Kent are being used for the transfer of puppies, not necessarily to owners, but you know, people bringing puppies across so they then start to... they're effectively using a distribution network to get them across the country [E12].*

For example, there has reportedly been a move towards consumers unknowingly 'preordering' puppies online prior to traders importing them from Eastern Europe, thereby, there is no need to hold or care for the puppies in the UK. Puppies, originally brought in from Ireland in a large variety of litters and then kept at a location until they were sold online, are now brought over with their mothers or show dogs or sent to UK owners of specific female breeds to hold and sell the puppies to members of the public:

*they're even bringing over show bitches, so you get a litter of pups with a bitch that's probably got nothing to do with the litter, so that if somebody visits your house you've actually got a west highland terrier bitch and west highland terrier pups. So every time you kind of close one angle they're finding another one [E14].*

This is in reaction to the recommendations from NGOs to consumers to view puppies with their mother and check for repeated mobile numbers online. Consistent with this change, our online advertisements analysis found little evidence of repeat sellers, with only 18 people likely to be repeat sellers based upon their contact details. As the information shared by sellers on the seven websites was inconsistent<sup>10</sup>, it is impossible to know with any accuracy about the selling patterns of individuals selling puppies through these sites.

Offenders were identified by some focus group participants, survey respondents and an interviewed expert by stereotypes such as "gypsy", "traveller" or "Irish traveller". Experts identified a range of offenders involved in the trade: a) non-compliant or "hobby" breeders who breed or trade dogs in excess of the regulations or fail to care for their welfare in accordance with the regulations, b) organised crime groups "who view pups as a low risk: high yield commodity" and c) "ancillary individuals who facilitate this trade in a number of ways – transportation of the animals for example" [E110]. These variations add to the difficulty in identifying the nature (and prevalence) of the illegal and legal trades. Those who are legitimate can easily become non-compliant, while those who purposefully smuggle and

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<sup>10</sup> It is important to note that the same seller is likely to be using alternative names, email addresses, and/or phone numbers to avoid being identified as a repeat seller by the website hosting his or her advertisements. Furthermore, an extended period of observation may have facilitated the identification of repeat sellers.

organise the illegal trade can use the legitimate trade to do so (e.g. laundering dogs).

Vans and other large vehicles (e.g. horse boxes) were identified by experts to be the common modus operandi to smuggle large numbers of puppies. Cars were also used, along with misusing the PTS scheme to 'legitimately' bring in five puppies and covertly smuggle others (e.g. in the spare wheel cavity in a car). Surveyed stakeholders' (Question 20) answers were also consistent with the experts; puppies were identified to be hidden in domestic vehicles (48 respondents) and hidden in business cargo (44 respondents). Respondents also indicated that PTS passports could be faked (33 respondents) and illegal puppies could be mixed in with legal puppies (27 respondents). In other cases, the puppies were said to enter the country with the correct PTS paperwork, but under the guise of personal pets, who were intended for sale. To avoid attention at the ports, more recently, an individual was identified bringing in puppies as a foot passenger with the intention of selling them in the UK. The modus operandi in the illegal international trade are diverse and fluid, with offenders rapidly adapting their procedures and transit routes in response to enforcement and consumer behaviour: "*Once we've closed a loophole they'll find another one*" [E14].

A crucial opportunity for enforcement occurs at the port; once in the UK it is more difficult for enforcement agencies to identify and respond to the trade:

*but once we get into the UK and start to trace things it can be very, very difficult, and quite often, unless they're actually stopped at the port, quite often we don't hear about a lot of these cases until the puppy's been taken to a vet or it's ended up in quarantine* [E12].

Consequently, the international trade seamlessly becomes part of the UK domestic trade. While the majority of experts focused on this international trade as of paramount concern, this was not to say the nature of the domestic trade is unproblematic. Rather, the international trade is directly linked to the issues identified in the domestic trade.

## Domestic Trade

Puppy farms and industrial-scale breeding establishments were identified by experts in the UK, linked to Wales and Northern Ireland respectively (one FG participant campaigns against several in the north-east of England [FG23]), but not Scotland:

*"What you would class as traditional puppy farms virtually do not exist in Scotland, it's mainly dealers bringing in other stuff"* [E14].

*"Well I'm not aware that we have any farm you know, puppy farms actually in our area... I'm pretty sure we don't have, because there's huge welfare issues there for the pups you know, there's constant breeding of dogs do you know"* [E13].

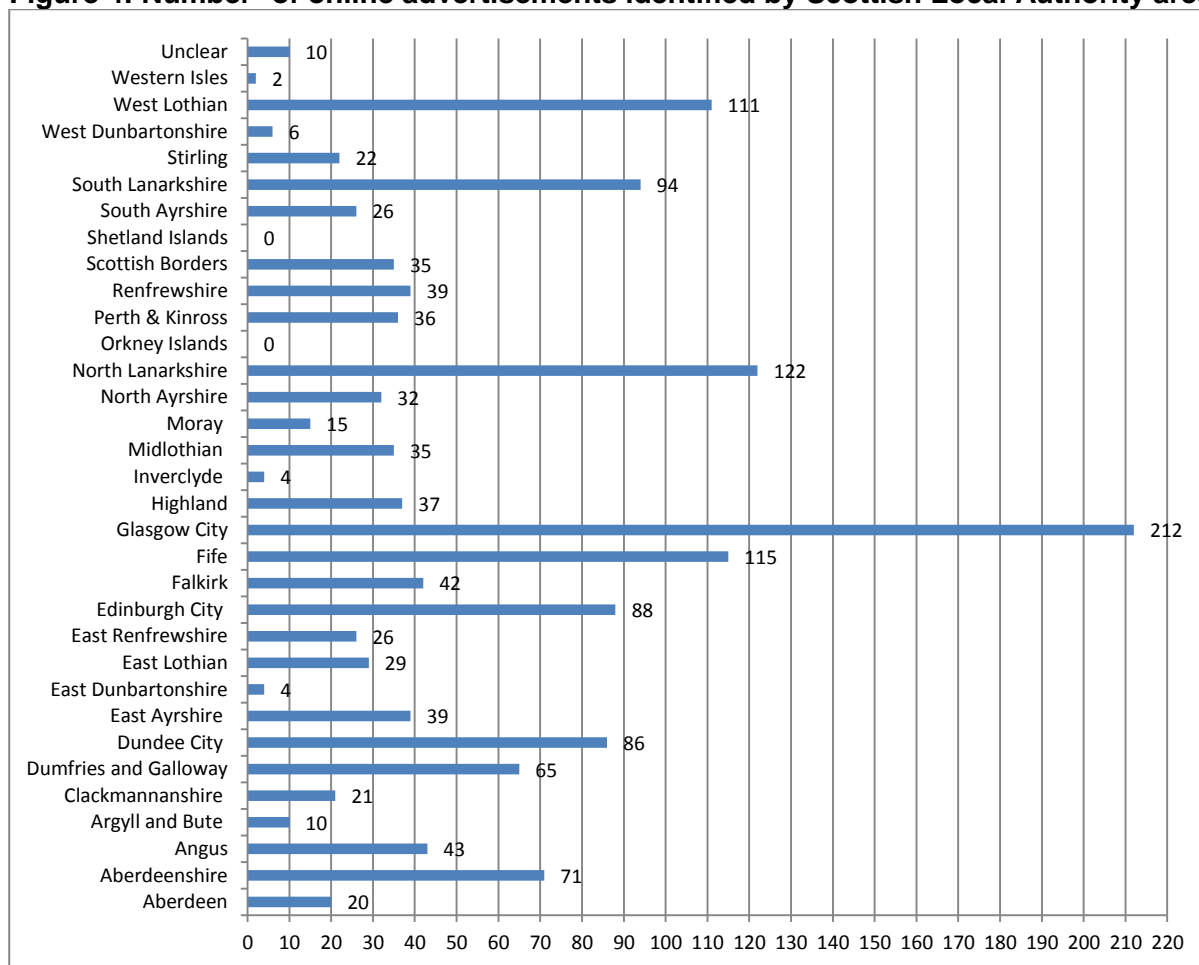
This is interesting as the majority of stakeholders in the online survey reported an increase or a significant increase in puppy farms (see above). This disparity may be due to experts and stakeholders defining ‘puppy farms’ differently, or because experts are more focused on the ‘bigger’ picture of the international trade. Nonetheless, experts recognised the nature of the domestic trade is problematic due to issues of registration, which involve breeding without a licence, breeding excessively and non-compliance with licence and welfare requirements. With specific regard to Scotland, puppy farms and traditional ‘pet shops’ were of less concern, rather the licensing and welfare conditions in which most puppies were bred were seen as inherently problematic as was the inability to licence and regulate all puppy sellers. This was repeated in the focus groups with many participants wanting stricter regulation to ensure appropriate welfare conditions. Interestingly, one expert suggested the domestic trade was not being enforced as it may impact negatively on the demand from the illegal international trade:

*“so if we work extensively on puppy farms, then potentially online trade might go up, and there might be more opportunities to smuggle in from perhaps Eastern European or Irish puppy farms”*  
[E11].

Stakeholders recognised both national and international illegal breeding establishments (Question 16), with Ireland identified as the top location (46 respondents) followed by Romania (37 respondents), Scotland (36 respondents) and Northern Ireland (35 respondents). Illegal suppliers (Question 17) were also thought to be predominantly from Ireland, England (43 respondents), Scotland (41 respondents), Wales (40 respondents) and then Northern Ireland (37 respondents). Interestingly, these respondents thought these suppliers were mostly part of an organised network (43 respondents), but some also acted opportunistically (30 respondents) and as part of their legitimate business (20 respondents). This again suggests a crossover between legal and illegal trade. One respondent commented that illegal suppliers are “*casual, ill-informed backstreet ‘breeders’*” (Questions 18 and 18a). In contrast, one LA expert indicated that one-off (accidental breeders) were not identified as a problem in complaints from consumers.

The internet was consistently referred to when discussing the modus operandi in the domestic trade, with all experts agreeing that it is the main vehicle for unscrupulous breeders and traders to advertise puppies. By way of a snapshot of the domestic trade in Scotland, the online monitoring of the puppy trade revealed puppies advertised for sale throughout Scotland. The only areas where no sellers were identified were the Shetland and Orkney Islands. The greatest numbers of advertisements were placed by sellers located in Glasgow, North Lanarkshire, Fife, West Lothian and South Lanarkshire respectively. The pattern appears to be that puppies in Scotland are sold in and around urban areas, particularly Glasgow. Figure 4 below presents details of the number of advertisements identified by LA area.

**Figure 4: Number\* of online advertisements identified by Scottish Local Authority area**



\*1,497 total advertisements of an approximate 4,074 puppies, over a 12-week period (Oct 2016) on seven websites.

A number of expert NGOs detailed how their analysis of the online trade helped identify the nature of the domestic trade. For example, one NGO was able to match advertisements from unscrupulous traders by comparing the contact details (for example mobile phones, images). Another indicated she watched for sales of specific breeds:

*I used to keep an eye on online ads, and because Bichons ... became a beacon for me so if ever I saw an ad for Bichons I would scrutinise them and ...I would find that Bichons weren't the only breed so this day I phoned up, I said, "I'd like to come and see the pups". "Which pups?" "Oh", I said, "Which pups have you got?" and you know, I got given a list [E16].*

### **Dogs in the Trade**

As previously discussed, experts identified the flexibility and changing nature of the trade. One notable change identified was the nature of the dogs involved. Pedigree dogs have always been desirable – “25 years ago then it probably was German shepherd, Rottweilers, Dobermans in terms of that sort of dog” [E12]. Current trends lean towards pedigree toy (e.g. French bulldogs) and fashionable crossbreeds; “until fairly recently over 70% of the puppies were bulldogs, French bulldogs, pugs, so all those popular breeds, closely followed by dachshunds” [E12]. Focus group

participants also commented on the changing nature of puppy buying - from people willing to wait for litters to be born of pure bred and working dogs, to people hastily buying 'designer dogs' from websites. Internet advertisement monitoring supported expert and consumer comments, with, as mentioned, the four most commonly advertised breeds being small or toy dogs (see Table 5 below). Over 25 percent of advertisements were for four breeds alone.

**Table 5: Most commonly advertised breed types\***

Breed Type	Number of advertisements for breed	Percentage of total advertisements (n = 1497)
French Bulldog	153	10.2%
Pug	88	5.9%
Bulldog	82	5.4%
Chihuahua	82	5.4%
Percentage of total advertisements advertising these four breeds		26.9%

\*1,497 total advertisements of an approximate 4,074 puppies, over a 12-week period (Oct 2016) on seven websites

Also popular, but less frequently advertised, breeds include:

- Labrador Retriever (n-54/3.6%)
- Yorkshire Terrier (n-51/3.4%)
- Border Collie (n-49/3.3%)
- Pomeranian (n-43/2.9%)
- Jack Russell Terrier (n-39/2.6%)
- Cocker Spaniel (n-35/2.4%)

A total of 31 (2.1%) adverts did not include clear information about breed. A total of 353 advertisements advertised non-pedigree and crossbreed dogs (23.5% of all advertisements). A wide variety of crossbreeds were identified, with the most common being 'fashionable crosses' such as 'cockapoos', 'chorkies', and 'labradoodles'. A total of 335 (22.4%) advertisements claimed the puppies for sale were KC-registered. Table 6 below presents details of the number of puppies for sale for the most commonly advertised breeds.

**Table 6: Number\* and percentage of the most popular breed of puppies advertised in relation to all puppies advertised**

Breed Type	Number of puppies of relevant breed advertised	Breed of puppy as a percentage of total puppies advertised (n = 1497)
French Bulldog	390	9.6%
Bulldog	279	6.9%
Pug	230	5.7%
Labrador Retriever	189	4.6%
Chihuahua	167	4.1%
Border Collie	163	4.0%
Jack Russell Terrier	161	3.9%
Yorkshire Terrier	130	3.2%
Cocker Spaniel	86	2.2%
Pomeranian	83	2.1%
Total	1878	46.3%

\*1,497 total advertisements of an approximate 4,074 puppies, over a 12-week period (Oct 2016) on seven websites

## Signs of the Illegal Puppy Trade

For many focus group consumers, the first indicator that their puppy had come from the illegal trade was when they did not receive the expected paperwork (KC registration and/or health checks of the parents) or when they visited their vet. Several focus group participants related experiences of taking newly purchased puppies to the vet soon after bringing them home because the puppy was poorly or to confirm the puppies' age, vaccinations, and micro-chip. Often a veterinarian was the first person to query the origin of the puppy:

*Many of the reports are sick puppies and the vet telling the buyer that what they have been told about the puppy is untrue. Some people don't report it because they think it is just a case of bad luck to get a sick puppy. They don't put two and two together that something was wrong with where they got the puppy from [E112].*

*Not always because they're ill or dying you know, they've been promised paperwork and they don't get it, or if they've been to the vet, their own vet to get boosters or whatever and the vet has said, "Well look, it's not the age it's supposed to be", or whatever, it's something that clicks you know, the bells ringing with them generally [E13].*

In order to help develop recommendations for consumers, a series of multipart questions (21, 22 and 23) in the online survey asked stakeholders what they felt were indicators at the buying stage that a puppy was from the illegal trade. In terms of seller behaviour, the most significant indicators were meeting the seller away from their home, not seeing the puppies' parent(s) and the seller selling several breeds of dogs (see Table 7). Focus group participants also seemed mostly aware that these were suspicious behaviours.

**Table 7: Signs of the illegal puppy trade identified by survey respondents**

<b>Question 21 – At the point of sale, are any of the items below a sign that a puppy has been illegally bred or traded?</b>	<b>Always a sign</b>	<b>Frequently a sign</b>	<b>Sometimes a sign</b>	<b>Rarely a sign</b>	<b>Never a sign</b>
The buyer is not able to see the puppies parent/s	21	24	4	0	0
The seller suggests meeting the buyer away from their home	24	23	2	0	0
The seller offers several breeds of puppy for sale	22	23	4	0	0
The seller mentioned a waiting list and/or planed future litters	2	9	20	13	5
Incomplete or no papers	15	21	12	1	0
The seller makes 'too many promises 'about the puppy (e.g. temperament, ultimate size, weight and health)	9	18	15	7	0
The seller does not request that the puppy is returned to them if the purchase does not work out	10	24	13	1	1

\*49 respondents



Upon observing the place where the puppies are living and the puppies themselves, the most important indicators of the illegal trade were the puppies appearing younger than the seller indicated, the puppies having parasites, being underweight and/or having a skin conditions.

A majority of our focus group participants were aware of an illegal trade, with some feeling well educated on the topic:

*I thought that it would just be one in every 20 breeders would be a puppy farmer but...it's more like one in three could potentially be a puppy breeder or smuggler [FG29].*

However, they thought many consumers were not aware, educated or choose to ignore the signs as their priority was simply to purchase a puppy. This was supported by a smaller portion of participants who admitted knowing very little about the illegal puppy trade. For example:

*I wouldn't have known. You would think everybody who wants to raise puppies does it out of love, but in a market that big, you've got people who are doing it just for money [FG14].*

*There is also an element of head in the sand, because it's so awful I don't want to know any more so I don't try and find any more [FG28].*

An expert similarly suggested that consumers do not want to know about these issues as they are too distressing; but "*how are [they] ever going to know what these animals are suffering? You have to look at it*" [E16].

As previously indicated, some focus group participants found it difficult to distinguish the legal versus illegal trade and so had little concrete understanding of the law. There was general awareness throughout the focus groups that, at the point of purchase, signs of illegality or irresponsibility were: not seeing the mother and to a lesser degree the father, puppies not socialising with their litter-mates, and obvious signs of being unhealthy or unclean (faecal stains, fleas, ticks, and matted hair). Yet others said:

*I wouldn't have said I knew what to look for, but I kind of realised that I'd probably have a gut feeling of what was right and what was wrong [FG1].*

Those who looked for signs of an illegal and irresponsible element to the puppy trade, knew of its existence from television documentaries, the news and charity information campaigns.

With regard to puppy smuggling specifically, stakeholders indicated the presence of diseases uncommon to the UK as well as having an uncommon vaccination record were significant signs, however, the description of the purchasing process by clients was the most telling information on the origin of the puppy (see Table 8).

**Table 8: Signs of illegal puppy smuggling identified by survey respondents**

<b>Question 23 – What are the signs a puppy has been smuggled?</b>	<b>Always a sign</b>	<b>Frequently a sign</b>	<b>Sometimes a sign</b>	<b>Rarely a sign</b>	<b>Never a sign</b>
Presence of a foreign microchip	7	25	10	4	1
Uncommon vaccination record	8	26	15	0	0
Presence of diseases/illnesses (e.g. parvovirus), suggesting poor welfare conditions	9	23	17	0	0
Presence of uncommon diseases or parasites to the UK	16	21	9	2	0
Owners description of purchase	14	24	9	2	0

\*49 respondents

Price was suggested by some focus group participants as one reason why other people do not do more research prior to purchase, as people simply looked for the cheapest puppy. Interestingly, cheap puppies were not viewed as a clear indicator of the illegal trade by most experts or stakeholders. While many consumers mentioned ignoring the cheapest puppies in an effort to avoid negative elements of the trade, paying a significant amount did not necessarily guarantee the puppy's origin or health. The summary of the costs for Kennel Club (KC) registered breeders, compared to their 'gold standard' Assured Breeder Scheme (ABS) provided by two experts [E18] provides some indication of the cost of breeding responsibly and the profits available from the illegal trade. Table 9 details the costs of breeding a litter (and cost per pup) of two popular dog breeds (with different health considerations and thereby health requirements). A KC registered Labrador and French Bulldog pup on average would cost £193 and £195 to breed, while an ABS breeder would spend £286 and £254 respectively. These figures, when compared to the approximate cost of a puppy from the research's online advertisement data - £817.88, provides some sense of the profits available for legal and illegal breeders.

**Table 9: Comparative costs of breeding KC registered and ABS registered puppies**

Breeder	Item	Cost (£)	
		ABS Member £ cost per litter	Non ABS Member £ cost per litter
Labrador [litter of 7 pups]	Required Health test - Hip x-rays	250	0
	Required Health test -BVA charge for scoring	115	0
	Required Health test - BVA/KC Eye test	40	0
	Recommended* Health test -DNA test – prcd-PRA	170	0
	Recommended Health test -DNA test – Elbow grading	63	0
	Puppies Vet check	50	0
	ABS Membership fee	60	0
	Litter registration [£14/£16 per pup]	98	112
	Advertising FAP service	0	20
	Microchipping [£20 per pup]	140	140
	Other (e.g. food/care) [it is not possible to accurately determine all the additional costs incurred by breeders, this figure is based on the puppy remaining with the breeder for 8 weeks, with an average dog costing £1000 per year for feed/care. There are likely to be higher costs for ABS than non-ABS due to the quality of food and improved care provided, so this figure should be seen as a conservative estimate for ABS members	1077	1077
	<b>Total £ per litter</b>	<b>2,003</b>	<b>1,349</b>
	<b>Total per puppy</b>	<b>286</b>	<b>193</b>

Breeder	Item	Cost (£)
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		<b>ABS Member £ cost per litter</b>	<b>Non ABS Member £ cost per litter</b>
French Bulldog [litter 4 pups]	Recommended Health test - BVA/KC Eye test	40	0
	Recommended Health test -DNA test – HC-HSF4	50	0
	Recommended Health test -DNA test – DM	50	0
	Participation in French Bulldog Club Health Scheme	35	0
	Vet check (for puppies)	30	0
	ABS Membership fee	60	0
	Litter registration [£14/£16 per pup]	56	64
	Advertising FAP service	0	20
	Microchipping [£20 per pup]	80	80
	Other (e.g. food/care) [it is not possible to accurately determine all the additional costs incurred by breeders, this figure is based on the puppy remaining with the breeder for 8 weeks, with an average dog costing £1000 per year for feed/care. There are likely to be higher costs for ABS than non-ABS due to the higher quality of food and improved care provided, thereby this figure should be viewed as a conservative estimate for ABS members	615	615
	<b>Total £ per litter</b>	<b>1,016</b>	<b>779</b>
	<b>Total per puppy</b>	<b>254</b>	<b>195</b>

\* Recommended tests are not optional, while registration is possible without them, compliance is monitored. Only these tests are specifically required for ABS. However, there are other recommended health tests, which may be conducted by ABS members, at an additional cost (for example, DNA tests – CNM (£48), EIC (£60), HNPk (£48), SD2 (£48) for Labradors).

The nature of the illegal and irresponsible puppy trade is varied and dynamic. It also blends into the legal trade, particularly at the domestic level, which makes it difficult to identify as well as to comprehensively characterise. It appears that a range of offenders are involved (i.e. legitimate businesses, registered breeders, hobby breeders, more organised crime groups) and thus a multi-faceted strategy to target these diverse strands is most likely needed.

## **Summary of Respondent Suggestions regards the Nature of the Puppy Trade**

1. The ports provide a crucial opportunity for enforcement as once puppies are in the UK it is more difficult for enforcement agencies to identify and respond to the trade, thereby enforcement at the ports must be a priority, with appropriate resources provided to respond to the scale of the problem.
2. The internet facilitates puppy sales to consumers; failure to regulate the advertisement of puppies online facilitates the illegal and irresponsible international and domestic trade. Thereby, stronger enforcement of the online trade is required, as is the need to make it more difficult for consumers to purchase their puppies from online advertisements (as is done, for example, with the purchase of knives and prescription drugs or gambling online).
3. It is important for enforcement agencies to recognise the different types of trade and offenders in the trade, in order to tailor their response to each (for example, organised crime groups and opportunistic occasional offenders)
4. Problems in the nature of the domestic trade makes the international illegal trade possible. In order to respond to the growing international trade, it is crucial to first evaluate the domestic trade and ensure it is appropriately regulated and enforced.

## **Understanding Consumer Behaviour**

As indicated in the aims of the research, one of our main goals was to gain a better understanding of how people go about buying their puppy. Through the expert interviews, stakeholder survey and focus groups, we were able to gather information about people's pre-purchasing and purchasing behaviours and what influenced their purchase.

### **Purchasing Behaviour**

Suspecting that responding to online advertising was the dominant way consumers purchased puppies, surveyed stakeholders were asked how their clients located their puppy (Question 24). Social media was identified as the main way to locate a puppy for purchase (48 respondents). Small ads were next (45 respondents) followed by websites (42 respondents), word of mouth (16 respondents) and personal contacts (14 respondents). This is generally consistent with the focus groups. These participants found their puppies from websites, such as Gumtree, Pets for Homes and Discover dogs. They also used the KC, breed club websites (i.e. The Cockapoo Club) and Champdogs websites to identify breeders to then contact. Our participants also sought their vets' and trainers' advice, though this seemed rare. Several of our participants visited dog shows, such as Crufts, to meet breeders and used the internet to search for more information about these breeders. Those participants who reported a very positive purchasing experience were more likely to have used a recommended breeder, identified through word of

mouth and/or longstanding relationships [FG7; FG27]. Facebook was used as a way to both seek advice on breeds and breeders and to locate a puppy to buy. However, getting a recommendation is not possible for all consumers, as one participant explained:

*I couldn't find anyone to recommend a breeder to me. I literally asked all my friends, I went on Facebook. No one I knew could recommend breeders to me. So, that was really hard because I know that would have been the best thing to do, but if I waited I probably would never get a puppy [FG11].*

The importance of the internet in facilitating the trade was supported by the experts, suggesting the internet is the key location for consumers because it is more 'accessible', 'convenient' and 'a trusted trading place'. The belief among consumers that the internet was a trusted place to find a puppy resulted in many focusing on their breed and type preference rather than the breeder/sellers reputation:

*Found it off Preloved Pets, on the website on the internet, and obviously we just focused on the dog that we were buying, the type of breed, rather than where we were buying from [FG9].*

Although many focus group participants' experience of purchasing puppies did not indicate rapid purchase was a priority for them, the experts suggested the origin of the puppy is less important to many consumers than their expectation to be able to purchase it immediately:

*'I want it, I want it now', so if you're to go to a registered breeder you know, they do all the appropriate health checks, but they're saying, "Well actually I'm not having a litter for 18 months", for a lot of people that's not good enough and particularly if they can go on to the internet and get one almost the following day, they're not going to wait and that's the problem, well one of the problems [E12].*

Thereby, rather than consumers using the internet primarily for cheap and conveniently located puppies, the key motivation seems to be the opportunity to make a rapid purchase. This was evidenced by the fact that many focus group participants who purchased online did not pay low prices and were willing to drive hundreds of miles to collect their puppy. As with other consumer products, online advertisements of dogs appear to increase in December. We estimate that 44 percent of advertisements were placed in a time period that was 25 percent of the overall period in which data was collected and one-twelfth of the whole year. This supports the theory that consumption is driven by the purchase of a puppy as a Christmas gift – and that this purchase is facilitated by the internet:

*Some ongoing research in schools about what children want for Christmas and the number one answer was a puppy [E112].*

Many participants reported planning and researching their puppy prior to purchase – which involved consulting the KC and other specialist breed websites multiple

times [for example, FG10; FG1; FG9]. This links to many of the focus group participants desire to purchase a specific breed. One consumer used the:

*Kennel Club website. Checking for registered breeders of the breed that we'd specifically chosen and Champdogs as well...because then you can see all breed history and more info about litters and sire [FG1].*

Although the internet is a 'trusted' place, most consumers indicated they were also alarmed by the way many puppies were advertised:

*...someone says, 'Female, 7 weeks, for sale' and, I don't know, 'and also a Vauxhall for sale' because they couldn't be bothered to, I don't know, post another advert ... there are just so many dodgy adverts out there and I know that it's impossible but somehow [we need to] regulate it, regulate selling puppies [FG13].*

Focus group participants also commented on the choices and demands consumers make and how this behaviour negatively impacts the trade:

*There's this big push about designer breeds, we're a bit guilty of it too; French Bulldogs, you might have seen in the news, are the dog to have now. They're breeding them to be blue and lilac and they're selling for £5000 a puppy. It's huge money [FG23].*

*It's a demand issue. So, there are various fashion breeds out there currently, so Pugs, French Bulldogs, Dachshunds and a few more. They are really fashionable right now, because they are toy kind of sizes, and the demand in the UK is so huge for them because of social media and the internet, and cute videos on YouTube. The demand side is so huge that people...don't really care where they get it from [FG11].*

## **Professional Advice**

As mentioned above, some of our focus group participants did ask the guidance of the vet or trainer before buying a puppy. As the online survey was aimed at professionals in the puppy 'industry', we also asked respondents if their clients asked them for advice before purchasing a puppy. Sixteen (32.7%) people were asked quarterly, 15 (30.6%) less than once a year and 12 (24.5%) at least monthly. An expert veterinarian identified that "very few of them [clients] come to us the first time" and when they do it is often as a result of a prior negative experience with the puppy trade. However, even if consumers did seek advice from experts or professionals, the problems within the legal and illegal trade, discussed above, makes it difficult, as one expert put it, to give 'very clear guidance':

*We also know that there are issues with people breeding, perhaps we might call reputably, in this country. That might not be quite as high up welfare as we might wish, and there are various issues there too. So it's very difficult to give people very, very clear guidance of where they should go...[E11].*

Only one focus group participant reported going to a vet for advice: “because we only had one vet in the area, we actually went to them first and said, “We’re looking at getting a dog and they gave us a puppy pack” [FG22]. Consumers may not seek expert or official advice, as repeatedly evidenced in the focus groups, as most consumers are unclear as to who is responsible for the puppy trade. As consumers are largely not seeking advice from practitioners and experts, it is important to understand what is influencing their purchasing decisions; this is discussed below.

## Purchasing Influences

In an effort to better understand consumer behaviour, we asked stakeholders how important the reasons listed below (Table 10) are in explaining why people buy illegal bred/traded puppies?

**Table 10: Why survey respondents believe consumers buy from the illegal puppy trade**

Question 27 – How important are the reasons listed below in explaining why people buy illegal bred/traded puppies?	Very important	Important	Neither important nor unimportant	Un-important	Very un-important
First time buyer	25	18	6	0	0
Households with less disposable income	15	20	10	3	0
Buyers are looking for cheaper/affordable status breed or crossbreeds	23	20	5	1	0
Prospective buyers are not checked/vetted by sellers	23	14	10	0	1
Impulsive purchase, rather than a considered decision	28	15	4	2	0
Purchase of a puppy for an occasion	19	15	13	1	1
Buyers do not realise they are purchasing an illegally bred or trafficked puppy	40	8	0	1	0
Buyers feel that they are rescuing the puppy	30	13	5	1	0
Ease of purchase compared to buying from a legal breeder/seller	25	20	3	1	0

\*49 respondents

Stakeholders identified a lack of education or understanding of the illegal puppy trade (40) as the central reason for consumers’ engagement, followed by the decision being an emotional (30) and impulsive one (28), as most influential. Focus groups participants and expert interviewees identified a similar wide range of factors – each of which will be discussed in turn below.

## Education and Awareness

The survey stakeholders thought people who buy illegally bred/traded puppies were most likely to live in urban areas (39 respondents) and suburban areas (39 respondents) rather than in rural (20 respondents) or farming (17 respondents) communities (Question 26). There was also indication that anyone who is



uninformed can buy an illegally traded puppy and that people may not realise this has happened to them until too late. As one focus group participant shared: *“I think it’s probably a bit of a minefield if you’ve never had a dog, and you are trying for the very first time because it is a bit overwhelming”* [FG9]. Another suggested there is significantly more support when purchasing other products:

*If they’re sort of adrift in a sea of information...I think it’s about helping people to access information. I mean, if you want to go and buy something like a laptop, there’s all this information out there; there’s proper reviews and you know where to go...a dog’s, you know, much more important to get the right one and it’s much harder* [FG13].

Our survey respondents thought that *not* knowing about the illegality of the puppy was the main reason why people bought an illegally bred or traded puppy. One respondent said that buyers are from “lower socioeconomic backgrounds, perhaps not educated about the illegal puppy trade?” Other important factors were that people believe they are rescuing the puppy, that people buy dogs impulsively, if the purchase was the first puppy that people had bought and that buying from illegal breeders was easier than legitimate sources. These results are supported and elaborated on by the experts. Significantly, experts found the purchasing behaviour of consumers particularly difficult to explain, due to the lengths consumers were willing to go to purchase a puppy, which would not be repeated in any other purchases:

*And maybe I’m just pessimistic and gloomy, but I also can’t believe... that people are willing to buy dogs basically the way they do. They’re live animals, they need to be looked after and cared for and they just buy them as though they’re toys... but you wouldn’t buy a toy the way you go and buy you know, you wouldn’t just go and stand in the middle of the street and meet somebody and hand over hundreds of pounds for this thing* [E13].

Both stakeholders and experts indicated that many consumers are not aware or informed enough prior to their purchase. This can be due to the purchasers not understanding the requirements of owning a dog or the issues in the puppy trade, not doing enough research prior to their purchase or purchasing on impulse. Again, as indicated this was largely supported by the focus groups participants. In particular, experts suggested that many consumers do not understand the responsibilities, costs or implications of ownership:

*We ask people who already own this animal to estimate the lifetime cost of that animal, and around about 92% get it wrong - significantly wrong... there’s quite a high percentage that think it will only cost £500 over their lifetime ... a dog’s closer to between £25-30,000. You know, we’ve got some serious problems between people’s*

*expectations when they get that cute puppy and actually what the reality is [E13].*

*But a lot of people do not, until we get them the evidence, do not think they've put anything into puppy farming [E14].*

*while we have huge numbers of people saying how wonderful having pets is, there are a significant number who come up with comments like, 'It's much more hassle than it's worth', 'She's much more expensive', 'I shouldn't have chosen that breed', 'I hate not being able to go on holiday' and some quite negative things [E11].*

This also accounts for the large number of puppies who are later discarded. The experts unanimously agreed that there is a lot of information and advice available to purchasers; the problem is “*getting the right people to get that advice in the first place*”.

*We've got the biggest education outreach programme in Britain, a little programme for Scottish schoolchildren, we spoke to 315,000 of them last year and getting over the message, we're continually educating people all the time ... and yet people are still going out in their droves and buying them [E14].*

*You can give buyers as much information as possible, but as you say, if they're happy to buy one off the back of a lorry no matter how much info you spit at them, it's not going to change their behaviour [FG1].*

Experts reported that many consumers genuinely felt they had followed expert advice and guidance and done all the correct checks, and still became victim to the illegal trade. This was confirmed in the focus groups. For instance:

*They [clients of a veterinary practice] wouldn't realise that they'd bought at a farm until they started telling us the conditions the puppies were in and we said, "Do you think it could have been a puppy farm?" and then the realisation kicked in and they were like, 'Oh, no' [FG22].*

As enforcement agencies and NGOs provide advice on an issue, the perpetrators change their behaviour to thwart that public messaging. Furthermore, as the trade becomes more organised, consumers are less able to distinguish the legal and illegal trade using this advice. For example, the experts explained:

*I think the traders are becoming very savvy with how they approach it - the language they use, the photographs they use, and it's becoming harder and harder to give really clear messages [E11].*

*It depends who's in it but if it's an organisation, you know, that have come together and put together a real business, I mean, the likes of*

*LC, I mean, they even had, you know, fake registration, pedigrees and all the rest of it, you know, all kennel registration and people*

*were taken in and she was the glamour girl. She was seen as, you know, the person who met somebody at a rented property that she turned up to an hour beforehand with the puppy, 'Oh, yes, this is my house and this is my puppy. Here you are, goodbye, thank you. £600. Cheerio' [E16].*

### **Official Organisations**

Many focus group participants thought all trade was legislated and regulated. For example, they did not realise LA registration was only required after breeding a specific number of litters or that up to five puppies could legitimately enter the country as pets, that not all advertisements online were from registered breeders and that there was a further distinction between KC and LA registration. Registration with the KC, although not a requirement for LA licensing, can further confuse consumers regarding the guarantees that are being made. KC papers do not guarantee the breeder is LA-registered or compliant with welfare regulations, rather it indicates the lineage, age and pedigree of the puppy and permits the owners to engage in KC activities. The purpose of KC papers is not understood by consumers:

*... the Kennel Club [Assured Breeder Scheme] one, which is you pay a premium price for the listing. Now to me, that defeats the whole purpose, because I thought Kennel Club papers was trusted trading that you can believe that these people have got Kennel Club stamp approval [FG14].*

KC papers differs from the stringent health and welfare requirements of the regulated KC system of 'Assured Breeder' (detailed below), which is more likely to be what consumers expect from a KC registered breeder. Focus group participants commonly raised their confusion, misunderstanding and mistrust of the regulations and requirements of the trade.

*I don't think I'd have a lot of faith in that and that sounds awful, but a council one... it wouldn't make me want to say, "That's a good breeder", I'd just go, "Yeah, so what, you're registered with the council". I would want something that says, "This person is checked on a regular basis", and not just, "I'd better tidy up, I'm about to be inspected", you know [FG1].*

*People at the breed place said a lot of the time they say, "No papers" because they [KC registered breeders] can't register them because the bitch has already had a litter or three litters or whatever the set is [FG27].*

In most cases, consumers assumed that if the puppy was being advertised (especially with KC papers) then it must be legitimate: *"I just presumed if something was Kennel Club approved it would be okay, but I don't know" [FG9].* Few consumers understood that aspects of the legitimate trade were completely unregulated (that is, do not require registration or checks).

The KC proved to be a contentious issue in the focus groups [FG4; FG7; FG22]. Being a registered breeder with the KC meant to some FG participants that the breeder must be legitimate (as indicated above), but for others the KC is contributing to irresponsible and illegal breeding.

*They look after their own and it is very difficult to put forward a complaint [FG4].*

*That's what puts me off because when they're breeding specifically for money, even though they've got a licence and are doing it legally, they're still doing it to make money, most of them, and they've kind of got a set up [FG7].*

*[the problem with KC accreditation] You have to health test but your health test results don't have to be good. So, you could hip score and get a horrendous hip score but you could still breed with it, that would be okay because you had it hip scored. There's not any stipulation that you have to health test and the results have to be decent ones [FG4].*

In one focus group [FG23], for instance, a participant detailed how the KC refused to investigate a Cavalier breeder even though an entire Facebook group with more than 80 people sharing experiences of sick and abused puppies documents the conditions. The RSPCA were also criticised for not responding to this case. Another detailed her experience of using KC registered breeders to locate her puppy:

*I even had people that were Kennel Club registered that asked me if I wanted them to ship me the dog...the Kennel Club said you had to go and see the dog, but I had a couple of them that said they would send it to me...I didn't like it because would you want to go and buy a car without looking at it first, unless it came from the dealership [FG11].*

Experts commented on the fact that post-purchase, consumers who have received an ill or illegitimate puppy will seldom make complaints or alert the authorities:

*...because actually when you think the number of people that maybe do contact us and actually for the number of people it's actually happening to, they don't bother contacting us and say, "Well we'll just try and... we'll just live with it, we've got the dog now we'll just go with it [E13].*

Whilst several consumers considered making a complaint, they found it difficult for a variety of reasons: it was difficult to find the right person to report it to, felt agencies had more pressing priorities and so would not have helped; did not think to contact the LA or trading standards; and/or did not think there was enough information to make a complaint. For example:

*My mother-in-law turned around and said, 'I wish we had reported them because something didn't seem to be quite right in that situation'. Yeah, didn't know who we would have reported it to ...I've had dogs, and you know straight away that something wasn't quite right. I still wouldn't quite know who to report it to [FG9].*

This may help to explain the few (118) complaints received by Trading Standards between November 2015 and 2016. Again it was recognised by the experts that this is not just an issue for consumers, but for the professionals also.

One expert suggested that consumers were concerned that their dog would be removed or placed in quarantine. Another indicated that many consumers in the aftermath feel embarrassment and shame for not avoiding the illegal trade. Furthermore, two experts identified that consumers reported being threatened by the seller and were frightened to pursue a response: *"You know, 'My husband's phoned, he's threatened to come round and do my husband in with an axe' - that was one"*. This also prevented consumers from helping enforcement agencies investigate cases, as they did not want to provide their details:

*...and if we do go after who sold it or try to get more information about that they don't want to be involved in the investigation further down the line basically [E13].*

*People are very often frightened because perhaps they've got the puppy home, the puppy's spewed up worms or been sick or whatever. They've gone back, they've phoned the person back and they've had all sorts of abuse [E16].*

Several participants had wanted to adopt a rescue dog from an official rescue organisation/charity, but were either fearful of possible behavioural problems or it was too difficult to adopt. In regards to the latter, it was mentioned several times that charities set specific requirements for the adoption of rescue dogs (i.e. no children, no flats, size of yard, no others pets, age of the adopter, etc.), which make it too difficult to adopt. For some people, they want the experience of raising a dog from a puppy. This was often the case for first time dog owners, who did not feel skilled enough to train an older dog, never having done so before.

### **Emotional and Impulsive Decision**

Our focus group participants also indicated that impulse and emotion played a part in influencing their or others' purchases. For example, most consumers were deemed by participants to be impulsive buyers who wanted instant results: *"I feel that if they want a pup, they want a pup now [FG4]*. Regarding emotion:

*Well really, we really shouldn't have got it from her, but we felt really sorry for the dog and weren't going to leave him behind [FG8].*

*They do pull on your heartstrings when you get there though. When you see the conditions you don't want to leave them there, do you?*  
[FG22].

The emotion involved in purchasing a puppy was highlighted by all experts and many FG participants and used to explain why even educated consumers were willing to engage with the illegal puppy trade:

*...it's still the most emotional decision that a client will make. No matter what we do and no matter what we say, when they go to these places and they see the pup, it could have one leg and they'll still buy it and I have been there... there is a disconnect between this and the idea that 'if only the public were aware of where these are produced'... it's replicated in what they buy. Like, they buy the worst breed, like pugs [E15].*

*That lady with the £6,000 she, when we spoke to her after buying a dog and £4,000 in vet fees she admitted, 'I knew there would be a risk but it was just so gorgeous and he seemed so nice I didn't think it would be a problem' [E14].*

The emotional impact of this decision is so significant that consumers will buy a puppy even when they are aware that the transaction is problematic (e.g. the puppy is ill, suspicions about the person selling the pup or the conditions are very poor), as indicated above. Experts refer to consumers going into “rescue mode”, where experts suggest no amount of logic or information will prevent the interaction from happening.

*We obviously have quite clear processes in our hospitals and things to support owners who might have problems like this, but I think in general, we know that owners are given the advice if you are worried about the transaction or if the puppy looks ill, walk away, but owners come to us saying, “Well, I couldn't walk away, the puppy was sick, so I rescued her’... So even if you do have rational advice - walk away and call this number, take a photo and send it here - or whatever it might be - a process that people try to communicate out. You've got an emotional issue there, with, ‘Oh no, I just paid for her and took her. I couldn't leave her’ which you wouldn't get with a car, to use our previous analogy [E11].*

*But clearly, when you're buying a puppy it's an emotional purchase because you're bringing in another member to your family and therefore even if you know, for most people even if they seem to think something is wrong they're probably going to come away with a puppy because they want to save or rescue it from a situation. And whilst that's absolutely understandable, sadly the flip of that is clearly that it just continues to fuel this trade [E12].*

FG participants expressed similar sentiments:

*...if you go and look at the puppies it's fatal [FG8]*

*Somebody that I know wanted a Boston Terrier and they had seen an advert and decided to go. They went and it was horrendous. The house was horrendous, there were two pups and they were both scrawny. But they bought the one they went for and then the person said, there was a wee runty one left, 'We'll give you that for £100'. But, again, it was their heart strings, they took it [FG27].*

Consequently, it could be argued that many consumers cannot be 'trusted' to make a rational decision when confronted with a litter of puppies and that any changes to their behaviour need to be made prior to this. However, it is important to note that both the experts and stakeholders, agreeing with the FG participants, identified the difficulty of distinguishing the legal from the illegal trade and must base their understanding at times on anecdotal information. Thereby, it is easier to understand why consumers are often unaware or 'tricked' by those in the illegal trade. According to one expert, there are "a number of the different issues around how people are getting access to these animals in a way that they trust that perhaps shouldn't be trusted" [E11].

In discussing what influenced the purchasing decision of consumers, all experts commented on the significant impact of social trends and celebrity culture. This was most apparent in the drive for toy breeds:

*I surmise that the city life style where people might be watching the Kardashians or what have you are fuelling the designer dog demand. Where you can have your little Chihuahua under your arm and even what your Chihuahua is wearing [E112].*

*The other challenge we have is clearly peer pressure as well. For example, David Beckham is your icon, you probably can't have the car he's got or the house he's got but you can have the dog he's got. And we know that particularly with these smaller breeds they're being popularised by celebs you know, being shown as effectively fashion accessories and people are following that trend [E12].*

Altering consumer behaviour is arguably the biggest challenge when generating strategies to decrease the illegal and irresponsible puppy trade. Whereas there is information about how to choose a puppy and what to look for, this information does not necessarily reach the people who need to hear it. Often this is because puppy consumers buy impulsively, so do not look for more information. It may also be because puppy consumers do not want to know about the dark side of the trade. Even when people do have the information, they may 'rescue' the puppy and unintentionally contribute to the illegal and irresponsible trade.

## Summary of Respondent Suggestions regards Consumer Behaviour

1. Consumers rely on the internet to make and inform their purchases; they believe the internet is safe and reliable as they are unaware of the limited regulation and protections in place. Furthermore, consumers are confused by the scale of the trade and variety of advice available. A central online location or website application which all consumers are advised to use prior to making their purchase could be used to advise and inform consumers. Companies which allow the advertisement of pets online should be required to place a pop up which consumers must go to prior to their purchase (for example, to the above website). This may pause an impulsive purchaser and help them recognise the consequence of their purchase and provide them with consistent advice and guidance. Significantly, responses relating to consumer impulse buying need to intervene prior to people seeing the puppy online or prior to meeting the puppy, as most consumers will not walk away once a connection has been made.
2. PAAG Minimum Standards for advertising pets online should become a requirement – with sites that consistently implement these being identified as trusted sites for consumers.
3. Help develop a community of official advisers who can guide consumers through their purchases (that is, service providers and professionals such as veterinarians, dog trainers, dog handlers, NGOs). The fee for the service could be set or decided by the professional.
4. Consumers are not clear how best to respond when they have a negative puppy purchasing experience. Consumers must be supported better in terms of reporting the problem promptly and appropriately. Further, those who have purchased a puppy may need further support to retain ownership of their puppy (on the condition they can provide a suitable home for the puppy), which could be provided by a formal and informal multi-agency group.
5. Consumers need a 'quality assured' option – which is more than a licence. This should be for those breeders and traders which demonstrate excellence/best practice.
6. Clarify and educate consumers on the different types of registration (that is KC) and licensing requirements (for example, LA, in terms of the guarantees they bring to consumers and the welfare standards required. Linked to this, voluntary schemes, such as KC papers or their assured breeders should be more clearly explained to enable consumers to make an informed purchasing decision.

## Regulation

### Formal Regulation

A number of issues were raised regarding the formal regulation of the trade, in particular experts referred to the unforeseen impact of legislative change, that these changes were implemented with more resources than are currently available, and the unanticipated change in the scale and nature of the trade. For example, one reported



*... 12 years ago when this was all getting debated and going through parliament this kind of puppy farming was not an issue ...it's got a little bit of legislation but nobody bothers about [it] because it's mainly local authorities that should be doing it [E14].*

Experts suggest there is a pressing need to map out the legislation and strategy with the present economic situation in context to improve the “woefully inadequate” response currently in place. As one expert explained, it is difficult to determine how successful the current legislation is, as certain aspects work well, but it does not stop the illegal trade from occurring:

*And being able to get the problem sorted out so that it's not a public health risk and things like that, yes, we can do that successfully, and I would say that's the vast majority of cases we manage to get that sorted out. But getting to the actual, kind of, nub of it in terms of where it's all happening... we can't really do that [E13].*

*I mean we've had a number of, if you want to call them - successful, where we've had to get the dogs quarantined, get everything sorted out and the dog then gets returned and things like that, is that successful? We'll really know further down the line in a lot of cases because of identifying the seller and getting them to stop doing it, which I think would be what I would, you know, I think that would be successful [E13].*

Overall, the legislation available is viewed as mixed. However, while experts indicated there was a need to re-evaluate and update the legislation, the regulations were mostly seen as fit for purpose, if enforced correctly. Experts also expressed the need for caution when looking at any changes to the regulation of the trade. For example, one expert commented that PTS “*was intended to be a very positive thing for animal welfare, and it had the unintended consequence of opening the floodgate to this trade*” [E11].

Consequently, further regulation of the trade requires a multi-strategy and multi-agency approach that is “*overarching and look[s] at the number of different strands ... it has to have a robust system behind whatever solution is put in place, and I think that starts with traceability and accountability and enforcement through perhaps a microchip*” [E11].

Furthermore, the experts indicated a delicate balance was required. For instance, one stakeholder indicated that more stringent laws would only impact upon legitimate and responsible breeders and thereby increase the hold of less scrupulous and illegal breeders. Such changes could impact the international, domestic and online trade. This caution was echoed by consumers; “*but on the opposite side if you start to go down the road of putting too much paperwork in the way, are you not going to drive the ones who don't do it properly further into the dark*” [FG1]. What follows is a discussion on the legislation regulating the international trade, online trade and domestic trade, prior to moving onto the complications surrounding its enforcement.

**Regulating the International Trade**

The Balai Directive (92/65/EEC) and PTS Regulation (576/2013) were identified as key legislation regulating the international trade and movement of puppies (see Table 1). However, most experts focused on the impact of PTS rather than the Balai Directive. In response to the online survey question on the impact of current regulations on the illegal puppy trade (Question 28), professionals indicated that both PTS and Balai made it ‘easier’ or ‘much easier’ (21:20) to offend or had no effect on the illegal puppy trade (17:22). The enforcement of these regulations at the border was viewed as even more problematic with 31 of the 49 respondents suggesting it made it much easier or easier to offend.

**Table 11: The impact of PTS and Balai on the Illegal Puppy Trade**

Question 28 – Do you think that any of the following make illegal puppy trading easier or more difficult?	Much easier	Easier	No more or less easy	Difficult	Much more difficult
The current Pet Travel Scheme	13	8	17	7	4
Regulations for commercial movement	12	8	22	4	3
The way border checks are currently implemented	22	9	15	3	0

\*49 respondents

All but one expert expressed concerns over the mis-use of PTS for commercial purposes. PTS does not provide a full traceability system which correlates pet and owner movement, for example, to ensure an individual cannot repeatedly enter the UK with five different pets each time [EI3], or that these ‘pets’ leave the country with their ‘owner’ [EI2]. All but one of the experts acknowledged the loophole provided in allowing five puppies per person to enter the UK as non-commercial pets:

*...it’s not normal human behaviour to go out and buy yourself five puppies...over 90% of people in the UK have 1, 2 or 3 dogs, so you know, why is the limit set at 5, and surely by actually reducing that limit to 3 you’re going to cover probably 95% of the population [EI2].*

Furthermore, PTS was deemed problematic as the mandatory microchips used to link the dog to their passport is not required to be registered. Thereby, dogs arriving into the UK with a microchip cannot be traced to their breeder. Drawing on his experience in Ireland, one expert [EI5] suggested PTS and related microchipping legislation is problematic in the UK owing to the complexity of controlling data, especially with puppies regularly changing hands. He explained that changes made to domestic Irish legislation in September 2016 now provides “cradle to grave” traceability and prevents document forging. For example, in order to attain a Balai certificate for exporting puppies or a Pet passport (PTS), traders and owners must produce a MODR (Microchipping of Dog Regulations 2015) certificate. The MODR certificate identifies that the dog is microchipped and registered in Ireland and the identity of the person presenting the document has been officially confirmed (for example through a passport or driving license with photo) and recorded. In order to receive a MODR certificate the dog must be microchipped and registered. It is illegal to own, sell, transport, acquire or permit another to acquire a dog without a MODR certificate. When a change in ownership occurs both the seller and

purchaser are required by law to contact the microchip database with the change of information and proof of identity for the new owner. Thereby, the system provides clear traceability throughout the dog's life. That owners, consumers and professionals can be held accountable for their role in tracing the dog is central to the success of this process. According to this expert "*your system in the UK is so flawed in who registers, who transfers ownership, how's this audited ... I'm not going to say you're never going to have it, you're not going to have a fool-proof system*".

Most experts and many consumers agree that stricter regulations were required regarding the age at which puppies can be authorised for PTS, as it is too difficult to accurately age puppies at 15 weeks. Linked to this, the passports themselves were viewed by experts as too easily forged or reused. Many experts identified that although there have been updates (e.g. added lamination) they remain too easy to falsify and recycle. One expert recalled, for instance:

*...you can go in and buy a whole heap of pups and they will just say, 'Where do you want their passport to be from?' and take them out of the drawer, 'Do you want an Irish one or a Dutch one or whatever?' That's it [E15].*

*...there was quite a number of [Irish] vets who were willing to put their name on a seven-week-old vaccination saying that the pup was twelve at the time [E15].*

Two experts suggested transgressions by professionals in providing forged passports should be severely punished [E13, E15]. Another expert referred to positive changes by the Lithuanian government which permitted only government appointed vets to issue pet passports [E12]. However, more recent investigations in Lithuania (2017) have identified unscrupulous vets offering sedation, resulting in puppies being covertly smuggled into the country, rather than illegally imported via the PTS.

As there is a variety of legislation that is available to regulate the trade (see Table 1 for summary) choosing the correct legislation to respond to the problem is crucial. For example, one expert explained their increased use of TARPS [Trade in Animals and Related Products Scotland Regulations 2012] rather than the current rabies importation, as the former provided a more "*proportionate*" and "*pragmatic*" approach to regulating dogs coming from Ireland (a rabies free country) to Scotland without being subject to the stringent quarantine rules [E111]. As part of their partnership with LAs, the SSPCA have been permitted limited authorisation to enforce TARPS, which is not possible with traditional rabies regulations. This is an important extension to the regulations, as enforcement would be very limited without this partnership, in particular because the enforcement agents are required to prove the origin of the dog:

*...so you can guess what the people say when they arrive in Scotland, 'We got it in... no, these pups come from Northern Ireland', and it's up to us to prove otherwise. So we have not just the*

*difficulty of catching them, then we have the added difficulty of proving that they came from Southern Ireland and we're managing to do that [E14].*

Another important consideration in regulating the trade is choosing the approach to adopt within the legislation. For example, under regulation 32 it is written that authorities “*have the option of turning the animals around, sending them back from whence they came or having them slaughtered*” [E12]. There is further provision to seize and detain puppies to allow seven days for the production of further paperwork to clear up any anomalies. Due to the costs and conditions in quarantine, there has been increased use of the power in Scotland to return the puppies to Ireland rather than euthanising/quarantining them. However, in England, the most common outcome is quarantine [E13] because the country of origin is seldom known. If the owner cannot or will not pay for this, the puppy is put to sleep [E13]. Consequently, experts discussed the need for further provisions to ‘dispose of animals before a court case’. While legislation is commonly used in court cases to dispose of livestock prior to the case, this is problematic due to the nature of the puppy trade. As one NGO expert explained:

*...you can use it for pups but you're coming out of the criminal system and going into the civil system. The last time we tried to get an order to dispose of animals before a court case cost us £30,000 and we just haven't got that kind of money... When you do that with pups, we've got bulldog pups in now that the guy was aiming to sell at £2,500 to £3,000 each, you wouldn't get £50 for them they're so badly bred... you can value livestock very, very easily but pups is a totally different aspect [E14].*

### **Regulating the Online Trade**

There is currently no formal regulation of online advertising of puppies. Although all commercial sellers require a licence, there is little evidence to suggest those advertising puppies for sale online are licensed or that enforcement agencies regulate this marketplace. Focus group participants assumed there were controls in place which specifically regulated and monitored the online puppy trade and thereby felt the internet was a safe marketplace. However, none of the participants who looked online and/or purchased their puppy thereafter from an online advertiser sought proof of a sales licence. Most consumers expected there to be regulations in place which required the advertisement provider to check the credentials of the seller. Due to the limited regulation of online advertisements and the ease with which consumers can purchase puppies, some consumers argued for a ban on online third party sales. Focus group participants also pointed to the regulation of other ‘products’ online, suggesting examples could be taken from these to regulate the online puppy trade.

Although both stakeholders and consumers expressed the need for regulation, experts suggested a considered approach was required - with more emphasis on enforcement, raising consumer awareness and facilitating change in consumer buying. Concerns were raised regards banning online advertising, due to the complications of regulating a global internet. The Electronic Commerce (EC Directive) Regulations 2002, implements the EU's Electronic Commerce Directive 2000 into UK law, which was introduced to boost consumer confidence by clarifying and harmonising the rules of online business throughout Europe. All European-based information society services (which includes online advertisements for sale) , are covered under this regulation. However, it is not clear how these regulations impact on the online puppy trade. Issues were raised by experts regards regulating the online trade. It is possible that by forcing UK online service providers to regulate their puppy advertisements, these companies will close down or move abroad, which would make regulation impossible. Further, it is likely to drive online sales underground or towards unscrupulous websites. For example, a PAAG representative explained:

*...this is why we're lobbying government to say, 'Look we... what we've done is great, it's not perfect and we absolutely acknowledge that, but to be able to go to the next level we need some sort of legislation to be able to support it'. There are organisations you know, for example, Get Gumtree Animal Free that want to stop advertising online altogether, and I absolutely understand their motives. But the harsh reality is it's just not achievable, and if some of the websites go down all that will basically happen is you'll get less scrupulous websites pop up... the other worry for us is that the websites we have engaged [with], if we push them too hard they'll just say, 'Oh, this isn't worth it, we'll just walk away', and we're just left with a less scrupulous website [E13].*

### **Regulating the Domestic Trade**

Table 1 summarises the variety of domestic legislation relating to the puppy trade. There were mixed views from experts and consumers on the ability of this legislation to regulate the trade. For example, the sale of young dogs and cats legislation was deemed “*very ineffective*” due to poor enforcement and being out of date according to one expert [E14]. The Animal Welfare Act (in England and Wales) (2006) was deemed effective by one NGO due to the declining number of cases:

*Now the legislation allows us to prevent it, so we're actually able to prevent a lot of things happening before it actually reaches a court ... I mean a prosecution is always a failure [E14].*

Yet another interviewee suggested it was “*pointless*” due to the lack of enforcement. The former expert felt the SSPCA's ability to order a warrant under the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006 successfully allowed them to seize evidence, seize pups, prosecute offenders and seek a ban from handling or

coming into contact with animals in the future [E14]. However, this is not possible for NGOs across the UK:

*I think the problem that the RSPCA are encountering is one, they have no powers under the Animal Health Legislation. They therefore it appears cannot be authorised under any other council legislation, so they couldn't be nominated in the way that we are, or certainly the councils haven't chosen to do that, so they very much have to rely on the local authorities. And because of the difficulties that the local authorities have in terms of finance and resourcing they just have to basically wait until the councils can do it and that causes difficulty [E14].*

Discussions on domestic legislation predominantly focused on the traceability of puppies and licensing of puppy breeders. Traceability was identified as central to the successful regulation of the trade, as without this there is limited accountability and enforcement. Although microchipping is now mandatory in the UK (see Table 1) and puppies are required to be microchipped by their breeders, the system in place could be improved, according to the experts. For example, many consumers identified incidents where they did not receive a microchipped puppy or the microchip was not registered, which prohibits traceability. There is no reliable way for a consumer to check these details prior to purchasing their puppy (unless the seller agrees to bring it with them for a vet check). Furthermore, not all consumers were aware that their puppy should be microchipped, rather, they identified the KC registration papers as a guarantee that the puppy was legitimate.

Traceability and a centralised database was central to the success of the aforementioned Irish compulsory microchipping system [E15];

*...so we can have that "farm to fork" no problem [in Ireland], but as soon as it leaves here, your system in the UK is so flawed in who registers, who transfers ownership, how it's audited... as long as the dog doesn't leave this country, we know every single place it's ever been...I was in a lot of legal cases and it was never really a problem to prove cruelty or neglect, it was always a problem to prove ownership. That's the, kind of, key to it, you know, and it has been for 20 years [E15].*

Traceability problems, according to this expert, stem from having an open market for microchips and microchipping database providers. UK microchippers can purchase, for example, Lithuanian microchips and implant them in UK puppies, thereby, the origin of the puppy cannot necessarily be traced back to microchip country of origin [E12; E16]. It was suggested that if UK-only produced microchips were used, it would be easier to identify puppies brought into the UK. Although microchip database providers are required to share their data on request, with government agents, there is a common perception that they do not. There are

several approved microchipping database providers across the UK, which differ from one country to another and which are not required to collate their data with each other. Consequently, it is not possible to easily identify the number or type of dogs microchipped or the number of licensed sellers. Easy access to this data would help illuminate the scale of the illegal trade and would improve traceability. This expert suggested a mini EPN (European Pet Network) database which pulls all microchips together in the UK and which filters into EPN in Europe would help improve the process. The most significant problem with the microchipping system is the issue of non-compliance, with breeders, sellers and buyers failing to register/update their details. The expert clarified that in Ireland, both the seller and purchaser are responsible for updating the details when the purchase is completed. The purchaser is required to provide evidence of their identify to the seller for the database and the seller is required to provide the purchaser with a microchipping certificate at point of sale.

With regard to the licensing of puppy breeding and selling establishments, most experts agree the legislation was “*fit for purpose*” if enforced correctly [E16]. However, this legislation is limited by those responsible for enforcing it and an inconsistency in licensing fees across Local Authorities, with some experts arguing that some LAs use licensing fees to avoid their enforcement responsibilities:

*So there is no statutory... it's up to every local authority to set whatever charges they want. But they try to avoid it because if they take on the statutory responsibility they've got to employ somebody to make sure they do that. So it actually suits them having less licensed premises because they don't have to put the manpower in to do it [E14].*

One expert [E18] predicted further licensing problems should the threshold for a breeding licence be reduced further in England to three litters a year, as the resources are not available to enforce this. In response to this, another expert [E17] suggested the KC Assured Breeder Scheme [ABS] – which requires enhanced health and welfare conditions from breeders - be formally integrated into the licensing regime (further details available in Case Study Box Seven below). As a result, the LAs would not be required to inspect the premises of these breeders, thereby saving resources in order to target high risk breeders.

One expert went even further in their suggestion to alter the current system:

*Dogs Trust believes that to tackle the irresponsible breeding and selling of dogs, anyone breeding, selling or transferring the ownership of one litter, regardless of any financial transaction or gain, should be required to be registered.*

*In addition to this, anyone breeding, selling or transferring the ownership of more than one litter, regardless of any financial transaction or gain, should be required to have a licence.*

*There should be a link-up between individuals and their address so that it is possible to identify situations where multiple individuals are evading licensing by individually registering to breed or sell animals on the same premises [E12].*

### **Penalties**

Experts also questioned the availability and use of penalties within the legislation, with some identifying them as “weak sanctions” and a “joke”, which would not deter offenders [E15; E16].

*So there are huge profits to be gained, and the flip side of that is that the penalties are low/negligible; there’s very few successful prosecutions when somebody is stopped for bringing in an illegally imported puppy [E12].*

Another expert documented a serious animal welfare case involving puppy farming where the offender received “*nine weeks suspended [sentence], 200 hours community work, [and] a 4-year ban, possibly [which he’s appealing because] ‘he needs to work with sheepdogs’*” [E16]. This expert also explained that often inspection reports for breeding establishments will make recommendations when the breeder is in breach of the regulations and allow them months (or even years) to comply:

*In Wales, the new dog breeding regulations came in in 2015, April 2015. To this day we still get inspection reports showing that the dogs haven’t been health checked, that they’re not all micro-chipped. Why? ‘Oh, well, you know, we’ll give them time. They’ve got another ...’ They’ve only had two years [E16].*

In order to avoid legislation without ‘teeth’, experts explained the move to use legislation in place for fraud and tax evasion to respond to the illegal puppy trade, as the systems supporting these regulations are more robust and provide a better range of sanctions, including significant fines. One expert referred to this as the ‘Al Capone strategy’:

*I think there are various operations around the country where there’s been focus particularly from HMRC who have a task force looking at this in particular and when that resource is focused on an issue and this is picking up on the tax avoidance element ...there is resource there because the value of these transactions, then it seems to have a real impact and they tend...[to] see them in the press [E11].*



## **Enforcement**

Enforcement was deemed by the experts to be the most problematic aspect of regulating the trade. The issues stemmed from how responsibilities and roles were designated under the legislation and the resources available to enforce the legislation. The agencies responsible for delivering enforcement on animal health and welfare vary throughout the UK – with local authorities dividing up responsibilities within services, based on “historical” roles rather than best practice [E13]. Thereby, the agency to report to, or to request help from, for a breeding or trade issue is not obvious and reportedly creates confusion for experts, professionals and consumers:

*And part of that...is actually knowing who to report to and actually being able to get hold of those people... So I think there's potentially a sort of an ever decreasing circle there that if you can't actually get to the people that you're talking to then you may not think about doing it [reporting or requesting help] next time [E12].*

LAs were both highly praised and condemned for their enforcement efforts by experts and consumers [e.g. FG4]. That LA staff carrying out inspections on dog breeding premises in England and Wales have over 150 varying job titles, just 28 percent of which include reference to ‘animal’, ‘dog’ or ‘vet’ was of concern [E18]. Consequently, licenses may be issued to “anybody” – including those with prior offences and those currently under investigation for breaching the regulations – due to inexperience and/or complacency [E14]. Furthermore, too few inspections are carried out to appropriately regulate the trade:

*...five per cent of local authorities license 10 or more breeders in their area and 90 per cent license 5 or fewer breeders... over one third of local authorities did not carry out any inspections on dog breeding premises in 2015 and 68 per cent carried out 2 or fewer inspections. One dog breeding licence was revoked throughout 2014 and 2015 and over a 5-year period only 20 licences were refused, equating to less than half a percent per year. Fifty-eight percent of local authorities have between 0-2 members of staff who carry out inspections on dog breeding premises [E18].*

Reporting on a KC trial in England, an NGO expert provided a comparison of breeders on the KC database who bred over five litters a year (and thereby should be licensed) to the number of breeders currently licensed in these LA areas. Their findings suggest there are significantly fewer LA licensed breeders than are currently operating - see figures in Table 12 below. Although there may be a number of variables which impact on this data (new approvals/delistings not included, slightly different timeframes, use of different business addresses and so forth), this is an important snapshot of illegal unlicensed breeders, especially as the KC only represent approximately 40 percent of all UK puppies bred.

**Table 12: Comparison of KC registered breeders to LA licensed breeders**

	Number of breeders breeding over 5 litters a year on KC database	Number of breeders the LA licenses currently.
Amber Valley	4	5
Breckland	9	7
West Lindsey	12	13
Charnwood	1	2
East Northamptonshire	1	1
Blaby District	2	2
Aylesbury Vale	1	2
South Somerset	1	1
Cheltenham	1	0
Basildon	7	10
Stoke on Trent City	7	5
Melton	4	3
North Devon	3	5
North Kesteven	4	6
South Derbyshire	3	11
Medway	1	0
Horsham	4	5
East Lindsey	12	12

Where official roles have been conferred to other organisations, there have been mixed results. The aforementioned role of the SSPCA under the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006, under which they are authorised as an enforcement agency, was perceived to be a very successful approach. However, in Southern England, where commercial organisations have been authorised to make border checks, this is not believed to be a suitable partnership, rather, it was argued that the responsibility should be securely placed with a government agency.

*...those checks are delegated from APHA to the carriers and we know that for the carriers it's an administrative check... And this is the challenge you know, it's supposed to be a document and identity check, but effectively it would be a bit like you or I walking through Heathrow with a paper bag over your head and saying, "Here's my passport, can I go through?" [E12].*

The issues around roles and responsibilities are directly linked to the limitations of resources:

*I don't think anyone would have predicted the economic problems that have meant local authority resources have been so drastically cut, port resources have been drastically cut. When it [legislation] was put in place there's certain caveats and safeguards which have since been reduced and then since, have been further reduced [E11].*

Even though licensing is full cost recovery, key legislation changes, such as compulsory microchipping and changes to the litter numbers requiring licensing, have required considerably more resources, whilst resources have, reportedly been reduced. Experts identified deficits in: agency funding and staffing, professional experience and training, coordination between agencies and quarantine facilities and capacity. One expert explained:

*...you've got to think of all the other responsibilities and roles that we have as well, this is not our sole remit... So that's just part, this is just one part of a service that we deliver, and again when broken down it's also one part of the animal health remit that we have... I would say the vast majority are responding, it's reactive. There's very little proactive work being done on this [E13].*

Thereby, while 'animal' issues are competing with 'more pressing' problems overseen by these enforcement agencies, at a time of ever-diminished resources, no matter how robust the legislation, it cannot be enforced appropriately with current resources [E11]. Furthermore, these agencies have repeatedly experienced reorganisation, which minimises ownership of the issue and makes it difficult to implement a coordinated enforcement approach. In fact, this creates confusion, whereby, even the experts find it difficult to do their job:

*...even following up on a complaint or an issue, it can be very challenging. You know, with who to report that to, is it Trading Standards, is it RSPCA, is it the port, is it the microchip company? I think there can be quite a lot of confusion there when there's an issue with a sick puppy being bought online, or something like that [E11].*

*...as a vet dealing with perhaps a suspected illegal landing your natural instinct may be to contact DEFRA. But actually once an illegal landing is actually in the country it actually becomes a Trading Standards issue, it's not a DEFRA issue, it's not an APHA issue, which not every vet's going to be aware of. And the other challenge... is actually trying to get hold of Trading Standards... Well if you've got an illegal landing it needs to be dealt with now not in five days' time [E12].*

Resource deficits also harm the animals involved. For example, if a puppy arrives into the UK without the correct paperwork or in breach of the regulations, the puppy will need to be placed in quarantine (if not returned to the place of origin or euthanised). Depending on the issue, this may involve the puppy remaining in quarantine for three weeks or more. At present, there are 17 authorised quarantine kennels across the whole of the UK – this includes one each in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Experts acknowledged the impact of too few quarantine facilities, with puppies being sent back, on long journeys, to the continent and long and costly journeys for the LA transporting the dogs and for the owners of the dogs.

Although no figures were available on the rate of euthanasia of puppies in quarantine and experts believed this to be the least likely outcome for the puppies, there was a concern that the lack of facilities may lead to euthanasia of healthy puppies [E12; E13]. These concerns have resulted in NGOs working in partnership with quarantine facilities; whereby they pay the cost of kennelling and enhance the welfare of the dogs (see case study one below).

When experts were asked who they felt should be responsible for the formal regulation of the trade, all agreed that it required multi-agency work, with one expert suggesting the complicated nature of the puppy trade requires that the government oversee this multi-agency work [E13]. Experts confirmed their involvement in multi-agency partnerships was predominantly a positive experience, which produced results and reduced costs. Among the many examples provided, three case studies of these successful partnerships are provided below.

#### **Case Study One: NGO and formal enforcement agencies partnership in Welfare and Quarantine**

So what we've basically said is look we don't want these puppies turned away because ...there are welfare issues...so what we've said is 'Look, we'll underwrite the quarantine costs'. So what happens is if somebody stops with some underage puppies they are then aged by a veterinary surgeon, if they're deemed to be under 15 weeks they then go into quarantine. The individuals associated with that are given a period of time to pay the quarantine costs within seven or ten days. If they don't and the puppies are signed over to Dogs Trust, what we do with the quarantine kennels is we're putting extra resource into the quarantine kennels because you're obviously very familiar with that critical window in a puppy's life between sort of 3 and about 14 weeks when it's really important to socialise and habituate, so we're putting extra resource in to try and help that. And then when the puppies are 15 weeks they come to us and we responsibly re-home them [E12].

#### **Case Study Two: NGOs, business sector and government agencies PAAG partnership for regulating Online Advertisements**

We know a lot of these puppies are being advertised online. So the whole remit of PAAG is to try and work with online advertisers, and what we've developed is a set of minimum standards that the websites that we've engaged with are trying to adhere to those minimum standards. So, for example, not selling any underage puppies, making sure there's an appropriate photograph of the puppy with every advert, no selling of banned breeds, no selling of pregnant animals, no swapping of animals for a PlayStation or whatever, and we have a number of engaged websites, which is great...[E12].

I think the very fact that we're having this conversation is a really positive thing...that PAAG is so well supported from the trade, from veterinary organisations, from NGOs, from HMRC, from Trading Standards - that's a fantastic group. The fact that we can work with the websites who do advertise some of these pets for sale, and that they are receptive to working with us. But there are some based abroad that simply don't have to [E11].

### **Case Study Three: National and Overseas NGOs, enforcement agencies, government and business sector in Operation Delphin partnership for regulating the International Trade**

I would say that the one thing that does seem to work is the joint work between the welfare charities throughout the UK and Southern Ireland. So under the umbrella of Operation Delphin, which was spearheaded by ourselves, all these welfare charities are coming together to adopt whatever approach is most suitable in their individual countries to address the issue... it's about trying to get all the organisations that have got a business to be, or some sort of assistance, to become involved at whatever level... what we are doing is we're pulling the whole thing together and getting whatever we can out of the organisations, even if it's just intelligence... councils are involved, the police are involved... ferry companies are very helpful... Well we've got memorandums of understanding for data sharing with the police, the local authorities, Animal and Plant Health Agency. A lot of people use data protection as an excuse for not complying... but in the main on this issue everybody seems to cooperate. And the advantage is, we hold all the intelligence. So if we hold it all these people that we're working with generally have a lot less than we do, so they're generally in the business if they want to do anything they want our intelligence so we're happy to work with them on the basis it's a two way street. And there is... generally speaking that isn't a problem, and there's channels in place for us to share easily and we do do under the you know, the handling intelligence network, it's an easy procedure to do [E14].

Operation Delphin - that seems to be a really good focused, targeted evidence based initiative to really hone in on a specific route and element of this trade and have a real breakthrough, and I think it's been really well publicised which is then a deterrent in itself...[E11].

The key Agencies HMRC has been involved with to date include SSPCA, RSPCA, USPCA, ISPCA, DSPCA, Police Scotland, Police Scotland (Port Unit), North Wales Constabulary, Border Force, Local Authorities from both a licensing and Trading Standards perspective both in Scotland and across the rest of the United Kingdom, DEFRA and APHA. There has been and continues to be a great deal of co-operation and co-ordination amongst the stakeholders previously referred to and Operation Delphin is an excellent example of this [E110].

## Informal Regulation and Prevention Strategies

Whereas some NGOs are blended into the formal regulation of the puppy trade, the majority of their work involves informal regulation and prevention using a variety of strategies. Ideally, interest groups and consumers would also play an important surveillance and awareness-raising role. However, one NGO expert indicated that *“we go as far as we can to empower people to have a say but it doesn’t do any good when it’s going to people that couldn’t give a damn in the first place”* [E16]. In order to respond to apathy among adult consumers, education, particularly for children was deemed a high priority among NGOs as mentioned on page 44. Focus group participants also supported this [FG22].

### Education

Local Authorities and Trading Standards were among some of the formal agencies, who sought to prevent the trade through education and advice for consumers. A recent campaign by Trading Standards was released prior to Christmas (2016), which involved press releases and placing information on all LA social media and websites to help raise awareness: *“If you come across puppies that have been bred in a puppy farm share your story, this kind of thing been through Facebook...and top tips for buying a puppy”* [E13]. However, NGOs provide the majority of frontline services that can be used to engage with and educate consumers. For example, NGOs have worked together to develop a Puppy Contract for consumers, which provides a standardised checklist and questions, which they can bring to their meeting with the breeder/seller (<https://puppycontract.rspca.org.uk/home>).

Rather than general education on the puppy trade, all participants (experts, professionals and FG participants) mentioned an urgent need for consumer advice and guidance on where to purchase a legitimate and healthy puppy; essentially how to help consumers [FG10; FG16; FG23] traverse the chaotic online marketplace and avoid illegal and irresponsible breeders and traders:

*“I think there is a big piece where we need to talk about, “So, where should people get dogs from?” I think if we don’t help tackle our internal domestic issues with dog breeding, then... and that is an animal welfare NGO issue with support from government, then we are opening the way for people to take advantage of that commercial need for this product”* [E11].

According to one expert, education must focus on consumer impulse buying: *“Folks say education is what’s needed... we’ve done it and still people want an instant fix”* [E16].

As part of their education programme, key NGOs conduct research which is used to educate consumers, stakeholders and government officials. For example, one NGO funds a longitudinal study called Generation Pup, which involves recruiting puppies up to 16 weeks of age and following them through their lives to compare how puppies from different parts of the trade develop over the next few years [E12]. Another aspect uses YouGov to gather data on how pet owners provide for the

welfare needs of their animals, including how they locate their pets, what research they do prior to purchase and where they buy them and how they subsequently look after them [E11].

### **Surveillance and intelligence**

Surveillance and intelligence was also a key approach to informal regulation and prevention strategies by NGOs. Experts detailed their efforts to gather information – such as images and videos – both to help support the intelligence and actions of formal agencies and to raise awareness and thereby scrutiny among consumers. Informal surveillance has been crucial to regulating the online marketplace. According to the experts, while this is helpful, it is also inadequate. For example, initiatives such as PAAG analyse and advise companies on online advertisements. This was evident in our online advertisements research, which, again, involved monitoring seven websites over a 12-week period. Most of these sites had various protocols or advice, for advertisers to follow, designed to comply with legal requirements and to protect the welfare of the animals for sale. This included instructions about not selling puppies under eight weeks old (Dogs & Puppies UK, Gumtree), advice regarding domestic and business breeder advertisements and requirements (Pets for Homes), regular website monitoring for suspicious activity (Epupz), and advice to visit a vet prior to sale for health checks, vaccinations and microchipping (Gumtree). The Gumtree website also advises that any identified puppy farmers will be reported to the RSPCA and Trading Standards. Neither does this site allow dogs with docked tails or clipped ears to be advertised, or for advertisers to promote puppies as Christmas gifts. The Pets for Homes website screens all advertisements before they are made public to check they comply with the terms of use, with around 30 percent of advertisements submitted being identified as unsuitable for publication because they fail to meet standards (due to a failure to provide full ID, not including a photograph of the puppies, inaccurate descriptions and use of more than one account). The VivaStreet website advises that it may disclose information to law enforcement agencies if it is believed the website is being used for criminal and/or illegal activities. Although there are protocols and guidance (and in some cases monitoring) it is hard to determine the impact of these measures. An overview of the standards and challenges identified in the online advertisements research, in terms of compliance and membership with the PAAG Minimum Standards is provided in Table 13 below.

Although the PAAG Minimum Standards attempt to improve the advertisement of puppies for sale, there is evidence that providers are not reliably compliant across all standards. See Table 13 and also Appendix VI that includes more detailed information about compliance.

**Table 13: Analysis of adherence to PAAG guidance of the seven websites monitored Oct-Dec 2016**

<b>Website</b>	<b>Element of PAAG followed</b>	<b>Observations during monitoring</b>
Craigslist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ No indication website uses protocol</li> <li>➤ Pet sales prohibited</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Small number of pets (including dogs) for sale</li> </ul>
VivaStreet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ All posters agree to PAAG (<a href="http://paag.org.uk/about-paag/minimum-">http://paag.org.uk/about-paag/minimum-</a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The PAAG link is not visible on individual advertisement pages.</li> </ul>

	<a href="#">standards/)</a>	<p>However, is mentioned on terms and conditions page with hyperlink</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Found advertisement for stud dog (breaching rules).</li> <li>➤ Facility to 'report' advertisement</li> </ul>
Pets for Homes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ If an advertiser is breeding and advertising dogs for sale and requires a dog breeding license from their local council, the person needs to be registered as a licensed breeder on the site, and provide with a copy of the license. If site suspects that a licence is required and details have not been provided, we will report this to your local authority.</li> <li>➤ Photo of mother required</li> <li>➤ Location information required</li> <li>➤ Will not advertise stud dogs</li> <li>➤ Report function on each ad page</li> <li>➤ Pets must be at least 8 weeks old before leaving mother</li> <li>➤ Does not accept adverts for 'designer dogs'</li> <li>➤ Pets advertised must be located in UK and adverts advertising dogs brought for sale from outside the UK banned.</li> <li>➤ All pets for sale must be available for viewing with their mother (and ideally their father)</li> <li>➤ Need to declare status (private, commercial or rescue organisation status)</li> <li>➤ Advertisements for breeding purposes banned.</li> <li>➤ Advertisements of banned breeds prohibited</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Does not allow courier service</li> <li>➤ Advertises found for stud dogs</li> </ul>
Epupz		Website down, but site had few advertisements for puppies available in Scotland.
Gumtree	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Supports PAAG and website includes a link to PAAG.</li> <li>➤ Website includes links to Buyer's Guide, Rehoming Guide and Buyer Checklist.</li> <li>➤ Recent picture of animal/s for sale required in advertisement.</li> <li>➤ All animals must be at least 8 weeks old before leaving their mother.</li> <li>➤ A max. of 2 litters per year to be sold on site by any single seller.</li> <li>➤ Discourages advertisements alluding to breeding and stud dogs.</li> <li>➤ Advertises from puppy farms not accepted. Any such adverts found will be reported to the RSPCA and Trading Standards</li> <li>➤ Advertises for dogs with docked tails/ears not allowed.</li> <li>➤ Advertises for pregnant animals not allowed.</li> <li>➤ Advertises referring to sale of animals as gifts not allowed.</li> <li>➤ Advertises for banned breeds not allowed.</li> <li>➤ Report function on each advertisement.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Website provides link to advice</li> <li>➤ <a href="https://www.gumtree.com/content/pet-education/puppies-checklist/">https://www.gumtree.com/content/pet-education/puppies-checklist/</a></li> <li>➤ Pet passport required</li> <li>➤ Report suspected Puppy Farms to the RSPCA</li> <li>➤ Not clear if private, commercial or rescue sale</li> </ul>
Free Ads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Puppies must not be rehomed before they are 8 weeks old.</li> <li>➤ Bitches should only breed once they are</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ No link to PAAG to found on website</li> <li>➤ Not clear if ads are domestic,</li> </ul>



<p>more than 12 months old, only breed once a year and no more than 6 times in their lifetime.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ We DO NOT allow puppy farms. If you sell more than 4 litters of puppies in a year, by law you must have a “dog breeders license”. Evidence of breeders licence required to place commercial advert.</li> <li>➤ Location on all ads</li> <li>➤ No shipping of live animals</li> <li>➤ Appear to check for puppy farms and ban those who advertise more than 4 litters a year who do not have a LA licence</li> <li>➤ Puppies must be 8 weeks old before rehoming</li> <li>➤ DOB stated on ads so age can be calculated</li> <li>➤ No advertisements for pregnant dogs</li> </ul>	<p>commercial or rehoming (no categories to select)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Allows couriering of dogs</li> <li>➤ Adverts for stud dogs found</li> <li>➤ Pregnant dog ad found</li> <li>➤ No report function found on individual adverts.</li> </ul>
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It was interesting to note that some consumers in our focus groups also became part of the informal surveillance society through breed specific Facebook groups:

*...there is a Facebook group for people wanting to get mini Dachshund puppies and then minidachshund.uk ... Also, if they notice people doing things like, spelling the name of the breed wrong or something, they'll post it on there, and warn people not to buy, saying "I saw this ad. Looks dodgy. Does anyone know anything about this?" So, they will make other people aware if there seems to be things going on, and also, because they are popular at the moment, there's thefts and stuff, so they steal them, and use them for breeding. They'll always put on if dogs get stolen so you can keep an eye out [FG11].*

Therefore, while regulations are thought by some to be fit for purpose, there are improvements that should be considered with regards to breeding, selling and online advertisements. Enforcing existing regulations, albeit challenging with current resources, would help reduce the irresponsible and illegal puppy trade, as would informal measures such as education of young people and consumers.

### **Summary of Respondents Suggestions on Regulating the Puppy Trade**

1. Compulsory microchipping is only effective as a way of recording and tracing imported animal movement if it is designed for this purpose and changes of ownership are properly notified. Compulsory microchipping in the UK was only ever designed to reunite lost animals with their owners, it was not intended to be a full movement traceability scheme (as for livestock). The development of a UK centralised database or the requirement for UK databases to provide data to the centralised European database could help enhance traceability of puppies across the EU and UK. In order to facilitate traceability, accurate notification of changes in ownership by individuals is required, although this may be difficult to enforce.

Furthermore, traceability could be enhanced through mandatory recording of microchips as a part of the PTS and Balai.

2. Review all domestic puppy breeding and sales legislation in line with the current economic and international context of the trade to identify if they are fit for purpose.
3. PTS acts as a loophole to traffic puppies into the UK – close this loophole by a) reducing the number of dogs permitted to travel with each individual and b) enhancing traceability of pets entering the UK to check they have also left the country when their ‘owners’ leave, c) increase the minimum age at which dogs can travel with their owners to make it easier for enforcers to age the dog and to avoid the transportation of puppies at their most marketable age. This could be achieved by increasing the waiting period for post-rabies vaccinations from three weeks to 12 (the higher end of the incubation period for rabies).
4. Regulation of online advertisements which encourages strong censorship and punishes poor enforcement. Encourage consumers to be part of the enforcement process.
5. Animal welfare must be a more central focus in puppy trade legislation. For example, ‘disposing’ of healthy seized puppies or placing them in confinement for extended periods while awaiting trial should not be appropriate options. For example, a standardised valuation of puppies (such as used for seized livestock) would assist in helping move puppies on while court cases are ongoing.
6. There are significant deficits identified in agency funding, resources and staffing, professional experience and training and coordination between enforcement agencies which counteracts the effectiveness of the legislation in place. Failure to enforce the legislation appropriately renders it ineffective. An evaluation of the resources available to enforce current and prospective legislation is crucial to developing an effective response to the illegal trade. In particular, resources and training must be considered in light of the growth and changing nature of the trade.
7. Review sanctions available in breeding and related legislation and broader legislation in order to appropriately respond to offenders in the trade
8. Develop further opportunities for multi-agency partnerships aimed at enhancing awareness and enforcement of the trade

## **Impact of the puppy trade**

Irresponsible and illegal puppy trade has a variety of negative impacts related to welfare and wellbeing of dogs, people and society. Below we analyse these negative aspects, again drawing on our range of collected data.

### **Animal Health and Welfare**

The impact of the puppy trade on the dogs involved was well documented by the experts, often because this is the focus of the studies and projects they fund. The impact begins at the point of origin and is evident at every point in the trade. For example, an NGO expert summarises the puppy and public health concerns in the international trade in Case Study Four.

#### **Case Study Four: The Impact on Puppy and Public Health from the Trade.**

**We know from our investigations that how these puppies are being bred are, you know, really in very, very poor conditions, they're very barren, their welfare needs are not being met. For example, one of the groups of puppies were kept in basically a cupboard under the stairs so the only time that they saw daylight was when the door was opened. There is very little attention paid to the provenance of the children, for example, I saw an alleged pedigree for a Lithuanian puppy and when you looked at it, it was actually a sibling mating, which as you know, is a big no, no. And clearly, as you know, for certain breeds there are certain health tests that we would normally do, so for example, you have a Labrador you would expect the parents to be hip scored before you breed with them because we know there's an inherited component to that particular condition, you'd expect them to have their elbows scored because again with elbow dysplasia, you know there's an inherited component with some of the ocular problems you'd expect them to be eye checked. And none of this would happen you know, none of this is happening with the parents; the individuals associated with it are doing the bare minimum. To get them to the UK, they're undergoing enormous journeys; you are talking probably 30 hours by road to get to the UK. And again, anecdotally what we're hearing is that they're given very little in the way of food and water because obviously if you put something in stuff comes out at the other end and that creates a headache for the puppies being transported. So it's hardly surprising you know, for example, the work that we've done that we've lost a number of the puppies. On the other side of the fence is the potential disease risk as well. The investigations we did we found that because the puppies were so young either they weren't being vaccinated against rabies or they were being given a half dose. To my shame members of my own profession in these countries were certifying these puppies to be 15 weeks and having been vaccinated when they hadn't. And as you know, the other requirement to come into the UK is to have a tapeworm treatment between one and five days before entry. If they're not being vaccinated there's no way they're going to be popping a worming pill down these puppies [E12].**

These human and dog health and welfare impacts were echoed by all experts. As a consequence of these welfare issues, the above NGO reported that in the period from December 2015 to July 2017 they supported the quarantine and rehoming of 507 puppies. A further 26 puppies (almost 5%) died during this time. Of the puppies stopped by the authorities as a part of the scheme, almost 70% are either a Dachshund, French Bulldog, English bulldog, Pug or Chow. There is profit to be made out of this misery, according to the experts:

*if you've got 40 ... and three happen to die they're just getting kicked out at a lay-by... if I pick up 100 and I only end up with 50 I'm still going to make a good profit out of it [E14].*

*basically what's happening here is the cost of production is so low they're willing to take a chance and bring a hundred pups over and maybe getting ten of them alive... and they'll still make it worth their while [E15].*

Death and disease were commonly identified impacts of the domestic trade [E16]. A further impact emphasised by experts and common to legal and illegal and domestic and international breeding establishments is the prevalence of and poor breeding standards of brachycephalic breeds (breeds with the very short noses that struggle to breathe) – *“some of them are going to need corrective surgery but the problem is that a lot of people think that when a puppy snorts and snuffles and snores that it's cute, not the fact that the dog's actually struggling just to exist”* [E12]. The impacts identified in the trade are often long-lived by the dogs and their owners. This is also reflected in the online survey data – long-term health problems, long-term behavioural problems, short-term health problems and premature death – were, in the order listed, thought to be very significant (see Table 14).

**Table 14: The Identifiable Impacts of the Trade indicated by survey respondents**

<b>Question 30 – What is the identifiable impact of the illegal puppy trade on the puppies</b>	<b>Very significant</b>	<b>Significant</b>	<b>Neither significant nor insignificant</b>	<b>Not very significant</b>	<b>Not at all significant</b>
Long term health problems	41	8	0	0	0
Short term health problems	37	10	1	0	0
Long term behavioural problems	40	8	1	0	0
Premature death/destruction	35	12	2	0	0

\*49 respondents

Furthermore, one respondent commenting on the animal welfare aspect said *“Puppy's/dogs who are victims of illegal trading/breeding suffer greatly, the cruelty involved is incredibly concerning”*. Other implications listed by respondents were the risk of disease from imported dogs to other dogs and animals (specifically rabies) as well as the *“very significant impact on other illegal activities, the puppy trade provides funds for other criminal activity which is also a huge social and economical concern”*. Experts also identified the impact extends well beyond the puppies in the trade, arguing it has an effect on the state of the nation's dogs' health: from outbreaks of known diseases and the risk of introducing new diseases to the dog population to the long term behavioural impact resulting from puppies not being socialised properly, being removed from their mothers too early and having a traumatic journey to the UK. Experts suggested a possible consequence of this to be an increase in dog-bites resulting from a rise in aggressive and 'unsocialised' dogs in the UK. Surveyed stakeholders similarly identified illness, disease and

behavioural issues as a consequence of illegal or farmed puppies in response to Question 22 (Table 15).

**Table 15: Conditions typically found in Puppies in the Trade identified by survey respondents**

<b>Question 22 – How often are the conditions listed below typically found in illegal bred and ‘farmed’ puppies?</b>	<b>Very often</b>	<b>Often</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Rarely</b>	<b>Never</b>
Appears younger than age stated	30	17	2	0	0
Pathogens (parvovirus, canine brucellosis, canine distemper)	23	12	13	0	0
Respiratory illnesses (Bordetella bronchiseptica (ie. Kennel cough), pneumonia and other respiratory infections)	21	15	12	0	0
Parasites (Giardia canis, coccidiosis, intestinal parasites (e.g. roundworms, whipworms, hookworms, tapeworms)	32	11	5	0	0
Skin conditions (rashes, fleas, ticks, mange)	24	16	9	0	0
Common illnesses (eye problems)	22	15	11	0	0
Weight (under)	26	15	7	0	0
Inherited disorders	18	18	11	0	0
Behavioural problems	24	15	9	0	0

\*49 respondents

Due to the concerns around biosecurity, the puppies involved in the trade may experience further adversity when identified by enforcement agencies. Each of the options available to enforcement agencies involves potential further suffering or death. An LA expert identified that while the decision to ‘destroy’ healthy puppies was seldom taken, the alternatives also had negative consequences. Dogs returned to the country of origin with the transporter were identified by experts as discarded (at the port of origin) or kept for prolonged periods in the vehicle while an alternative route into the UK is identified. Consequently, “*they still end up in the country just on another you know, at another time*” [E12].

In response to this issue, the aforementioned Operation Delphin multi-agency partnership has arranged for seized puppies from Ireland to be returned and rehomed by the Irish SPCA so they do not go back into the trade [E14]. This agreement has been facilitated by the nature of the trade from Ireland. However, this cannot be replicated in England, as the origin of seized puppies is seldom identifiable. Instead, puppies seized in England are commonly placed in quarantine kennels. Puppies arriving from other European countries seized at the port or identified within the UK without the correct paperwork will need to spend at least three weeks in quarantine. This period was recognised by some experts (as confirmed by dog behaviourists) as a critical window in a puppy’s life (aged 3-14 weeks), at which time it is crucial to socialise and habituate them. The quarantine

facilities used by government agencies cannot provide the nurturing and socialisation required at this time – thereby negatively impacting on the welfare and behaviour of the puppy. As discussed in Case Study Two, Dogs Trust have responded to this by providing enhanced environments and funding for quarantined puppies in Kent. The impact of kennelling trafficked puppies is further exacerbated in cases where traders refuse to hand over their puppies to the authorities. Consequently, the SSPCA holds hundreds of puppies, who can be kennelled for up to a year before their case goes to court:

*And by the time it gets to court they're no longer pups; these are institutionalised dogs that have had very little socialisation. So you have to then question yourself ... are you achieving what you're setting out to do ... or compromising animal welfare [E14].*

According to experts, there are currently no provisions in the law to re-home these puppies prior to the trial, although this is possible for 'other' farmed animals.

## Consumer Health and Wellbeing

Part of changing consumer behaviour around buying puppies is linked to conveying to people the consequences of engaging with illegal puppy trading and breeding. With that in mind, the online survey asked respondents what they felt the impacts are on consumers – see Table 16.

**Table 16: Identifiable Impact of the Trade on Consumers**

<b>Question 29 – What is the identifiable impact of the illegal puppy trade on the consumer?</b>	<b>Very significant</b>	<b>Significant</b>	<b>Neither significant nor insignificant</b>	<b>Not very significant</b>	<b>Not at all significant</b>
Loss of income/excessive costs	24	23	2	0	0
Emotional distress	41	7	1	0	0
Relinquishment of puppy	35	11	2	1	0

\*49 respondents

Interestingly, the financial costs related to purchasing an illegal puppy was seen as the least significant aspect. Emotional distress and having to give up the puppy were identified as the most significant impact on consumers. The impact on consumers was also noted by the experts, from financial loss resulting from medical treatment and quarantine costs, to emotional distress resulting from the loss of or concern for their pet [E12]. One expert also noted the distress experienced by consumers is often intensified by their interactions with the breeders or sellers post-sale. Specifically, threatening and abusive behaviour was reported by the majority of consumers the NGO engaged with, which prohibited them reporting the issue to the authorities. This expert also experienced threatening behaviour: *“we had a police escort but that wasn't going to stop me... That just shows the depravity ...of*

*these people*” [E16]. The fear and concern when interacting with sellers was also addressed by focus group participants.

### Stakeholder Resources and Wellbeing

The negative financial impact of the trade is not just experienced by consumers, but by government, NGOs, legitimate businesses and the UK public, according to the experts. Enforcement agencies and NGOs must use their limited resources to regulate and respond to the harms of the trade. In contrast, the profits available, according to one expert agency, are greatly enhanced for those “*who have no tax footprint and those who have a tax footprint but are either not declaring income from this source of income or are suppressing the amount they are declaring*” [E10]. Furthermore, those engaging in the illegal trade are “*benefiting from an unfair trading advantage*” [E10], by not paying VAT, taxes or the breeding and selling costs common to the trade (e.g. licensing).

The online survey also asked respondents what they felt the impacts are to professionals (Table 17). Again, monetary issues were considered less significant, with emotional distress reportedly the main impact. Survey respondents felt that in terms of wider implications (Question 32) that the illegal puppy trade had significant (23) and very significant (15) implications for public health.

**Table 17: Impact of the Trade on Professionals and Organisations**

<b>Question 31 – What is the identifiable impact of the illegal puppy trade on professionals and organisations caring for dogs?</b>	<b>Very significant</b>	<b>Significant</b>	<b>Neither significant nor insignificant</b>	<b>Not very significant</b>	<b>Not at all significant</b>
Loss of income/business/greater pressures on organisational budgets	11	20	12	5	0
Additional costs to professionals or organisations	16	18	11	4	0
Increased income/business	13	16	15	4	1
Emotional distress	33	12	3	1	0

\*49 respondents

Impacts of the irresponsible and illegal puppy trade are significant for the puppies and people involved, but also have much more far-reaching implications. Government, NGOs, businesses and society also experience negative impacts from loss of tax revenue from breeders and sellers avoiding taxes to extra expenditures to combat irresponsible and illegal trading; from emotional distress for veterinarians and dog ‘owners’ to public health threats from diseased or un-socialised dogs. Individually, each of these impacts would warrant further attention, but in combination, addressing this trade becomes even more of a priority.

## Summary of Participant Suggestions regards the Impact of the Puppy Trade

1. Highlighting the negative impacts of the trade on the dogs, consumers and society should be a key part of education and public awareness campaigns. Illegal breeders and traders must be identified to consumers as offenders.
2. Enhance LAs and key stakeholders awareness of the wider negative impacts of the trade, in order to help them recognise the importance of regulating the trade and encourage them to prioritise resources to reduce the irresponsible and illegal puppy trade.
3. Animal welfare must be given greater consideration in regulating and enforcing the puppy trade. This can be done by making changes to the enforcement process, the welfare standards and the sanctions available.

## Improving the Puppy Trade

Experts, stakeholders and consumers who recommended improvements, predominantly focused on consumers, breeders, traders and official agencies. Consequently, suggestions often incorporated a multi-strategy and multi-agency approach. For example, one focus group participant argued: *“the whole canine industry needs more regulation and that’s the seller’s side of it. The buyer’s side needs education”* [FG4]. Another argued that: *“All these things depend on like how much we as a society really care, because it can be stopped, it just takes investment, kind of by everybody* [FG13]. Experts took a broader, more international, perspective when making their recommendations, while consumers and stakeholders focused their suggestions on improvements to the domestic trade. What follows is an overview of the recommendations suggested by all participants to improve the puppy trade – focusing on consumer behavior, breeders and traders and then regulation and enforcement.

## Consumer Behaviour

Tackling consumer demand was deemed essential for a successful puppy trade. Participants suggested this could be done by educating and advising consumers and decreasing demand for specific types of dogs:

*And it’s a case of informing people, therefore. Just making sure that they either stop demanding those breeds because it is not good for the breed itself, or stop people from spreading the word that, “Hey, this is a really fashionable dog. Look at me and my cute Pug.” It’s hard to cut demand* [FG11].

Both experts and consumers suggested this would not be easy to achieve. Participants acknowledged that not all buyers are open to changing their behaviour, consequently, any attempt to provide advice and education must be targeted at the right people and in the most effective manner. Some consumers suggested consumers should be required to demonstrate their knowledge – through a “doggy



*driving licence*” [FG5] or “*dog ownership certificate*” (Germany may have an example course) [FG4]. This suggestion was supported by experts and professionals. Most consumers focussed on educating buyers about the trade, for example:

1. the national press, bus shelters and other popular platforms such as the internet or TV soap operas for informing the general public on the dangers and abuse in the puppy trade [FG1; FG2; FG15; FG21]. Furthermore, these would be more effective with celebrity endorsements from credible people such as ‘Paul O’ Grady’, ‘Martin Clunes’, ‘David Attenborough’ or ‘Ricky Gervais’ and provide hard-hitting images and ‘scare tactics’ detailing the reality of the puppy industry:

*There definitely needs to be more public awareness. I sat and did my research and even I got caught [FG14].*

*There’s a lot of hard hitting advertising campaigns out there now for drink driving, drug use, all that sort of thing, but see having something like a puppy, a wee Staffie, for instance, in a puppy farm, somebody takes it, and you show it through its life, becoming a really aggressive dog because that’s what happens. Something like that would really hit hard [FG16].*

*I think if you show a time-lapse of this dog being bred, all the puppies there, all in a nice clean bed and then eight weeks down the line the bed is a mess and then she’s got a new litter of puppies and the bed is still a mess and then eight weeks down the line she’s got a new litter and the bed just gets muckier and muckier. But the puppies still look good [FG21].*

2. An increase in documentaries which expose the illegal puppy trade and help consumers purchase in an informed manner, such as “*The Right Puppy*”, “*Choose the Right Puppy*” [FG13; FG17].
3. Experts and stakeholders suggested an urgent need for education to focus on helping consumers locate their puppy. Consumers argued for an increase in official advertisements and education online [FG10], as consumers felt there was no guaranteed websites available [FG27] for advice and guidance:

*If it was a government thing, that would certainly help, but I suppose really what you are talking about would be if you are looking for a puppy, what you do is you go into Google and the first thing that will come up on the search thing is that it is a government thing which then directs you to this website [FG16].*

*If you went on Google and one of the first things that came up was a gov.uk website. You’d think, oh well, that looks official, let’s have a look at that one for some advice first [FG23].*

4. Accessible and reliable information on the requirements of owning a puppy/dog to ensure consumers are aware of the effort and responsibilities. One focus group participant suggested making a video available or to facilitate prospective

buyers spending a day with a puppy to understand the impact it will have on your life [FG30]. For the same reasons, another FG participant suggested prospective buyers go to a training class with another dog to experience how difficult owning a dog can be [FG4].

5. The use of a simple acronym that promotes a small number of steps to help consumers buy their puppy, as consumers are overwhelmed by the amount of information available [FG1]. A small portion of consumers used the puppy packs available from NGOs, which detail the questions to ask breeders, but found this to be too detailed and embarrassing to ask [FG28]. A shorter guide may make this information more accessible to the general purchasing public.
6. A list of people who consumers could go to for advice or information [FG1; FG13], (e.g. veterinarians, NGOs). One focus group discussed the merits of setting up a voluntary online group – such as ‘borrow my doggie’ but as a source for people who want help in choosing their puppy [FG23].
7. Mandatory dog awareness classes for owners [FG19]. In particular, education in the classroom (as part of the national curriculum) was proposed by a number of participants, as children can have a substantial impact on the purchasing process and are the next generation of buyers [FG22]. This was also supported by experts.
8. Clearer guidelines on how to report a suspicious sale or purchase [FG23] for all consumers, including help lines and report lines.
9. A standard guide price for dogs: *“This is what you can expect to pay. I know a few Cockapoos who are anything [from] about 300 to like 2,000. It’s a massively ridiculous price range”* [FG24].

Impulse buying was recognised by all consumers as particularly problematic as consumers who are educated may still make an impulsive and emotional decision in buying a puppy. Consequently, consumers proposed steps to avoid or delay the purchase: get a recommendation for a breeder, bring a vet or other professional with you, never buy on first viewing the puppy, view the puppy frequently before buying, don’t bring the full amount of money when first viewing the dog – only bring enough for a deposit to ensure you do not take the puppy there and then, use a well-recognised breeder rather than the internet to locate your puppy, view the documentation in advance of purchase, view the puppy with the mother and in his/her home, have a list of questions with you when visiting and ask these prior to meeting the puppy, and put a puppy contract in place.

When survey respondents were asked to comment on strategies proposed to change consumer behavior, the suggestions thought to reduce consumer purchases ‘a lot’ were better traceability of animal from birth to sale, stopping online sales, mandatory registration for all breeders and traders and more effective enforcement of existing legislation and protocols. Those deemed less likely to

reduce purchases from the illegal puppy trade were a mandatory cooling off period and a compulsory puppy information pack (Table 18).

**Table 18: Influences on Consumer Purchasing Behaviour**

<b>Question 34 – How, if at all, would any of the changes, listed below, reduce puppy buyers purchase of illegally bred and traded puppies?</b>	<b>Would reduce a lot</b>	<b>Would reduce</b>	<b>No impact</b>	<b>Would reduce a little</b>	<b>Would not reduce at all</b>
Legal sanctions/prosecution (purchasers)	26	18	3	2	0
Legal sanctions (suppliers)	32	14	2	1	0
Wider legal changes	27	19	3	0	0
Stop third party sales	24	16	8	0	0
Stop online sales	35	8	5	1	0
Pop-ups with information attached to online sales	21	21	6	2	0
Mandatory cooling-off period after purchase of puppy	15	13	18	1	1
Internet advertisement guidelines (PAAG) made mandatory	21	15	10	2	0
Education in schools	25	17	5	1	0
Prohibit sales from abroad	17	18	7	5	2
Mandatory registration for all breeders and traders	34	10	2	1	0
Better traceability of animal from birth to sale	36	8	4	1	0
More effective enforcement of existing legislation and protocols	34	12	3	0	0
Compulsory Puppy Information Pack	13	19	13	0	4
Make it easier to identify legal, responsible breeders	28	15	6	1	0
National register of pets and their owners on entry to the UK	31	11	5	2	1

\*49 respondents

In response to the question on the best methods of communicating with the public, survey respondents also felt that Television campaigns would be the most effective followed by celebrity endorsements and radio campaigns. Other suggestions included information through pet supply stores, vets' practices and rescue centres as well as advertisements through social media, like Facebook (Table 19).

**Table 19: Consumer Information Approaches**

Question 35 – Which of the approaches listed below, designed to provide consumer information, do you think would be most effective at preventing illegal puppy trading?	Very effective	Effective	Neither effective nor ineffective	Ineffective	Very ineffective
Information on government websites	5	15	22	5	2
Newspaper campaigns	18	23	6	1	0
Radio campaigns	20	21	6	2	0
Television campaigns	30	15	3	1	0
Celebrity endorsements	25	16	7	1	0

\*49 respondents

Participants in one focus group strongly argued that to make an impact on demand, it is crucial to help consumers to make smarter and more ethical purchasing choices, and to forcefully promote the dogs in need of homes – those in animal rescues [FG23]. Another agreed, explaining: *I never knew there was a Vizsla rescue centre, and if some of these centres were advertised more, people might go to them rather than go to puppy farms et cetera* [FG1]. Other focus group participants recommended consumers become more involved in preventing the illegal trade, suggesting involvement in petitions to the government and Facebook forums against the irresponsible trade [FG2].

### Breeders and Sellers

Among experts, professionals and consumers, those responsible for the trade were seen to have a key role in improving the puppy trade. For some consumers, those responsible for the trade involved all people who breed a litter “*even if you do one litter*” [FG2]. Specifically, they felt occasional breeders needed to be more informed about the potential problems and responsibility of breeding from their dog; “*there is so much involved with breeding. It is exhausting*” [FG16]. Thereby, consumers called for a re-classification of what constitutes a breeder. In line with this, consumers argued that breeders needed to be more accountable for the current condition of the trade [FG9]. For example, one FG participant recommended legitimate breeders being heard more and engaging in public debate and in consultations. In particular, a number of consumers argued that KC breeders needed to be better represented online (e.g. better websites) in order to demonstrate the benefits for consumers in buying from them:

*...you know I was saying breeders have crappy websites but in future they won't, you know? In future they probably will have better websites and that, actually, I think will start to help as breeders like are more in the public eye and putting out ... why do I charge the prices I charge? How do I break those down, you know? What are the standard things that I do? What do I look for in an owner for one of my dogs, you know? [FG13].*

Another focus group suggested there needs to be a public database of all breeders, which highlights reputable breeders and is regularly checked [FG22].

In terms of breeders' responsibilities, consumers suggested breeders should play a significant role in educating and supporting consumers and thereby supporting their dogs. This could involve a number of strategies:

1. Ensure all puppies are vet checked and it is mandatory that purchasers are supplied with an official form from the vet confirming there are no obvious health problems, the puppy has been vaccinated, microchipped and wormed and is of a certain age [FG7].
2. Ensure all puppies are registered in advance by breeders in order to receive a number to advertise the puppies. Consumers should be able to check basic breeder details through a central website [FG4].
3. Place the onus on breeders to educate prospective owners and to give lifelong support to their dogs [FG4]. To do so breeders should be happy to support consumers with advice and recommendations, even if they are not purchasing their dogs [FG5]. To provide a breeder contract/agreement in place with the buyer which means the buyer can return the dog if they could not look after it [FG29] or the consumer had problems [FG26]
4. Breeders are required to vet buyers and if they do not fit the criteria, the breeder needs to refuse to sell them the dog [FG8]. Many consumers expected to be 'interviewed' by the breeder/seller, and failure to do so implied the seller did not care for the dog's welfare [FG23]:

*I would have liked an interview on getting an animal rather than, "Okay, so she's here, you can take her next week". I would have liked her to say to me, "Are you suitable for me to give you a living creature?" and I didn't get that and I would have liked that [FG29].*

5. It is important to point out that both experts and consumers were aware of the possible problems resulting from turning consumers away. That is, if they cannot get a puppy from a legitimate source, they will go to less reputable breeders [FG5]. This issue was previously identified by experts with regard to rehoming rescue dogs.
6. Require breeders to demonstrate they are up to date and use best breeding practice, evidenced by research. For example, one breeder [FG6] recommends the Military Superdog Programme, which requires a more hands-on approach to handling and socialising young puppies in order to reduce stress in the dogs and mother. Another consumer mentioned the use of 'puppy culture' and 'puppy enrichment' classes from four weeks old:

*And it's just raising the criteria, we're asking the breeders, and as you raise that criteria if the breeders are then going to that level then*

*obviously the buyers are going to start looking for that level as well [FG8].*

Case Study 5 details an example of a breeder who engages in many of these positive behaviours, which she argues justifies the higher price charged for her puppies and should be required of any person selling a dog.

### **Case Study 5: Suggested Breeder Requirements**

First, the breeder only advertises her puppies on her personal website, the KC website and Champ Dogs, not on generic online advertisement providers. Second, consumers must complete a questionnaire and discuss their requirements with the breeder in order for her to shortlist applicants. Third, all puppies are KC registered, microchipped and first vaccinated. Fourth, when the puppies are eight weeks old, the purchasers are brought to her premises for a two hour “Puppy Right Start” session, in order to pick up their puppy. These sessions are used to advise consumers on how to take care of their puppy, provide them with the necessary details, answer any questions and to create a supportive community among the prospective owners. Breeders should be required to complete a form when handing puppies to their new owners, to record who the puppy has been registered to/purchased by [FG16].

It is important to note that although recognised breeders could provide a strong voice for public education, consumers recognised that it was not necessarily in their interest to take the time to do so, as they were not reliant on the general public for their puppy sales.

### **Regulation and Enforcement**

In terms of regulation and enforcement, participants focused on changes to legislation, better traceability and enforcement strategies. Changes to formal regulations supported by experts and stakeholders involved significant changes – such as, banning trade from outside the UK [FG12], banning online advertisements and third party sales [FG5] and formalising regulation of the online trade. Other suggestions were alterations – such as, increasing the age at which pups can be passported, sold and neutered (Sweden and the Netherlands may have regulation that can be useful to compare) and/or introducing fixed penalty notices, for example, on the spot fines for overseas carriers with incorrect paperwork. Consumers supported an increase to the age at which pets can travel and formal regulation of online trade. As mentioned, one focus group suggested a ban on online sales:

*You shouldn't be able to buy a puppy online. Make it illegal... not finding a puppy, buying a puppy. You can't just go and [buy them but] you would want the breeders to be able to promote themselves online, of course [FG17].*

Both stakeholders and consumers argued there was also a need to penalise those who buy puppies from illegitimate sources [FG2; FG12], as is the case for those who purchase fake or pirated goods [FG11]. However, many argued that the focus should be on enhancing trader standards and policing traders, rather than consumers:

*...it's not about the public so much, it's about the breeders. You've got to make sure they're legit because then it doesn't matter how inexperienced the purchaser is, the breeder is up to standard [FG1].*

A variety of suggestions were posited to achieve this:

1. Develop an independent agency who is responsible for monitoring sellers and their documentation, “almost like Scottish Quality Assurance ...It's like when you buy a car you get a V5...” [FG1]. Another consumer suggested this should look:

*kind of like a school where you can actually see the inspection report, to have open inspection reports so that you see the breeder and you can see the most recent inspection report and when it was done...and you can see how they did and if they failed they have to be inspected again within six months, but they're not allowed to sell any puppies until they've been re-inspected... I know there's a lot of resources associated with that though [FG28].*

2. Develop a registered association of puppy sellers, “you're not allowed to sell a puppy unless you're part of a trade association. Like Corgi gas fitters” [FG17]. With this approach the government “signpost consumers to approved breeders, not just registered breeders” [FG4]. Furthermore, it provides breeders with the necessary incentive to raise standards. In line with this, one focus group participant who works in an LA indicated they were looking at expanding their Trusted Trader scheme (used for home improvement traders) to animal breeders and boarders to enhance consumer confidence in the sector [FG5] – see Case Study Six below. Consumers, experts and stakeholders suggested an alternative to this approach the KC Assured Breeder Scheme – see Case Study Seven below.
3. Make sellers aware that they will be monitored and investigated by the HMRC, with all online advertisements requiring a tax reference [FG27].

*You know the way we have fraud lines and things like that? Do you think something like that would be good that was directly linked to the HMRC? Would you feel inclined to ring them and let them know about the people you have been dealing with [FG4]?*

4. Put in place punishment that is certain, severe and deters irresponsible traders:

*...more prosecution, more stronger prison sentences or fines or better punishment when these crimes are uncovered [FG24].*

*...but maybe if it was more publicised when there are these big fines or when there are prosecutions and when there are confiscations...It doesn't really make big news, does it? [FG27].*

5. Shut down websites that are repeated offenders in permitting irresponsible online trade [FG12]. Require websites facilitating trade to vet advertisements prior to publication [FG13] and role out PAAG Minimum Standards as the formal requirement for online trade [EI1; EI2; EI11; EI12].
6. Provide a legal impetus for key NGOs to enforce the legislation, enter traders premises and carry out checks [FG8] - an option strongly supported by some experts [EI4].
7. Enhance traceability across the UK and EU (like the system in Ireland where in order to get a Balai permit the traders must first have a MODR equivalent). According to experts this will make traders more accountable. Linked to this, experts and consumers argued for a centralised microchipping database and professional microchipping only [FG22; FG27] and others argued for professionals to be accountable (eg veterinarians) if they fail to register microchips to the breeders [FG5].
8. Regular and unannounced inspections by LAs [FG21].
9. Provide appropriate funding and staff to enforce the regulations [FG5]: *"I think it's all down to enforcement, and I don't think there is enough funding for enforcement".* Resources, or lack thereof, were identified as the chief limitation on enforcement, in response to this, one focus group suggested LAs look for help from other professionals: *"they need to work out how they're going to police it, whether it's getting vets, dog trainers you know, to sign up to help"* [FG1]. In line with this, one focus group suggested funding an NGO that is already looking directly at what breeders do [FG16] to carry out enforcement duties.

### **Case Study Six: LA Trusted Traders Scheme**

To become involved in the Trusted Traders Scheme, breeders and boarders would need to apply and comply with a set of criteria – for example, demonstrate *"they trade fairly and legally, and whether they have the right procedures in place if things go wrong...If they actually exist, for a start. Plenty people have a trading address and they don't even trade from that address, so that's a good start"*. The current Trusted Trader scheme is funded through a housing grant and overseen by a dedicated person. The scheme would work similarly to the Good Garage scheme, in that consumers would provide feedback, *"so it is an opportunity for people to make a decision based on what other customers before them have experienced"*. In addition traders can be removed from the scheme, for example, *"because they've not been able to provide us with an updated insurance policy for this year, or because there have been complaints, or not willing or able to resolve them"* [FG24].



## Case Study Seven: KC Assured Breeder Scheme

The Assured Breeder Scheme standards meet all local authority licensing requirements and place additional requirements on breeders in terms of health (e.g. relevant mandatory health screening tests), welfare (e.g. bitches must not be bred from if they are over 8 years old or if they have previously produced more than 3 litters and members must commit to lifetime rehoming), socialisation (a plan must be in place and provided information on future socialisation and exercise), information to buyer (buyers must be provided with a contract, information on the complaints procedure, and written advice on immunisation as well as on worming, feeding and grooming and veterinary treatment carried out). Every member is visited prior to breeding or registering litters and inspected every three years or more frequently (on a risk assessed basis). Assessors are located across the whole of the UK. The training of Assessors is overseen by UKAS (United Kingdom Accreditation Service), who also annually audit the assessors. The KC would inspect assured breeders and pass inspection reports on to LAs, along with a nominal registration fee. This would save LAs from needing to do inspections and would avoid financially motivated breeders to remain in/join the Scheme [E112]

One focus group [FG18] considered:

*“the kennel club assured breeder scheme is obviously a great idea. The breeders could earn different badges based on different targets they had met so that prospective buyers could see these. Breeders also had to undergo home checks every couple of years to retain their assured status. I think this idea could be rolled out in places other than the kennel club if there was another central governing body to control this. Also a comprehensive and up to date website could be put together and publicised to prospective buyers with information on what health tests puppies should have had for each breed and what buyers should expect of their breeders”*

The study participants proposed a broad range of suggestions that may prove useful in reducing the irresponsible and illegal puppy trade. In the next section, we summarise and propose recommendations and solutions based upon the data collected.

## **Summary of Respondent Suggestions for improving the puppy trade**

1. Creation of a scheme that requires consumers to attend training/awareness classes prior to their puppy purchase and/or issue buyers a 'driver's licence' or 'owner's certificate' after demonstrating their knowledge of caring for a puppy.
2. Develop a single 'go-to' website or website application which contains: a list of registered or approved breeders/sellers, a list of professionals who can give advice on purchasing a puppy, videos about caring for and raising a puppy, guidelines on how to report suspicious sales and purchases including access to a helpline, guidelines on the prices of puppies, and an acronym checklist to make the scrutiny of the puppy and seller at the time of purchase simpler and less time consuming.
3. Wide-scale education campaign, which would include changes to the national curriculum to teach children about animal welfare issues and a public awareness campaign in the national press and other forms of media with a celebrity endorsement to bring attention to the problem.
4. Require all breeders and sellers to have the puppies vet checked, that they be registered, that they vet the buyer and issue them a contract, and that they provide evidence of up to date practices such as enrichment and socialisation activities.
5. Establish a voluntary online and in-person support group that can provide guidance on purchasing and raising a puppy and who are willing (for a fee) to accompany people when visiting puppies for sale.
6. Create an independent agency to monitor breeders and sellers online and off-line, rather than rely on LAs and other organisations who have competing priorities and lack specialisation.
7. Increase prosecutions and sanctions for puppy trade violations.
8. Develop Trusted Trader Schemes or link into the KC Assured Breeder Scheme to monitor and improve the standards of breeding and enhance transparency.
9. Ensure the HMRC is more involved in monitoring commercial breeders and traders, in particular of online advertisements leading to sale.
10. Increase funding for enforcement agencies (e.g. LA) responsible for regulation and/or expand enforcement powers to NGOs or adopt other multi-agency approaches to increase unannounced inspections and overall enforcement.
11. Improve traceability of puppies by enhancing breeder/seller and consumer responsibility in updating registration and by providing a central database for the microchip data in order to identify prevalence and trends in the puppy trade.
12. Require all puppies be vet checked prior to purchase and make it mandatory that sellers supply purchasers with an official form from the vet confirming there are no obvious health problems, the puppy has been vaccinated, microchipped and wormed and is of a certain age.
13. Require registration of all sellers and all puppies to be registered by breeders in advance of their advertisement online. Consumers should be able to check basic breeder details through a centralised website.

# Recommendations and Proposed Solutions

What follows are the authors' recommendations and proposed solutions set out in the same order as the rest of the report: prevalence, nature, understanding consumer behaviour and regulation. This is followed by a summary of our recommendations as related to the two research questions and with suggestions on a timeframe for undertaking the recommended actions.

## Prevalence

It is difficult to estimate both the numbers of puppies who are irresponsibly or illegally bred and sold and the numbers of breeders and sellers overall as well as those who are acting unscrupulously or illegally. An important step forward in better understanding the prevalence of the problem is the development of a process to accurately record both the legal and known illegal trade. This would need to be widely accessible and shared between formal and informal agencies and stakeholders. In connection to this, some anonymised formal data should be shared in the public domain to assist in educating consumers and stakeholders about the prevalence of the irresponsible and illegal puppy trade. One way of achieving this is to copy the format of the European Union – Trade in Wildlife Information eXchange (EU-TWIX). An NGO, TRAFFIC, has a dedicated staff member that receives and collates all the information and intelligence data from across the EU from law enforcement agencies. This can then be shared across the countries through a central point and also can sanitise information to share more widely. This could be a format to work within the UK, but expanding those able to report information and intelligence to NGOs and charities.

## Nature

Evidence suggests the puppy trade is a fluid market, thereby resources and organisations need to be flexible in responding to market shifts. Fluidity in the puppy trade is facilitated by the different types of trade (that is, legal regulated, legal unregulated, illegal and irresponsible) and the variety of offenders in the trade (for example, organised crime, ad-hoc, legitimate commercial traders). Although the illegal domestic and international trade coexist, each requires a different responses. Consequently, further research is required to identify the nature of the domestic and international trade, for example to identify which aspects of the trade are linked to serious organised crime or otherwise legitimate commercial businesses. Enforcement at ports and internet advertising are key areas which are influenced by current shifts in the market. With regards to ports, it should be a priority to provide efficient and effective resources and staff at the ports to respond to the number of puppies entering the UK illegally. This is essential as once puppies enter the country it is very difficult for enforcement agencies to identify and respond to the illegal trade. With regard to the internet as the chief medium for consumer purchases, a combined approach is required – to make it more difficult to purchase puppies from online advertisements and to enforce sellers, breeders and consumers responsibility.

## Understanding Consumer Behaviour

As mentioned above, the internet is the principal source of information as well as the main conduit for consumers to purchase their puppies. This provides multiple opportunities for potential interventions. First, the PAAG Minimum Standards for advertising pets online should be considered for all advertisements. Linked to this, a pop-up warning could precede any detailed advertisement to try to help decrease impulse buying. Further pop-ups could be used to direct consumers to a dedicated 'go to' website or website application (see below) or to a link where they must confirm details, such as their age. Clearly, regulation of the internet is very difficult and has the potential to displace illegal and irresponsible trade to other websites potentially located in other countries, which cannot be regulated. Therefore, it is essential that regulatory and monitoring measures be introduced in partnership with websites and underpinned with robust evaluation to ensure the measures implemented are having the desired result. Ideally, evaluation would be undertaken by an independent party. Second, a single 'go-to' website should be developed that contains information vital for improving consumer understanding and behaviour. This could include a list or link to registered or approved breeders/sellers included in the proposed Trusted Traders Scheme of LAs. These breeders and sellers would be registered or approved through a scheme put in place by the LA or by a multi-agency initiative (see Regulations below). Another section on the website would be a list of professionals (i.e. veterinarians and so forth) who can give advice and support. The list would be made up of volunteers willing to answer questions and potentially to accompany people when visiting/purchasing puppies. This website would also provide specific guidance as to how to report suspicious activity and provide a contact number or helpline for reporting suspicious or illegal behaviour. Furthermore, there would be useful videos on how to choose, find and raise a puppy. Other valuable information would be a price guide for the different breeds of puppies. Additionally, a simplified checklist (taken from the Puppy Contract) or acronym guide to use when at the breeder's or seller's place would help consumers remember to ask the right questions.

Third, there needs to be wide-scale education about the irresponsible and illegal puppy trade. This could be included in the part of the national curricula that teaches children about animal welfare issues. The RSPCA, SSPCA and Dogs Trust and Kennel Club already provide materials that could be used, such as the Puppy Contract and Puppy Plan. Additionally, there should be a public awareness campaign involving the national press, social media, and TV programmes – soap operas and documentaries – with celebrity endorsements to bring attention to the problem. Not only would such a wide-scale education programme help consumer behaviour, it would also make LAs and businesses aware of the prevalence and nature of the irresponsible and illegal puppy trade and potentially enhance their understanding of the importance of allocating resources to reduce the trade.

## Regulation

As a starting point, there should be a review of all legislation related to the breeding, sale and international transit of dogs. This would entail analysis of domestic breeding regulation as well as international imports. Such a review is particularly necessary in light of the UK leaving the European Union. For instance, the PTS scheme currently provides loopholes in regards to the number of dogs each person may travel with (five), the age of entry and it provides very limited tracability of the dogs. PTS would be improved by allowing fewer dogs (three), monitoring the entry and exit of owners and their dogs, requiring registration of microchips and raising the age at which dogs can travel. Linked to PTS is the current untapped potential of mandatory microchips for UK dogs. Microchipping could be used for traceability of movement and sales in addition to locating lost dogs. Consideration should be given to a centralised UK database that records all microchipped dogs and places responsibility on both sellers and owners to update microchip data, such as the Irish MODR system or the mechanism in place for tracking livestock and horses. Although microchip data can be requested by the various official government agencies, this has not been done to produce statistics which could help identify the prevalence, nature and trends in the UK puppy trade. Should database providers be required to share and collate this data annually, this would provide clarity on the scale of the trade and the resources required to regulate it. To enhance tracability, the data from these databases need to be shared with European, as well as other, trade partners. Overall, domestic and international regulations need to have stronger animal welfare components. As mentioned, the options available to 'dispose' of animals seized and those waiting potentially for months or years for a court case must be reviewed.

As outlined above, the online advertising of puppies needs to be better regulated, such as making the PAAG Minimum Standards mandatory for all online advertisement providers. Part of improving sellers' behaviour regarding online advertisements would be to increase the involvement of HMRC in monitoring the tax returns of puppy advertisers online.

Regulation can be further improved by implementing schemes for both the sellers and the buyers. Suitable sellers and breeders could be voluntarily registered as part of a LA Trusted Traders Scheme, modelled on existing assured breeder or other trade schemes. The sellers and breeders taking part would then be required to present evidence to the LA that they have vet checked the puppies, vetted the buyer, provided the buyer with a contract and are up to date on practices such as enrichment and socialisation of the puppies. People buying from these traders can then post reviews and recommendations on the website of the scheme. For the buyers, there could be a scheme for them to attend training/awareness classes prior to purchase. This would qualify as their vetting in regards to the Trusted Traders Scheme. Undoubtedly, this would require more resources, but LAs participating in this research indicated it may be possible as part of their existing schemes.

An evaluation of the current resources available for responding to the puppy trade in terms of the agencies responsible for enforcing the regulations, the number of staff available and the financial and other resources (for example, quarantine facilities) needed to respond is necessary. Once this is determined, it may be possible to estimate what further resources are needed based upon estimation of the scales of the irresponsible and illegal trade (see literature review Appendix II). By ensuring the necessary capacity and training for enforcement is available, regulations will have the ‘teeth’ to prevent, deter and punish offenders in the trade. LAs should consider prioritising this issue so that more resources can be identified and allocated. Alternatively, these schemes could be part of a multi-agency partnership headed by an independent agency. Such a partnership should also entail increased enforcement, including more unannounced inspections. Overall, punishment and sanctions should be increased when there are violations. This could be provided for through greater use by enforcers of the broader legislation and sanctions available to respond to the illegal puppy trade, including tax evasion and proceeds of crime laws. As part of a legislation review process the government could issue definitive legislation and sentencing guidelines for criminal justice and enforcement agencies.

## Recommendations

The following is a summary of our recommendations. They are not set out in order of priority but in order of the two main research questions: 1) what can be done to enhance our understanding of the nature, extent and value of the UK puppy trade and 2) what improvements can be made at each part of the trade to help prevent the international illegal trade of puppies and unregistered puppy farms? It is important to note that the recommendations refer individually to Scotland, England, Wales and Northern Ireland and to all four devolved parliaments/assemblies [identified as “UK gov” below], in acknowledgement that a consistent approach to many of the recommendations is essential in order to respond to the national and international trade. In recognition of the difficulty in responding to some of the recommendations, a suggested timescale is provided: short (quick fixes), medium (within the next twelve months) and long (one to three years) term. As the resources available to respond to the puppy trade are currently limited, the authors recognise the need for further funding for enforcement agencies to facilitate the recommendations below. It should be noted that Defra are currently undertaking a review of the licensing system for dog breeding and sales in England, which may address a number of the issues highlighted above and fulfil the recommendations proposed in this report. However due to the timing and focus of this project the new licensing proposals have not been accounted for here.

1) Recommendations to further our understanding of the nature, extent and value of the UK Puppy Trade

Action	Organisation	Timescale
Collate existing data on the scale and value of the trade, trade offences and related harms (example databases are listed on page 21 of the report) to provide a more accurate estimate of both the legal and known illegal trade. This would require <b>cross-agency anonymised data-sharing, which could be collated by one agency.</b>	UK gov/ NGOs	Medium-Long
Expand the benefits of mandatory UK microchipping to assist in tracking dogs from birth through transportation/sale. To facilitate “cradle to grave” traceability a <b>centralised UK-wide microchipping database</b> could be developed whereby <b>all approved database providers are required to annually report their figures and/or all approved providers are required to contribute to Europetnet</b> [for example, the Microchipping of Dog Regulations [MODR] in Ireland only authorise providers that are full member of Europetnet, thereby, traceability is easier across the EU and Europetnet has the capacity to generate a single report on the trends, nature and scale of the puppy trade (for example, the number of puppies bred/brought to the UK, puppies age and breed, the keeper information, licensed keepers/breeders in each LA).	UK gov	Medium-Long
<b>Publish an annual summary of data</b> (as above, but with sensitive information removed), which provides an overview of the legal and known illegal trade. Share widely in order to enhance awareness and responses across all stakeholders, in particular consumers.	UK gov/ NGOs	Medium-Long
<b>Increase the ability to monitor online advertisements through the use of PAAG Minimum Standards</b> , such as requiring sellers to provide licence number on advertisements. Irresponsible and illegal sellers should be more easily identified through their failure to adhere to these guidelines. <b>Enhance formal monitoring by enforcement agencies</b> (for example, LAs) <b>through proactive spot checks for compliance and trial purchases.</b> This would facilitate the quantification of the online legal and known illegal trade providing more robust estimates of the overall trade. <b>Require online advertising providers to share the number and nature of non-compliant advertisements with appropriate government agency</b> to assist agencies intelligence gathering. This is already being considered in England (see Appendix VII)	UK gov  UK gov  UK gov/online providers	Medium
<b>Provide funding and support to further develop multi-agency partnerships</b> (such as Operation Delphin), which would help facilitate cross-agency data sharing. These partnerships should be developed at both the local and national level.	UK gov	Short
<b>Fund further empirical research to evaluate trends in the puppy trade</b> (for example, on prosecutions, convictions and sanctions)	UK gov/ NGOs	Short - Medium

2) Recommendations to improve each stage of the Puppy Trade: breeding, transportation, sale, ownership and enforcement.

Action	Organisation	Timescale
<p><b>Evaluate the resources available for regulating the puppy trade</b> in terms of the enforcement agencies responsible, the number of staff (for example, to carry out inspections) and the financial and other resources (for example, quarantine facilities) necessary to do so. This should be done once reliable prevalence data are available, ensuring the necessary capacity and training for enforcement is available.</p> <p><b>Provide funding and support to further develop multi-agency partnerships</b> in order to enhance enforcement, avoid duplication and reduce costs through shared resources. These partnerships should be both developed locally and nationally.</p>	<p>UK gov</p> <p>UK gov</p>	<p>Medium-Long</p> <p>Short</p>
<p>Evaluate and consider <b>strategies used across the EU to enhance the traceability of breeders and traders</b> (for example, centralisation of microchipping databases, the onus on buyers to provide ID and both buyer and seller to contact the microchipping database provider to change details after sale in Ireland (see page 53 for further details); the use of both a microchipping database and national register for dogs in Sweden).</p>	<p>UK gov</p>	<p>Medium</p>
<p><b>Consult key stakeholders on the national and international legislation which regulates the puppy trade</b>, to evaluate ‘fitness for purpose’ in line with the contemporary puppy trade – this is particularly important with regard to PTS (number of dogs and mandatory registration of microchips), third party sales, online advertisements and the licensing conditions and enforcement of breeding establishments. The recent EFRA (2016) consultation on ‘Animal Welfare in England: domestic pets’ is a good example of stakeholder consultation regards the puppy trade (see Appendix VII).</p>	<p>Wales, Scotland &amp; Northern Ireland</p>	<p>Med</p>
<p><b>Enhance regulation of online trade related sales through the use of PAAG Minimum Standards for online providers</b>, such as requiring sellers to provide license number on advertisement.</p> <p><b>Require UK online advertising providers to share the number and nature of non-compliant advertisements with enforcement agencies (LA) and LAs to carry out proactive spot checks and perform trial sale purchases online</b> This would enhance both formal and informal monitoring of traders and consumer ability to evaluate both online advertising sites and traders. Develop a strategy to clarify PAAG requirements for sellers and consumers to enable responsible trading and buying.</p> <p>Evaluate and consider <b>strategies used across the EU to enhance the traceability of online traders and their puppies</b> (for example, use of tax codes on puppy advertisements in France).</p>	<p>UK gov</p> <p>UK gov &amp; online advertising providers</p> <p>UK gov</p>	<p>Medium</p>
<p><b>Review the use of broader legislation and sanctions to respond to the illegal puppy trade</b>, including tax evasion and proceeds of crime laws, which provide further scope for enforcement and punishment. Using existing processes (e.g. Law Commission review) to <b>issue definitive legislation and sentencing guidelines for criminal justice and enforcement</b></p>	<p>UK gov</p> <p>UK gov</p>	<p>Medium</p>



<p><b>agencies.</b>  <b>Review the penalties in place in puppy trade regulations</b> to ensure these act as a deterrent.</p>	UK gov	
<p><b>Review animal welfare within the import control legislation,</b> with particular consideration given to the ‘disposal’ and confiscation/quarantine of puppies in the trade and the role of enforcement agencies in animal welfare.</p>	UK gov	Short - Med
<p><b>Create and provide enforcement agencies with easy to follow practical guides</b> (e.g. flow chart examples provided in Appendix VIII) on responding to the illegal puppy trade.  <b>Clarify and share the process for reporting the illegal trade for consumers and other stakeholders,</b> with the use of simple Flow Charts (See Appendix VIII) to direct people through the correct process and to the appropriate agency (these could be made available on the suggested ‘go to’ website).</p>	UK gov  UK gov	Short
<p><b>Develop a reliable online resource and/or website/mobile application, which is promoted by all stakeholders as the ‘go-to’ website/app for advice and guidance on puppy purchasing.</b> Consumers require a reliable tool to traverse the online marketplace, at present the variety of sources and inconsistent information causes confusion. Online providers could be encouraged <b>to divert buyers to this site prior to viewing the complete advertisement.</b> This resource should link consumers directly to the relevant enforcement agencies to report irresponsible and illegal trade, possibly in partnership with Crimestoppers for instance. This source may be facilitated through an existing website with dedicated link for the puppy trade, where a Steering Committee of stakeholders agree to the content.</p>	UK gov/ NGOs/ stakeholders   online advertising providers	Short-Medium
<p><b>Develop a national strategy to enhance awareness and education around the puppy trade.</b> This can be achieved through formal and informal education. Formal education establishments should be encouraged to include this in their lesson plans. Media (social/television) programmes with celebrity endorsement can informally raise attention and understanding of the illegal and irresponsible trade and thereby reduce consumer demand or redirect it to other sources (such as dog rehoming centres). The effectiveness of such campaigns should be assessed by further research on public attitudes and behaviour.</p>	UK gov/ NGOs/ stakeholders	Short - Long
<p><b>Develop an independent Trusted Traders Scheme,</b> which is based on best practice identified in existing schemes (for example, the KC’s Assured Breeder Scheme or government endorsed trade schemes such as TrustMark, BuywithConfidence), to provide consumers with an evidence-based list of breeders and traders with whom they can purchase with confidence. It may be useful to use existing processes to create and pilot the scheme in three councils initially to monitor impact.</p>	UK gov	Medium
<p><b>Provide funding for further research</b> which focuses on consumer demand, the role of social media, and mechanisms introduced in other countries, which have resulted in the reduction of illegal and irresponsible puppy trading.</p>	UK gov/NGOs	Short

# Conclusion

The irresponsible and illegal puppy trade is a fluid and lucrative market. This research has gathered more data as to the prevalence and nature, but still an accurate estimate as to the exact scale and scope of the illegal puppy trade in the UK was not achievable. This is presumably due to the hidden nature of the illegal trade in puppies and because consumers of illegal or irresponsibly bred puppies are too traumatised, embarrassed and/or ashamed to speak out.

We did learn from a snapshot of the number of puppies for sale online in a 12-week period in Scotland that trade within Scotland alone is estimated to be worth over £3.3 million a quarter or over £13 million a year. From speaking to 14 experts and 160 puppy owners, and surveying 53 stakeholders, we learned those profiting from the puppy trade are a mixture of individuals selling litters, hobby breeders, small businesses and commercial enterprises. Across this mixture, there are examples of good practice (complying with PAAG minimum standards, vetting prospective buyers etc.) and evidence of unscrupulous and illegal activities (using PTS for commercial transportation, using fraudulent passports with inaccurate data regarding age and vaccinations etc.).

There are information and processes in place that have the potential to be utilised more effectively to identify the illegal trade and to reduce illegal and irresponsible breeding and trade. For instance, mandatory microchipping could be used, not only to return dogs to their owners, but also to provide a traceability mechanism for dogs from birth through transport and sale to death. Likewise, NGOs produce useful guides to purchasing a puppy, but a combined effort and centralised 'go-to' website with this information would decrease the confusion felt by consumers looking for guidance.

Overall, the scale of the irresponsible and illegal puppy trade causes numerous puppies to suffer unhygienic and often abusive conditions. The trade can also endanger public health (see Case Study 4 and the literature review in Appendix II for specifics) as well as have other negative social and economic impacts, such as anti-social dogs and tax evasion. In order to respond to this problem, a multi-faceted approach is necessary. This would include better standardised data collection that is transparent and widely shared about the legal and known illegal trade, efforts to change consumer behaviour, and review and revision of legislation regarding domestic and international regulation and animal welfare.

Undoubtedly, resources and personnel are limited, so a multi-agency collaboration is the best chance of creating a robust team to undertake this improvement. A review and revision of the legislation should be a priority since there is an opportunity with leaving the European Union for the UK to revise its domestic and international regulation to ensure better traceability of dogs entering the country and their movement once they are in the UK. There is also the opportunity to address the main flaws of existing legislation (that is, PTS allowing five dogs per person).

There are several areas for further research that could be undertaken in the short-term to inform the improvement of the legislation: pilot studies testing, which approaches most effectively change consumer behaviour (i.e. celebrity campaigns, 'go-to' website), the role of social media in facilitating the illegal and irresponsible trade, and comparative research of how other countries are tackling this problem.

Whilst we propose some recommendations and solutions, these would be most effective if supported by continued research to strengthen the evidence base as to which approaches will work best. Implementing these recommendations and continuing to research the problem is important to reduce the myriad of suffering and social impacts brought about by illegal and irresponsible puppy breeding and trading.

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# Appendices

## Appendix I: Annotated Bibliography



*SCOPING RESEARCH ON THE SOURCING OF PET DOGS FROM  
ILLEGAL IMPORTATION AND PUPPY FARMS 2016-2017*

### *Deliverable 2: Annotated Bibliography*

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**Submitted: November 2016**

**Submitted by Tanya Wyatt & Paul Biddle, Northumbria University and  
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Ahuvia, A. (2007). 'Commentary on exploring the dark side of pet ownership: Status- and control-based pet consumption: A reinterpretation of the data'. *Journal of Business Research*. 61(5): 497-499.

This paper contributes further to Beverland et al.'s (2007) Buberian analysis of the motivations for pet ownership. First, it explores the link made by Beverland et al. (2007) to the thoughts of Martin Buber (1923) regards interpersonal 'I-Thou' or 'I-It' relationships. In line with Beverland et al.'s ethical views, Ahuvia suggests that in the highest forms of relationships, people attempt to see the other as they really are (I-Thou). Through this relationship each individual is treated as intrinsically valuable, rather than as a tool to achieve some other goal (as in I-It relationships). Beverland et al. refer to this as intrinsic (I-Thou) and extrinsic (I-It) pet ownership - with the latter identified as the 'dark side of pet ownership' due to the impact on the companion animal. Ahuvia argues that some respondents see their dogs through the metaphor of human friendship and others through the metaphor of human parenting, but note the irony that many of the respondents most committed to individual relationships with their companion animals anthropomorphize their pets, leading to harm and preventing an I-Thou relationship. Using this approach Beverland et al. and Ahuvia advance our understanding not only of companion animal consumption experiences but also of status-oriented consumption and the nature of social relationships more broadly. Of particular interest is the understanding that "extrinsic pet owners (a) place a high value on their dogs being cute; (b) choose small dogs, which they like to hold and cuddle; (c) like to buy their dogs clothing and toys; (d) believe that the dogs should do as they are told; (e) believe that it is the owner's job to mould and shape the dog's character; and (f) see their dogs as innocent to the dangers in the outside world and, hence, vulnerable and in need of restrictive rules for their own protection". In contrast, "intrinsically motivated dog owners (a) like larger dogs that have a more mature persona; (b) tend to see their dogs as being much closer to their existential equals; (c) praise their dogs for being intelligent and believe that their dogs understand a good deal of human speech; (d) assume that the dog is able to fend for itself out of the home; and (e) believe that to maintain the right kind of relationship with the dog, they must respect its wishes and not expect it routinely to do whatever they say. The concepts of I-Thou and I-It relationships or intrinsic and extrinsic motivations for ownership provide a means to understand consumers in the puppy trade, the popularity of certain breeds, and what drives their motivations to ignore and neglect expert advice when choosing a puppy.

Aylesworth, A., Chapman, K. and Dobscha, S. (1999). 'Animal Companions and Marketing: Dogs are more than just a cell in the BCG Matrix'. *Advances in Consumer Research*. 26: 385-391.

Pets are found in 58 million homes in the United States [US]. This article argues that marketers have begun to recognise the importance of these animal companions to the lives and experiences of consumers. Supported by examples from the companion animal and marketing literature, it presents an organising framework for continuing the study of the human-companion animal consumption. The framework argues the need for further research and suggests several areas where consumer behaviour scholars can make a contribution to the companion animal domain.

Beverland, M.B. Farrelly, F. and Lim, E.A.C. (2008). 'Exploring the dark side of pet ownership: Status- and control-based pet consumption'. *Journal of Business Research*. 61(5): 490-496.

In the light of ongoing debates surrounding 'designer pets' this article examines the "dark side" of companion animal ownership through interpretive interviews with dog owners. The findings compare and contrast two types of ownership motivation— dogs as companions to love versus dogs as toys, status markers and brands. The latter three categories forming, what they term to be, the dark side of pet ownership. They found owner's motivations differ in terms of their appreciation of the pet, the nature of the human–animal interaction, breed choice, and the purchase of pet-related paraphernalia. Specifically, they argue the desire for status and/or control motivate some consumers to own certain dog breeds which negatively impacts on their behaviour toward the companion animal.

Blue Cross (2016). *Unpicking the Knots: the case for a more cohesive approach to Pet Welfare Legislation*. London: Blue Cross

This report provides an overview of the current state of statutory enforcement of pet legislation in Britain. Specifically, the report highlights the need for a strong enforcement strategy in animal welfare, indicating that a lack of personnel with appropriate training and slashed budgets within government agencies, has resulted in a lack of resources and confidence to deal with animal welfare legislation effectively. Inconsistency and a lack of clarity of duties within enforcement agencies were also identified as making the role demanding and difficult. The Blue Cross provided recommendations aimed at the central government, local government and third sector. These included updating out-of-date legislation and bringing the dog breeding legislation in England and Scotland to Welsh standards, a more stringent registration and licensing system which is standardised across the UK, mandatory inspections of all licensing establishments and training of staff, making the enforcement of licensing cost-effective, and more coordinated third sector involvement with enforcement agencies and communities.

BBC Scotland (2015). *The Dog Factory*. 15th April 2015. BBC: Scotland.

The documentary details an undercover BBC reporter who follows the multimillion pound world of the dog trade to the UK. BBC Scotland suggests a third of all dogs bought in the United Kingdom [UK] are believed to have come from puppy mills using unethical breeding methods. Filming at a breeding kennels in Northern Ireland, the reporter found hundreds of breeding bitches in intensive or factory-farmed conditions that is, dogs confined in rows of small cages). Although the kennels were operating within the regulations and under the supervision of the council, the documentary argues these conditions are inappropriate for dogs and dispute the appropriateness of the licencing and enforcement processes in place. The documentary provides evidence of the organised and frequent nature of illegal puppy smuggling into Scotland. They documented the ease with which irresponsible and illegal traders can traffic and sell puppies, and the strategies they use to present a legitimate front to consumers. The documentary also focuses on the role of consumers who irresponsibly purchase dogs (e.g. without seeing them



with the mother, arranging to complete the transaction in car parks or service stations).

British Veterinary Association [BVA]. (2014). 'Surveillance, puppy imports and risk-based trading - where do we stand?'. *The Veterinary Record*. 175(22): 551-553. This article records the responses to questions raised in 'Ask the CVOs' at the BVA Congress. The four UK chief veterinary officers took part in the session, giving their perspectives on a range of issues raised by delegates - such as disease surveillance, illegal importation of puppies and risk-based trading of cattle. In response to a question on the increased risk of rabies in the UK following the closure of the Winchester regional laboratory, Mr Gibbens indicated the closure had not increased risk, that the risk posed by dogs coming from Europe under current rules was low. However, he was concerned that the Pet Travel Scheme [PETS] scheme not be used for the commercial sale of puppies, arguing doing so would "be bad for the risks, especially for Echinococcosis, and it's going to be bad for puppy welfare and it's going to be bad for the people who buy the puppies". On the importation of animals under the PETS, Paula Boyden of Dogs Trust questioned if so many underage puppies were able to enter the country due to the current checks at ports, which were administrative and not physical. Mr Gibbens replied that it would require a huge input of resources to boost administrative checks with physical checks. The new PETS requirements would, he believed, make it harder to claim that an underage puppy met the rabies regulations. Fraud would also be reduced through the use of a new passport, which would include details of the issuing vet, allowing problems to be referred back to the country of origin. He further emphasised the need to stop people buying cheap puppies - "a message that we all have a responsibility to carry".

Burger, K. (2014). 'Solving the Problem of Puppy Mills: Why the Animal Welfare Movement's Bark is Stronger than its Bite'. *Washington University Journal of Law and Policy*. 43: 259-284.

This article examines the differing US perspectives of those seeking and opposing enhanced regulation of industrial puppy farming and explains how the animal welfare movement can mitigate opposition to animal welfare reforms. Using Missouri Ballot Initiative Proposition B as a lens, it analyses the animal welfare movement's political efforts to eradicate puppy mills in the US. First, Burger discusses the history of puppy mills and explains the political role of animal welfare organizations and then, identifies opponents of these welfare reforms. He concludes that animal welfare activists can more effectively achieve their policy goals by producing a mainstream message, connecting with more human-focused interest groups, increasing public awareness, building local relationships, and movement towards achieving greater political influence and success. He argues that responses to puppy mills must include increased public awareness and reduced consumer demand. Specifically, if consumers demand puppies sourced from regulated and humane breeders, puppy mill breeders would be forced to comply or risk losing business.

Calder, C. (2014). 'The breeding & trade of dogs & cats from the perspective of animal welfare organisations'. Eurogroup for Animals. Brussels: European Commission.

This presentation was provided by the policy officer for Companion Animals on the problems arising from commercial and selective breeding, online and cross-border trade, and trade at markets or from third parties of cats and dogs. UK statistics and animal welfare case studies were used to evidence the problems associated with the puppy trade regards trader non-compliance and the irresponsible and illegal behaviour associated with breeding, moving and selling dogs. For example, one case study details two suspects bringing puppies to UK from Ireland weekly, estimated to involve up to 2,000 puppies/year which are purchased for around £50 from breeders in Ireland but sold for £300-£400 in the UK. The majority of these dogs entered the UK with no pet passport or microchip.

CAROCat (2015). 'Welfare of dogs and cats involved in commercial practices'. Welfare of dogs and cats involved in commercial practices Conference. Brussels: CAROCat.

This conference included the presentation of a 2014 EU study conducted in 12 member states. It highlighted that "in the EU there are 60.8 million dogs and 66.5 million cats, with an annual revenue estimated at 1.3 billion euros. The import of dogs is estimated at approximately 21 million euros (2014) and cats at 3 million euros (2014)". The study estimated that only 13% pets are purchased from professional breeders (although this estimate is problematic due to several European countries, not specifying the legal definition of a professional breeder). Dr Claudia Veith identified that non-professional breeders were financially motivated to "produce as many litters as possible and to even breed dogs with genetic diseases", resulting in dogs suffering from chronic illnesses which require costly medical treatments. According to data from France, significant financial reward is available to non-professional breeders - while professional breeders spend approximately 762 euros per puppy, non-professionals spend less than 260 euros, which means that the latter can sell their puppies for much less and still make a profit. The greatest difference in cost stems from providing medical treatment (vaccination, basic care, quality food) and fulfilling legal practices (registration and identification, pet passport, breeding certificate and taxes). Consequently, there is an estimated loss of 312 million euros annually in Government income from unpaid taxes. In response to the problems in the companion animal trade EU member states, such as Belgium, ban the sale of imported dogs and cats and provide an online listing of authorised breeders. It was noted by the Eurogroup for Animals that "In Europe, there is a serious lack of traceability implementation of responsible commercial practices as well as responsible ownership". Wildschutz, another presenter, suggested EU member states need to inform the competent authority for the country of dispatch about any non-compliance detected.

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs [DEFRA]. (2016). The review of animal establishments licensing in England: A summary of responses. London: DEFRA.

This document provides a summary of responses to Defra's consultation on the review of animal establishments licensing in England. This consultation ran for 12

weeks, from the 20th December 2015 until the 12th March 2016. A total of 1,709 responses were received from key stakeholders - animal welfare agencies, local authorities [LA], commercial and professional organisations, veterinarians and members of the public. Estimates show that there are approximately 2,300 licensed pet shops, 650 licensed dog breeders and 6,300 licensed animal boarding establishments in England. These comprise the fourth largest group of businesses LA's are required by law to issue licences to. The review suggests current regulations are dated, inflexible, incompatible with new welfare legislation and cumbersome for both local authorities and businesses. In relation to dog breeding, there was support from respondents for: a single animal establishment licence (70.5%); the requirement of Model Conditions (consistent standards and practice) by local authorities (71%); prohibiting the sale of puppies below the age of eight weeks (90%); a statutory licensing threshold for breeders at three or more litters of puppies a year (64%); a legal requirement to provide written information when selling animals (90%); removal of calendar-year restrictions on licenses (83%); prohibiting the transfer of licenses to new owners (61%); requiring license owners to notify LA of major changes to the premises or scale of activities (94%); powers of entry for LAs (72%). The key problems raised by respondents regards the breeding and selling of animals included: inconsistencies in enforcement and resource limitations; concern that enhanced licensing conditions may encourage illegal breeding; the need for increased inspections (in particular random unannounced inspections); the need to prohibit online sales and the sale of animals in pet shops; and the need for a mandatory cooling-off period for buyers to reduce impulse buying. In response, DEFRA indicated there is support for updating the licensing system for animal establishments.

Dogs Trust. (2014). *The Puppy Smuggling Scandal: An investigation into the illegal entry of dogs into Great Britain under the Pets Travel Scheme*. Dogs Trust. London: Dogs Trust.

Dogs Trust published this in-depth investigative report, based on a six month study into the UK Puppy trade, in particular, from Eastern European countries under the PET scheme. The report identifies a significant rise in the UK puppy trade after trade controls were relaxed in 2012 with the introduction of PETS. Prior to this policy change the minimum age of entry for dogs to the UK was 10 months. In the first year, the number of dogs entering the UK via PETS rose by 61%, according to Defra, just 2.5% of these pets were found to be non-compliant with PETS. Dogs Trust argue this number is inconsistent with the numbers reported in the illegal puppy trade, suggesting the majority of puppy smuggling goes undetected. Between 2011 and 2013 the number of dogs 'legally' entering the UK from Lithuania increased by 780%. In Hungary a 663% increase in dogs travelling under PETS into the UK was recorded. The investigators found the illegal puppy trade from Hungary and Lithuania to be prolific and unobstructed, due to: PETS being used by commercial dealers to illegally import puppies, Eastern European vets falsifying PETS passports and breeders supplying puppies too young to travel under PETS, ineffective British border controls and limited sharing of information between key agencies. For example, the investigation uncovered six vets falsifying passport information and fifteen breeders/dealers regularly transporting underage puppies into the UK from Lithuania and Hungary. The report argued for a number of

urgent responses which involved key enforcement agencies – APHA, DEFRA and Trading Standards. The recommendations suggested immediate responses focused on enhancing agency availability, multi-agency cooperation, legislation, training for front-line staff, and the introduction of a fixed penalty charge for those. Longer-term recommendations included government investment in consumer education campaigns targeted at people purchasing dogs online and mandatory identification and registration across all EU Member States.

Dogs Trust. (2015). Puppy smuggling the scandal continues: a follow up investigation into the illegal entry of dogs into Great Britain under the Pets Travel Scheme. Dogs Trust. London: Dogs Trust.

Following the in-depth investigative report by Dogs Trust on 'The Puppy Smuggling Scandal' (2014), this follow-up report details the further findings from their investigation from March-June 2015. The research looked to identify if changes to PETS (in December 2014) had changed or reduced the problems identified in the 2014 report. This report is particularly critical of the government response to their initial report, suggesting their findings and recommendations have been ignored. Further evidence suggests the issuing of false passports for underage dogs from Eastern Europe remains widespread, although last year's investigation did have an impact in Lithuania, with some vets and breeders now refusing to issue false passports. In Romania, breeders, dealers and vets regularly exploit PETS loopholes to illegally import puppies into the UK for commercial purposes. Further recommendations are provided including: the need for visual checks of all dogs entering the UK under PETS, intelligence sharing between enforcement agencies; further training for APHA staff and LA personnel, and EU legislation requiring the compulsory permanent identification and registration of dogs - linked to an EU database (as per framework legislation on the regulation of transmissible animal diseases).

DOGS TRUST. (2017). Puppy Smuggling a Tragedy Ignored: Investigation into the continuing abuse of the Pet Travel Scheme and the illegal entry of dogs into Great Britain. London: Dogs Trust.

Following the in-depth investigative report by Dogs Trust on 'The Puppy Smuggling Scandal' (2014), this follow-up report in 2015, Dogs Trust launched a Puppy Pilot scheme in to try to disrupt the puppy trade by underwriting the costs of illegally imported puppies through quarantine in order to facilitate their seizure, and then responsibly rehoming them through our network of rehoming centres. The Pilot has successfully rehabilitated and rehomed some 469 puppies, and is identified as hugely successful, as it has allowed Government agency staff to concentrate on their enforcement role. This report details the Dog Trust's third investigation which found that despite positive results from the Lithuanian Government changes to the pet passport controls, and the fact that official Government figures show that no dogs were imported commercially from Lithuania to Great Britain under the Balai Directive in 2016 and only two in 2015, the investigation found Lithuanian puppies openly for sale on the internet in Great Britain, with breeders clearly having used the non-commercial Pet Travel Scheme to import puppies. The investigation has expanded to Poland in order to demonstrate that puppy smuggling extends across Central and Eastern

Europe, beyond the three countries (Hungary, Lithuania and Romania) that our two previous investigations had explored. Figures from the Dogs Trust Puppy Pilot also indicated that Poland had become a significant source country with over 20% of intercepted puppies originating from there. Overall, the report recommends the focus on enforcement of PETS must be shifted from carriers to Government agencies and calls for the introduction of prison sentences to reflect the seriousness of the crimes committed and deter those involved in illegally importing dogs. Furthermore, when the UK leaves the EU, revised legislation must be introduced by Defra as a priority to effectively regulate pet travel and commercial pet movements.

European Commission. (1992). COUNCIL DIRECTIVE 92/65/EEC. Brussels: European Commission.

This document details how the regulations under the Balai Directive (council directive 92/65/EEC OJ L 268 14.9.1992 p54) for the commercial trade in dogs and puppies around Europe have been harmonised. With regard to the puppy trade, for example, dogs imported to be sold must be declared to authorities, come from a recognised breeding place, and be identified and vaccinated as per PETS requirements.

European Commission. (2013). Conference on the welfare of dogs and cats in the EU: Building a Europe that cares for animals. Brussels: European Commission. The report details the 2013 European Commission Conference on the welfare of dogs and cats in the EU. The report recognises the rise in animal commerce across the EU, stating, estimating the population of owned dogs and cats at more than one hundred million animals. The report argues this rise in commercialisation and the profits available raise a number of welfare issues – for the animals themselves, for consumers and the general public. For example, the harms to animals bred in unsuitable environments such as puppy farms are many, they may be victims of inherited diseases or exaggerated features/mutilations and may be inhumanely disposed of if they are unsold or ill. The conference speakers argue the absence of harmonised legislation that addresses the welfare concerns of companion animals is a considerable problem. The only legislation currently at EU level protecting the welfare of dogs and cats relates to their transport in connection with an economic activity or where their movement or trade poses an animal or public health risk. In response, some individual member states reported becoming increasingly proactive in developing and implementing policies that tackle a variety of problems surrounding breeding and trade in this area. The report confirms the launch of a study into the welfare of dogs and cats involved in commercial practices.

Federation of European Companion Animal Veterinary Associations [FECAVA]. (2011). 'FECAVA NEWS'. The European Journal of Companion Animal Practice. 21(1): 8-9.

This paper details key Newsletter stories (December 2010) from the FECAVA, one of which summarises the opinions raised at the "Responsible Dog Ownership in Europe" conference held in Brussels (4th and 5th October 2010) and organised by CARO-dog. The conference attracted 100 participants from over 25 countries, representing European, Member State and International Organisations, NGOs,

private sector and veterinary organisations. The conference called for institutional action, urging the EU to recognise the importance of companion animal welfare in EU legislation. Christophe Buhot (FVE vice president) argued that an effective and reliable system of dog registration is crucial for successful animal health and welfare management which prevents the illegal puppy trade and promotes responsible ownership. He stressed that “Without registration, identification is of little value and traceability is an important tool to fight diseases and to protect welfare”; thereby calling for mandatory pet identification, registration in a national database and the transmission of ID numbers to a central European database. Consequently, the areas for action highlighted in the conference conclusions included the regulation and licensing of breeding and trade, EU-wide compatible identification and registration.

Ferri, G. (2013). ‘Transport of animals - practical experience member country perspective’. Seminar for OIE National Focal Points for Animal Welfare of Europe Region.

This presentation by the Italian Ministry of Health detailed the regulation and enforcement of the transportation of animals, including the application of EU regulations across Italy. The Ministry recognised a recent significant increase in the illegal movement of puppies and kittens from Eastern Europe. In response, the Ministry of Health reports increased collaboration to enhance inspection activities by competent authorities (Official Veterinarians and Police corps), leading to the approval of two important operational tools: 1) The procedural manual for the implementation of inspections in the EU movement dogs and cats; 2) Law no. 201 of 4 December 2010 - “Law ratifying and implementing the European Convention for the protection of companion animals, and internal adaptation standards”. The latter, identifies penal and administrative responses to the illicit trafficking of companion animals. Administrative sanctions apply for each animal illegally introduced, even without commercial purposes, ranging from €100 up to €2000. Criminal sanctions are in place for the illicit trafficking of companion animals, defined as those who “in order to obtain a profit for itself or others, introduces, transports, sells, or receives on national territory dogs or cats with neither an individual identification system nor the required health certificates (or if required, individual passports)”. This is punishable by up to 12 months imprisonment and a fine of 3-15,000 Euro

FOUR PAWS International (2013). Puppy Trade in Europe: Research on the impact of illegal businesses on the market, on consumers, on the one-health concept and on animal welfare. FOUR PAWS International.

This report details research by NGO FOUR PAWS International on the European illegal commercial puppy trade. Through eight months of field research, FOUR PAWS aimed to evaluate the puppy trade networks in Europe and identify the biggest puppy traders likely to be using harmful or illegal practices and breaching current trade, transport and animal welfare legislation. The research identified 30 international trade links that appeared to be operational. In parallel to this research, FOUR PAWS created a platform ([www.stoppuppytraders.org](http://www.stoppuppytraders.org)) to gather testimonies from people who bought a puppy that was sold through illegal practices, got seriously ill or died. The report details that through collaboration with several online

classified advertisement websites in Germany and Austria, they raised consumer awareness of the illegal puppy trade. The Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovakia were described as key puppy production countries for the trade. The Netherlands was identified as a likely “transit country” due to its weaker puppy trade legislation, when compared to Germany. The report identified, in production countries dogs were cheap to purchase, even with the required identification documents and vaccinations (which were mostly faked or incomplete). The poor enforcement of transport regulations resulted in minimal costs to traders. Thereafter, these cheap puppies demand a high market price in the main distribution countries, resulting in profitable enterprise for the traders. Engaging in illegal trade is a rational choice for breeders, traders, distributors and veterinarians. The cheap supply of puppies creates a market distortion, consequently, regulated and responsible breeders cannot compete (with these prices). In response, legitimate breeders and traders may also rationalise the need to engage in illegal actions. The report argues for stronger law enforcement in order to control known traders and their veterinarians.

Ghirlanda S, et al. (2014). ‘Dog Movie Stars and Dog Breed Popularity: A Case Study in Media Influence on Choice’. PLOS 9.

Fashions and fads are important phenomena that influence many individual choices, including the consumption of puppies. They are ubiquitous in human societies and have recently been used as a source of data to test models of cultural dynamics. The authors measured the cultural impact of events using a method capable of disentangling the event’s effect from ongoing cultural trends. Although the influence of movies on fashions and fads has declined, according to the authors, this article demonstrates the impact of popular culture on breed popularity. They found the release of movies featuring dogs is often associated with an increase in the popularity and thereby purchasing of these featured breeds, for up to 10 years after the movie’s release. The movie’s impact on breed popularity correlates with the estimated number of viewers during the movie’s opening weekend (a proxy of the movie’s reach among the general public). They conclude that their results show that, while fashions may appear erratic, it may be possible to identify specific underlying causes.

Gill, J. A. (2013). Environmental Impacts of One Puppy Mill among Many: A Case History. Humane Society.

In the US, in recent decades, the animal welfare aspects of irresponsibly-managed industrial commercial dog-breeding businesses have attracted national attention and prompted legislative and regulatory responses. However, the environmental impacts of such businesses, also known as puppy mills, have received far less attention. Most puppy mills are secretive; therefore, it is hard to get documented information about their environmental impacts. Reliable environmental information regarding the operation of Whispering Oaks Kennels near Parkersburg, W.Va., became available in 2008 when Wood County cited the facility for violating the water pollution and solid waste statutes. This report is based on documented information generated by legal actions and eventual settlement. A chronological list of events involving Whispering Oaks’ effects on the environment is appended.

Goddard, A.D. et al. (2012). 'A Quantitative Release Assessment for the Noncommercial Movement of Companion Animals: Risk of Rabies Reintroduction to the United Kingdom'. *Risk Analysis*. 31(10): 1769-1783.

This article provides a quantitative risk assessment (QRA) developed to estimate the risk of introducing rabies into the UK under two different regulations - the EU pet movement policy and UK PETS. The QRA aimed to quantify the risk of rabies introduction should the UK harmonize with the EU policy. The EU implemented its pet movement policy (EUPMP) in 2004 under regulation 998/2003. As the UK had its own pet movement scheme, PETS, it was granted a temporary derogation from the EU policy until December 2011. The article concludes that assuming complete compliance with the regulations, moving to the EUPMP was predicted to increase the annual risk of rabies introduction by approximately 60-fold (from  $7.79 \times 10^{-5}$  { $5.90 \times 10^{-5}$ ,  $1.06 \times 10^{-4}$ } under the current scheme to  $4.79 \times 10^{-3}$  { $4.05 \times 10^{-3}$ ,  $5.65 \times 10^{-3}$ } under the EUPMP). This corresponds to a decrease from 13,272 (9,408, 16,940) to 211 (177, 247) years between rabies introductions. The risks associated with both the schemes were predicted to increase when less than 100 percent compliance was assumed, with the current scheme of PETS and quarantine being shown to be particularly sensitive to noncompliance. The results of this risk assessment, along with other evidence, provided a scientific evidence base to inform policy decision with respect to companion animal movement.

Hirschman, E. C. (1994). 'Consumers and their animal companions'. *Journal of Consumer Research*. 20(4): 616-632.

Despite the widespread practice of keeping companion animals, Hirschman identified that virtually no consumer behaviour studies had been conducted on this phenomenon. The article reports on his study which used in-depth interviews with consumers to expand three themes—animals as friends, animals as self, and animals as family members—and to discuss two emergent themes: (1) companion animals' mediation between nature and culture, and (2) the socialization of consumers' companion animal preference patterns. Building on this knowledge, the author discusses several directions for future research on the consumption of companion animals.

Holbrook, M. B. and Woodside, A. G. (2008). 'Animal companions, consumption experiences, and the marketing of pets: Transcending boundaries in the animal-human distinction.' *Journal of Business Research*. 61(5): 377-381.

This article lays the groundwork for a special issue of the *Journal of Business Research* devoted to "Animal Companions, Consumption Experiences, and the Marketing of Pets." After some preliminary comments on the relevant background, the editors develop a conceptual scheme – based on a typology of consumer value – for organizing the contributions appearing in the special issue. They explain the assignment of various contributions to various value-related categories in order to account for the structure and meanings of the perspectives that emerge. The article highlights the pet-related consumption experience is good for consumers, which suggests a difference between the consumption of companion animals and other products. The special issue articles are divided according to the proposed typology which appears to encapsulate the major ways in which animal companions enrich the lives of consumers by contributing aspects of economic value (as extrinsic



means to self-oriented ends); hedonic value (as a self-oriented part of experiences appreciated intrinsically for their own sake); social value (as a facet of consumption used as an extrinsic means to influencing the responses of others); and altruistic value (as an ethical or spiritual component of other-oriented consumption viewed as an intrinsic end in itself).

Holzer, H. M. (2009). Model Statute Regulating Dog Breeding, Facilitation and Sales. PA, USA: International Society for Animal Rights.

This monograph discusses the problems innate in the US 'puppy mill' industry. Problems include the overpopulation of dogs, which is recognised to have "severe economic, social, political, financial, health, environmental and other consequences which are well documented and not debatable". Holzer evaluates the regulations in place and proposes a solution. This involves strict administrative regulation of breeders, facilitators and commercial retail sellers, coupled with harsh penalties for offender and generous "standing to sue" provisions for consumers. Specifically, he proposes the ISAR's Model Statute, which applies to all breeders. It contains certain provisions aimed to address the harms in puppy mills because "they are, by far, the most inhumane kind of dog breeding that exists today in the United States and elsewhere in the world".

IBF International Consulting, Veteffect, Wageningen University & Research Centre and Istituto Zooprofilattico Sperimentale Dell'Abruzzo E Del Molise "G. Caporale" (IZSAM). (2015). Study on the Welfare of Dogs and Cats in Commercial Practices. Specific Contract SANCO 2013/12364: FINAL REPORT. Brussels: European Commission.

This report details the study authorised by the European Commission in response to requests from both the Council and the European Parliament to study the pet trade and identify options to improve policy. Specifically, the study aimed to identify the actions necessary to achieve key EU objectives regarding improved functioning of the internal market, consumer and public health protection and animal health and welfare. The study involved the collection of available (published) socioeconomic, technical and legal data, and a survey of almost 30,000 key stakeholders, which involved case studies on twelve member states (including the UK) which comprise 85% of the EU dog population. The study estimates the EU dog population at 60.8 million, with annual sales (of dogs and cats) to be worth 1.3 billion euro. The report identified five main areas of concern for the welfare and health of dogs and cats: compliance with national breeding laws, stress and suffering by animals during transportation and transparent data on transportation, limited consumer knowledge and information for the keeping of pets, discrepancies in market data (for example, intra-EU sales of 46,000 dogs per month) when compared to TRACES registered trade (that is, 20,779 dogs a year), and time-limitations on consumer protection. Two concerns were common to each of these issues; the proper enforcement of legislation and the need for an exchange of knowledge between Member States. The report demonstrates the benefits resulting from changes to legislation through mandatory registration, linking regulation on the internet sales of puppies to responsible breeders and improving the breeding conditions for these animals.

International Fund for Animal Welfare [IFAW]. (2012). *How much is that Doggie on my Browser: The Truth Behind Online Puppy Sales*. IFAW. Washington: IFAW. According to this report, in the past decade, Internet marketplaces have become a major platform for commercial breeders to sell their puppies directly to the public. IFAW argue that the anonymous and unmonitored nature of online sales makes it possible for irresponsible and illegal breeders and traders to skirt existing laws designed to protect dogs from high-volume businesses, who emphasize profit over animal welfare. This report details research conducted by IFAW into the online pet sales, specifically focusing on the scope and scale of online "puppy mill" sales in the US. The one day investigation found almost 10,000 ads from the six dedicated puppy seller websites—representing approximately 10% of total ads on these sites. The investigators conservative estimate was that 62% of the ads were “likely puppy mill” sourced. The results identified that in just one day, on nine websites, well over 733,000 puppies were advertised for sale. The ads featured dozens of breeds, and prices ranging from \$1 to thousands of dollars for a single puppy. The findings of this report are intended to be used to (1) educate the public about the cruelty of puppy mills and dissuade consumers from buying puppies online, (2) encourage websites to strengthen efforts to block puppy mills from using their sights to post ads, (3) urge USDA to promulgate regulations that fully and effectively address puppy mill breeders using the Internet to exploit animals, and (4) lobby Congress to provide increased funding to the USDA Animal Care Program under the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) in order to adequately enforce federal oversight of puppy sales online.

Jones, A. K. (2010). ‘Dealing Dogs: Can We Strengthen Weak Laws in the Dog Industry?’. *Rutgers Journal of Law & Public Policy*. Spring 2010. 442-480. This article aims to raise awareness of the US legal status of companion animals, in particular, the archaic and flawed federal legislation that protects dogs. Jones argues that legislation has not evolved with the rest of society and fails to recognize that dogs need greater federal protection. The limitation of current provisions is exemplified by the gaping loophole in the Animal Welfare Act [AWA], which leads to the exploitation of dogs by puppy mills and pet shops. For example, “budgetary constraints and strong opposition from animal breeders, pharmaceutical companies, exhibitors, and experimenters themselves--as well as an inadequate number of inspectors-- have resulted in poor enforcement of the AWA.” Comparison of the number of dealers (over 4500) with regulators (3 AHHIS Sector Offices, with approximately 70 veterinary inspectors who are entrusted with inspecting the various types of facilities covered by the Act) demonstrates why the Act is under-regulated. The limitations of protection are evident online, exemplified by puppy millers who are able to maintain kennels that are unregulated by federal laws, while producing large numbers of puppies that they sell at high profit margins. Internet sellers are the greatest beneficiaries, as they can sell their dogs to unsuspecting consumers without any sort of regulation at all. Jones suggests amendments to the 2008 Farm Bill have shown promise in improving conditions for animals that are sold over the internet. However, she quotes Francione and Charlton who “maintain that it is the use of animals and not the treatment of animals that ought to be the primary focus of animal advocates and that this involves the abolition rather than just the regulation of animal exploitation.”

Kennel Club. (2016). Kennel Club Campaigns: Puppy Awareness Week 12-18 September 2016. Kennel Club. Available at: <http://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/our-resources/kennel-club-campaigns/puppy-farming/puppy-awareness-week/> Accessed 05.11.16

This Kennel Club [KC] webpage highlights the key findings from the most recent Kennel Club Puppy Awareness Week (PAW) survey. These figures are based on a survey of 2,003 dog owners carried out for the Kennel Club by Censuswide, August 2015. The survey details the experiences of dog owners who have purchased puppies online, through local advertisements or from pet shops. They found almost two thirds of puppies were bought solely because of the way they looked. Over a third of puppies (37 percent) bought online or from a newspaper advertisement without first being seen, were bought impulsively. Half of these puppies (49 per cent) fell sick and 17 per cent had serious gastro-intestinal problems. Consequently, they found, one in five consumers who purchased puppies from these traders were required to spend between £500 and £1,000 on vet bills in the first six months of the puppy's life.

Kenny, K. (2011). 'A Local Approach to a National Problem: Local Ordinances as a Means of Curbing Puppy Mill Production and Pet Overpopulation'. *Albany Law Review* 75(1): 379.

The article evaluates the use of local ordinances in the US to respond to puppy mills (defined as high volume breeding operations populated by poorly treated dogs and pet overpopulation). The article starts from the premise that local initiatives play a crucial role in changing public and governmental perceptions of the social and moral issues and harms involved in the puppy mill industry. For example, a growing number of local governments enactment of local ordinances that ban or severely limit the retail sale of cats and dogs in response to irresponsible puppy traders. These ordinances aim to curtail the demand for puppies and thereby decrease the supply by reducing the ability of retail pet stores to sell their live animals. In doing so, Kenny indicates, it is believed that consumers will turn to more humane breeders and facilities, such as shelters, rescue groups, or small-scale breeders. In conclusion, the article asserts that local ordinances that entirely prohibit the sale of dogs in pet stores (rather than just regulating the prices) should be utilized by more municipalities as a means of tightening market pressure on commercial dog dealers in the face of ineffective federal regulation.

Kristen, H. (2009). 'Ethical Responsibilities Towards Dogs: An Inquiry into the Dog-Human Relationship'. *Journal of Agricultural Environmental Ethics*. 22(1): 3-14.

This article explores the duties between consumers and their dogs within the context of the great number of companion animals surrendered each year to shelters, the increased development of abnormalities and deformities through selective or irresponsible breeding, and the development of industrial-style puppy mills. Kristen suggests four possible ways of looking at the human-companion animal relationship: master-slave, employer-worker, parent-child, and friend-friend. Dogs, unlike other 'property' in law, are recognised as having a unique relationship with humans, which is translated in legislation into special duties of care. While these generally entail caring for dogs emotional and physical welfare,

she argues these duties should also relate to the prevention of harms linked to puppy breeding, suggests these harms are directly connected to consumers, often misplaced, desires and beliefs. For example, beliefs around the characteristics of certain breeds or the desire to buy an expensive breed more cheaply. In conclusion, the author argues that our unique relationship calls for the application of a special set of ethical principles to ensure the protection of dogs.

McMillan, F. D., Duffy, D. L. and Serpell, J. A. (2011). 'Mental health of dogs formerly used as "breeding stock" in commercial breeding establishments'. *Applied Animal Behaviour Science* 35(1-2): 86-94.

Canine commercial breeding establishments (CBEs) are defined as large-scale kennel facilities who produce puppies for commercial sale. Many of these establishments are perceived to be problematic as numerous anecdotal reports have suggested that breeding bitches display persistent behavioural and psychological abnormalities when compared with the general dog population upon leaving the CBE. This article details a study which aimed to determine if this anecdotal evidence could be confirmed empirically. A total of 1169 rehomed (for an average of 2 years) ex-breeding CBE dogs were evaluated using the Canine Behavioural Assessment and Research Questionnaire (C-BARQ). Among these, 76 different breeds were represented, with a sex ratio of 70.3% females and 29.7% males. The article identifies that when this sample was compared with a convenience sample of pet dogs matched for breed, sex, age and neuter status, CBE dogs showed significantly higher rates of health (23.5% versus 16.6%,  $P = 0.026$ ) and behavioural problems and significantly lower rates of aggression (toward strangers and other dogs), trainability, chasing small animals, excitability, and energy. The authors conclude that "by demonstrating that dogs maintained in these environments develop extreme and persistent fears and phobias, possible learning deficits as evidenced by lower trainability, and often show difficulty in coping successfully with normal existence, this study provides the first quantitative evidence that the conditions prevailing in CBEs are injurious to the mental health and welfare of dogs".

Ministero degli Affari Esteri (Ministry of Foreign Affairs). (2011). *Checking procedures for the Movement of Dogs and Cats Within the EU*. M. d. Esteri. Italy. Compiled by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, this guide aims to simplify the checking procedure for competent authorities (official veterinarian and the police) and clarify the complex regulations (e.g. (EU) 438/2010 and (EU) 998/2003) governing the commercial and non-commercial movement of dogs and cats between EU member states. The guide recognises that every year, tens of thousands of kittens and puppies are victims of animal traffickers, who transport these animals illegally, with either no identification or with incomplete, false or forged documents. It details the documents and procedures required to enforce and monitor the trade and the related legislation. It concludes by detailing the criminal and administrative penalties in place for offenders in the commercial and non-commercial movement of dogs and cats.

Pet Food Manufacturers' Association [PFMA]. (2016). *Dog Population Details 2016*. UK: PFMA.

The Pet Food Manufacturing Association estimates 11 million (that is 40% of) UK households in 2016 will have pets. The UK pet population currently stands at approximately 57 million, of which dogs make up about 24% (n=8.5 million). Within Scotland 22% of households will have a dog, with an average of 1.5 dogs per household.

Pets Advertising Advisory Group [PAAG]. (2015a). Gumtree PAAG Report. London: PAAG

This report provides the findings of the PAAG moderation projects which aimed to assess the ability of online pet advertisers to implement the minimum PAAG standards and to self-regulate their pet adverts. Initially, PAAG volunteers looked at approximately 70,000 adverts (81% of the total adverts on the sites) between January and June 2014, noting that the percentage of reported adverts fell during this period from 20 percent to an average of 4-6 percent. However, improvement hit a plateau with websites either implementing the minimum standards to the best of their ability or not achieving adequate progress in line with the commitment promised to PAAG. With the second, snapshot, moderation period (October, November, and December 2014) approximately 3,700 adverts were viewed across these sites, of which 359 adverts (9.7 percent) were reported for minimum standard breaches. In conclusion, the report notes that despite PAAG support and assistance, and some progress made across the board, only one or two sites can be deemed to be of a consistently high standard. PAAG suggest the next step must involve mobilising the public to monitor these sites and to refuse to use websites which do not offer advice and guidance and clearly have no regard for animal welfare. Furthermore, legislation and enforcement require urgent review to tackle the problem of unscrupulous online pet advertising.

Pets Advertising Advisory Group [PAAG] (2015b). Facebook Animal Group Moderation. London: PAAG

This report provides the findings of the PAAG moderation projects which aimed to assess the use of social media site facebook to sell animals. The report indicates that in 24hours 930 closed groups were identified, of which 230 accepted PAAG volunteers as members. 58% (134 Groups) of the 230 were in breach of PAAG minimum standards, in particular advertising without a photograph or providing the age. Of the 230 monitored groups, 143 groups focused on one species – the majority (60 percent) on dogs.

PDSA (2015). PAW PDSA Animal Wellbeing Report. London: PDSA.

This report details the national study conducted by the PDSA, which includes both members of the public and professionals. A sample of 1,127 veterinary professions were surveyed face-to-face and 572 surveyed online. Pet owners were surveyed online, with 5,152 interviewed via You Gov and 26,432 surveyed through the PDSA's contact database, website and social media. The survey provides an interesting insight into pet owners, including those who have purchased a puppy. Across the UK, awareness of the Animal Welfare Act had dropped significantly (31% in Scotland). When asked, the vast majority (95%) of pet owner respondents underestimated the cost of pet ownership, with 8% of dog owners believing that their pet would cost them up to £500 over the pet's entire lifetime. The PDSA argue

that it is essential for consumers to undertake research prior to obtaining their pet, however, 18% of dog owners conducted no research, 18% took advice from friends, 29% looked on the internet and 36% had previous experience of the breed. Only 4% took advice from a vet before taking on a pet. The majority of dog owners obtained their dog from rehoming centres or recommended breeders, however 20% found their dog through an advert and many would still consider getting their pet from unsuitable places (for example, 22% from a puppy farm). In conclusion the PDSA argue that many of the critical problems identified are rooted in poor pre-purchase decision-making, based on a complete lack of or misguided information on what pet ownership truly involves. In response the PDSA plan to support initiatives looking at the breeding and sale of puppies from the UK and overseas; increase the numbers of PetWise MOTs completed across the UK; and look for partners to help us develop ways to engage the public before they buy a pet.

Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals [RSPCA]. (2012). Do puppies have secret powers: Understanding the irrational behaviour of the puppy buying public. RSPCA.

This report presents the findings from RSPCA research on 7,272 adults aged 16-64 who were puppy owners (defined as those who acquired a puppy in the past two years) in the UK between November 2010 and January 2011. The report notes that 12 percent of those surveyed had purchased a puppy, but one in five no longer had their puppy two years later due to changes in personal circumstances, underestimating the dog's needs or behavioural problems. Almost a third of owners had spent less than a day (or no time) researching the breed prior to making the purchase. Almost two-thirds bought a puppy from the first litter they viewed, less than half viewed the mother, while only one in five received advice from a vet. The report concludes that this provides evidence that purchasing a puppy is an impulse buy for most and is linked to relinquishment. In response to this finding the RSPCA investigated three factors which created the impulse to purchase a puppy: nature, culture and cultural shift. Nature referred to the ability of puppies to eclipse rational thought, thereby, challenging the aesthetic factor was unlikely to work and it was too late to intervene once consumers reached the 'consideration' phase. Culture referred to the positive ingrained messages and images around dogs as perfection and completion, which drive consumers to make specific breed purchases. Cultural shift referred to consumer's view of breeds as brands and belief that dogs were consumable objects which could be replaced. In conclusion, the report suggests there is a need to interrupt and challenge consumer's nostalgic and brand oriented views of dogs and to offer support to those who have already purchased a dog.

Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals [RSPCA]. (2016a). Sold a pup? Exposing the breeding, trade and sale of puppies. RSPCA.

This report details current RSPCA data on the UK puppy trade gathered from the entirety of their investigations into the puppy trade, that is, "from the breeding of puppies through to the infiltration and successful prosecution of puppy dealers". The report highlights the market and trade in puppies is largely unregulated. Consequently, there are significant animal welfare issues, dissatisfied consumers and an illegal economy. Legislation governing the trade is incompatible with the radical changes, over the past few decades, in how puppies are bred and sold, in

particular, the increase in internet sales. The report suggests the demand for puppies is not satisfied by existing UK licensed and small-scale breeder, resulting in a booming international puppy commercial breeding and trading industry from Ireland and Eastern Europe. The report discusses the consequences of the largely unregulated trade, in terms of the impact on the health and welfare of the puppies and breeding dogs. It also makes recommendation on what can be done to improve these welfare concerns. The RSPCA recognise that many consumers are unaware of the origin and breeding conditions of these puppies prior to sale. Marketing strategies are used to encourage consumers to buy the puppies and to convince them the puppies are UK bred. The regulations facilitating the freedom of movement of pets create opportunities and loopholes that are exploited by commercial dealers to illegally move puppies around. For example, they identify the PETS policy (which permits anyone to transport up to five dogs) facilitates puppies to be moved as pets, but then rebranded and traded commercially as British animals. The scale and nature of the illegal and legal international puppy trade, according to the RSPCA, confirms the failure of traditional educational messages around responsible puppy acquisition. The report argues for a new response based on the licensing of all puppy sellers, improved and enforced licensing regulations on breeders, better targeted enforcement of imported puppies, and driving out unregulated dealers through enforcement of financial regulations. The report concludes with their top ten recommendations.

Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals [RSPCA]. (2016b). The trade in puppies: problems and solutions from the Public Affairs Department. RSPCA. This information sheet, provided by the RSPCA Public Affairs Department, summarized the problems integral to the UK puppy trade and provided recommendations for responding to it. For example, they emphasise there is a lack of clarity on the scale and nature of the trade, in particular, puppy importations, which prevents an appropriate response (e.g. licensing and regulations appropriate for the internet age). They also recognise that welfare problems can occur at every stage of the trade, resulting in chronic health and behaviour problems and premature death. These harms are exacerbated by profit-driven illegal traders who view puppies as a business to the detriment of their welfare and who are costing the Treasury millions in unpaid taxes. In conclusion, the RSPCA support: further regulation of the trade which would require anyone selling a puppy to be licensed and anyone breeding two or more litters a year to be licensed; model licensing (harmonisation) conditions for puppy breeding and selling and enhanced training and resources for local authorities; increased minimum age for the sale of a puppy to eight weeks old; greater surveillance and enforcement at key boarders for the trade, and greater transparency and information for consumers online.

University of Bristol (2011). One in five puppy buyers no longer have their pet two years later. Bristol: University of Bristol. According to a study commissioned by the RSPCA nearly one-fifth of people (19%) who bought a puppy in the past two years no longer had their dog. The survey conducted by the University of Bristol revealed that nearly a quarter of the owners (24 percent) who bought a pure-bred puppy in the past two years based their

decision mainly on appearance, while 56 percent of buyers did not see the puppy with its mother before they bought it. The report also revealed that many people buying a puppy do a minimal amount of research prior to their purchase (40% spent one week or less researching). Furthermore, more than 60 per cent of puppy buyers only visited one litter of puppies before choosing their puppy. The report concludes with recommendations, suggesting, for example, the RSPCA's Get Puppy Smart campaign may help prospective puppy buyers make the right decision by helping them consider the type of dog that best suits their lifestyle, the costs involved in having a dog, how to find a good breeder and how to select a happy and healthy puppy.

VIER PFOTEN/FOUR PAWS (2016). Identification, Vaccination and Movement of Dogs and Cats in Europe: The Pet Passport and the Trade Control and Expert System. (TRACES). FOUR PAWS.

This report was prepared by the European office of the international animal welfare organization VIER PFOTEN/FOUR PAWS, in collaboration with Dr. Sven Hüther (Director of Planet ID and ISO expert for Germany). The report identifies the gaps in the EU's identification system and policies for the movement of dogs and cats across Europe (that is the Pet Passport and TRACES systems) and suggests improvements which need to be integrated into future responses. Their research found it was commonplace for imported cats and dogs to have unreadable or duplicated transponders, the use of the TRACES system facilitates illegal trade (by giving these business an air of legality), and there were too few personnel available to carry out regular and efficient checks in most member states. Due to the limited integration of dogs, cats and ferrets into TRACES, dogs are not actually identified on the traces system, but are recoded under the general category of "Other mammals". The report calls for the urgent harmonisation of the European system which includes the identification and registration of all dogs and cats in Europe (not just those in trade).

Yeates, J. and Bowles, D. (2017). 'Breeding and selling Companion Animals'. In Maher, J., Pierpoint, H. and Beirne, P. International Handbook of Animal Abuse Studies. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

This chapter explores the breeding and trade of pets from a criminological perspective, focusing on the UK puppy trade. It recognises the puppy trade involves harms at each stage of the trade (some of which are covered by specific welfare offences), including, poor care (of breeding animals and progeny) and poor mate-selections and non-compliance with laws designed to minimise international disease transfer (for example, on pet movements to prevent the spread of rabies). These harms can cause animal welfare problems at the time (for example, infectious disease) or in later life (for example, fear-related aggression and inherited health disorders). The authors recognise there are no accurate figures available on the trade, however, through the use of available statistics they estimate the trade to involve between .5 and 1.5 million dogs coming onto the UK market each year. The authors use Rational Choice Theory to explain the underlying behaviour of illegal and irresponsible breeders and traders. Specifically, the trade is facilitated by (a) the lack of guardians for the animals and purchasers (with weaknesses in consumer and animal protection legislation); (b) the presence of suitable victims



(that is, vulnerable animals and purchasers); and (c) offenders' strong motivations (particularly for financial gain). The chapter concludes by arguing that appropriate responses to the trade should include enhanced consumer empowerment, updated and appropriate movement and animal welfare laws - which are effectively enforced, clearer and better enforced vending legislation particularly on online purchases; and the use of other legislation (for example, fraud) to challenge offenders.

## Appendix II: Literature Review



### *SCOPING RESEARCH ON THE SOURCING OF PET DOGS FROM ILLEGAL IMPORTATION AND PUPPY FARMS 2016-2017*

#### *Deliverable 1: Literature Review*

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**Submitted: January 2017**

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Jennifer Maher, University of South Wales***

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# Introduction

Dogs are the most popular companion animal in the UK; for many they offer companionship and support and a special emotional bond. For others, however, dogs are a lucrative source of income. Evidence from key national and international animal welfare non-government organisations [NGO] (PDSA 2016; Dogs Trust 2014, 2015; Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals [RSPCA] 2016a, b; International Fund for Animal Welfare [IFAW] 2012; FOUR PAWS International 2013) supports stakeholder (such as the British Veterinarians Association [BVA] 2014) concerns that illegal and irresponsible puppy breeding and trade is escalating. Central to these concerns are the large-scale industrial and international commercial breeders now characteristic of the breeding industry: effectively a sea-change in UK puppy trade.

Since the introduction of PETS (2012), which relaxed the requirements for importing companion animals to the UK, the commercial and non-commercial movement and trade of companion animals from Europe has increased significantly (Dogs Trust 2014). Simultaneously, stakeholders have identified UK-bred puppies coming from large-scale legal and illegal breeding establishments. The development of industrial-style puppy breeding establishments (often referred to as 'puppy farms' or 'mills', and canine commercial breeding establishments [CBE]) suggest that: first, legitimate and registered breeders cannot provide enough puppies to satisfy UK consumer demand; second, puppies have become a lucrative and vigorous commodity for trade – both nationally and internationally; and third, the nature of the trade has changed significantly, with fewer puppies now being sold from pet shops (less than 5% according to the RSPCA, 2016a), the majority purchased online or from classified advertisements. Problems inherent in puppy breeding and sales are extensive and encompass all parts of the trade, including commercial breeding, selective breeding, online and international trade, and trade at markets and from third parties (Calder 2014).

The harmful consequences of these changes are widespread – impacting the breeding dogs, their progeny, animal health and welfare, dog traders, consumers, public health and the economy. Holzer (2009:2) identifies puppy mills as “by far, the most inhumane kind of dog breeding that exists today in the United States [US] and elsewhere in the world”. According to Yeates and Bowles (2017) the harms associated include poor care, poor mate-selections and non-compliance with laws designed to maintain a standard of animal welfare (Animal Welfare Act 2007) and minimise disease transfer (Balai Directive - council directive 92/65/EEC<sup>11</sup>). These harms cause animal welfare problems in the short term (for example, infectious disease) and in later life (for example, behavioural issues and inherited health disorders). Consequently, Burger (2014) and McMillan (2011) found puppies raised in these establishments are more likely to suffer from illnesses and be poorly socialised. According to an EU study 42 percent of legitimate dog traders identified

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<sup>11</sup> <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv%3A12012>

the illegal trade as the main threat to their business (IBF International Consulting et al. 2015). Consumer behaviour is key to the irresponsible and illegal nature of the current trade - specifically, without capricious and impulsive buyers demanding young 'fashionable' dogs, large-scale commercial breeding establishments and illegal trade would not be profitable. Adjustments to consumer demand will directly impact on the nature and scale of supply.

There are no accurate figures available on the scale or value of the legal or illegal puppy trade, a concern that is raised consistently in both academic and official literature (Yeates and Bowles 2017; Dogs Trust 2015). Academic, official and NGO sources have provided estimates based on available statistics, with particular focus on the online trade. This literature review begins by providing an overview of the prevalence and nature of the puppy trade, before focusing on the literature which helps explain consumer demand and behaviour. An evaluation of current responses to the trade follows, focusing on both informal and formal strategies. Thereafter, the review identifies the widespread consequences of non-compliance and non-regulation. In conclusion, the recommendations offered by key stakeholders are considered. Where possible, this literature review will provide information specific to Scotland.

## **The Prevalence and Nature of the Puppy Trade**

### **Legal and Illegal Puppy Trade**

According to Pet Food Manufacturing Association's 2016 analysis, eleven million (that is, 40 percent of) UK households have one or more companion animals. The current companion animal population stands at 57 million, of which dogs make up approximately 24 percent (n=8.5 million). Within Scotland 22 percent of households have a dog, with an average of 1.5 dogs per household. More broadly, figures available from European Union [EU] member states on companion animal ownership and trade (European Commission 2013) indicate there are more than one hundred million owned dogs and cats across the EU. One EU study conducted in 12 member states identified 60.8 million dogs and 66.5 million cats, which provided an annual industry revenue of €1.3 billion euros (CAROcat 2015). The importation of dogs was valued at approximately €21 million euros. The UK is identified as one of the key consumers of this trade. However, estimates vary greatly on the scale of the UK trade, for example, the RSPCA (2016a) suggest it is between 700,000 and 1.9 million animals per year. Yeates and Bowles (2017) more recently suggest between 500,000 and 1.5 million dogs come onto the UK market each year. In Northern Ireland [NI] alone, puppy breeding is worth £160 million pounds (BBC Scotland 2015). Although similar statistics are not available for other parts of the UK, according to the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs [DEFRA] (2016), animal related establishment licensing (for example, 2,300

licensed pet shops, 650 licenses dog breeders) comprises the fourth largest group of business licenses issued by local authorities in England and Wales.

In addition to the legal regulated trade, there is a legal unregulated trade, that is, those who breed less than five litters of puppies a year in England and Scotland (and less than three in Wales and NI). Again, it is impossible to accurately estimate scale and value. There is also a buoyant UK illegal puppy trade. Trade is illegal if it breaches regulations, including: Breeding more than five/three litters a year without a license or excessively breeding bitches or selling puppies at less than eight weeks of age (Breeding of Dogs Act 1973 (England and Scotland); Breeding and Sale of Dogs (Welfare) Act 1999 (England and Scotland); Animal Welfare (Breeding of Dogs) (Wales) Regulations 2014; The Welfare of Animals (Dog Breeding Establishments and Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations (NI) 2013). Importing puppies from unregistered premises, without the correct paperwork, treatment or transport conditions (Balai Directive 92/65/EEC; PETS Regulation 576/2013). Selling puppies without a sales license (Pet Animals Act 1951; Licensing of Animal Dealers (Scotland) Regulations 2009; Pet Shop Regulations (NI) 2000). Animal welfare requirements on the appropriate treatment and conditions in which dogs should be kept (Animal Welfare Act 2006 (England and Wales); Animal Health and Welfare Act (Scotland) 2006; Welfare of Animals Act (NI) 2011). Failure to declare income from the puppy trade (Taxes Management Act 1970; Finance Act 2008; Customs & Excise Management Act (CEMA) 1979). Fraudulently selling a puppy (The Supply of Goods and Services Act 1982).

It is difficult to differentiate the legal and illegal trade as both the legal trade and non-commercial movement of companion animals provides opportunities for the illegal trade. IBF International Consulting et al. (2015) suggest discrepancies in EU market data and TRACES<sup>12</sup> registered trade (intra-EU sales of 46,000 dogs per month compared to 20,779 registered dogs on TRACES a year) provide some indication of the scale of the illegal trade. Under-reporting on the TRACES system is supported by data from Belgium, which recorded up to eight times more introduced dogs from countries of origin than were recorded in the TRACES database in 2012 (TRACES recorded some 155,000 dogs, including 26,000 puppies, introduced from the Czech Republic, Hungary, the Netherlands and Slovakia). Yates and Bowles (2017) take a similar approach to appraise the scale of the UK market: based on an estimated population of nine to ten million dogs who have an average life-span of 12 years, just over 700,000 dogs are needed annually in the UK to replace those who die. By removing the number of puppies whose sources are known (for example, DEFRA (2012) identified 560,000 puppies were born in England) from those estimated to be coming onto the market (.5-1.5 million), an estimate of the illegal and unregulated trade is possible. The profits recorded from the illegal trade may also be useful to estimate on the scale of the trade. For example, RSPCA prosecutions identified criminal operations profiting from £8,000 to £40,000 a week from the illegal puppy trade, with one providing an annual turnover of approximately £2 million.

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<sup>12</sup> TRACES is an EU-wide online veterinary database for monitoring the commercial movement of animals.

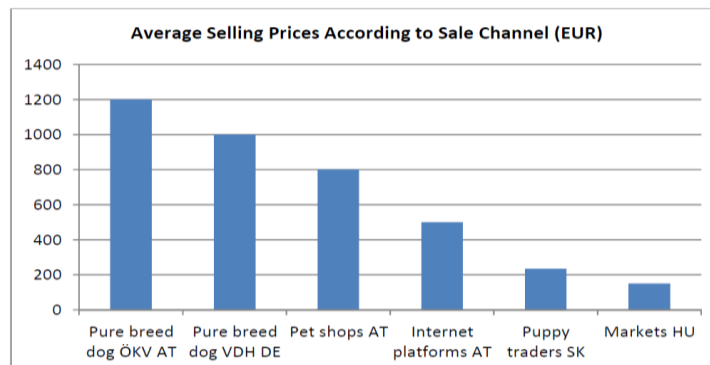
The aforementioned study by CAROcat (2015) reveals that only 13 percent of companion animals purchased in Europe come from professional breeders, although they recognise this estimate is problematic as several countries do not provide a legal definition for a 'professional breeder'. A FOUR PAWS International report (2013) described the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovakia as key puppy production countries, while the Netherlands was identified as a likely "transit country" due to its weaker puppy trade legislation (when compared to neighbouring countries such as Germany). The UK, alongside most Western European countries, were identified as key consumer countries with high market value for puppies. Their report argues that the cheap importation of puppies from production countries creates market distortions which can drive down the profit available to legitimate breeders and enhance the profits for illegitimate traders. For example, the profit available for traders bringing one Chihuahua to Germany is estimated to be €763.80 euros (approximately €15,000 for 20 and €210,000 for 260 puppies). Dogs Trust (2014) reported a significant rise in the international puppy trade to the UK with the implementation of PETS (2012). In the first year, the number of dogs entering the UK via PETS rose by 61 percent. The majority arrive from Eastern European countries and Ireland. Between 2011 and 2013 the number of dogs recorded 'legally' entering the UK under PETS from Lithuania and Hungary increased by 780 percent and 663 percent respectively. According to evidence presented in the Commons Debates (8<sup>th</sup> Mar 2016: Column 29WHX) in 2015, 93,424 dogs were imported into the UK from the EU. The RSPCA reported estimates of 30,000 dogs imported from illegal farms in Romania, Hungary, Poland and Lithuania, and 40,000 from Ireland (RSPCA 2016a). According to Defra, in 2012 just 2.5 percent of those dogs entering under the PETS scheme were found to be non-compliant with PETS. Dogs Trust argue this number is inconsistent with the numbers reported in the illegal puppy trade, suggesting the majority of puppy smuggling goes undetected. Prior to PETS the minimum age of entry for dogs to the UK was 10 months, which prohibited the movement of young puppies and prevented the legal trade providing opportunities for the illegal trade. The sale of puppies from industrial-scale breeding establishments abroad is possible due to a buoyant online marketplace in the UK and other EU member states (for example, Germany and Italy).

## **Online Puppy Trade**

The internet has become a major platform for the commercial sale of animals, in particular dogs, over the last decade. Increasingly, people are looking to the internet to easily access a variety of breeds and instantaneously purchase their puppy. Popular online platforms include specialised purchasing sites (for example, pets4homes), generic buy and sell sites (for example, Gumtree) and social media sites (for example, Facebook). When the majority of legislation across the UK was introduced to regulate puppy breeding and sales, the dominant role of the internet in this trade was not foreseen. Consequently, there is limited regulation online which permits anonymous unethical third party sellers and commercial breeders to sell directly to the public. Puppies available online usually demand a lower price, as evidenced by the FOUR PAWS International (2013) report. Figure 1 identifies the

average selling price for dogs direct from pedigree breeders, pet shops and internet platforms.

**Figure 1. Average Selling Price of Dogs in Hungary, Slovakia, Austria and Germany**



(Reproduced from FOUR PAWS International (2013:5))

While literature on the online puppy trade is sparse, online platforms are recognised by many organisations to be central to the facilitation of irresponsible and illegal puppy trade (for example, Calder 2014; RSPCA 2016a; PDSA 2015, 2016). According to the PAW report (PDSA 2016, see also 2015), 91 percent of companion animal owners (n=3,869) and 96 percent of veterinary professionals (n=673) surveyed believed online pet advertising and sales should be regulated. This would likely have a significant impact on the puppy trade as 50% of companion animal owners in this study would consider getting a companion animal from an online advert on a classified website. IFAW (2012) conducted an investigation into online puppy advertisements in the US and in just one day, on nine websites, well over 733,000 puppies were advertised for sale. The advertisements featured dozens of breeds, and prices ranging from \$1 to thousands of dollars for a single puppy. They identified nearly 10,000 advertisements from the six dedicated puppy seller websites—representing approximately 10% of total advertisements on these sites. As a conservative estimate, they indicated that 62% of the advertisements were “likely puppy mill” sourced. In line with the FOUR PAWS International (2013) report, the holiday season was identified as a peak time for online puppy advertisements.

In 2001 the UK Pets Advertising Advisory Group [PAAG] (2016a), made up of animal welfare organisations, trade associations and veterinary bodies, was developed in response to growing concerns regarding the irresponsible advertising of companion animals for sale, rehoming, and exchange. PAAG argue the extensive use of online platforms in companion animal sales has attracted unscrupulous breeders and dealers and has facilitated consumer impulse buying. Backed by the Government, PAAG have developed minimum standards which classified websites should meet when advertising companion animals (PAAG 2016b). In 2014 they conducted two ‘snapshot’ moderation studies of UK companion animal online advertisements<sup>13</sup>, with a particular focus on assessing the

<sup>13</sup> It is important to interpret these results within the remit of this small-scale study, which aimed to provide a cursory view of the nature, prevalence and use of PAAG standards in the online puppy trade.



ability of online companion animal advertisers to implement the minimum PAAG standards and to self-regulate their advertisements. Between January and June 2014 PAAG volunteers looked at approximately 70,000 advertisements, which equated to 81% of the total advertisements available on selected sites (PAAG 2015a). Sites reported for not meeting the minimum standards decreased from 20 percent to an average of 4-6 percent during this period, suggesting websites were making improvements to their practices. However, these improvement reached a plateau and during the second moderation (October, November, and December 2014), conducted on approximately 3,700 advertisements, declined (9.7 percent (n=359) were reported for minimum standard breaches). In conclusion, their report notes that despite PAAG support few websites consistently meet the minimum standards and cannot be trusted to self-regulate.

Most recently, concern over irresponsible online trade has focused on social media platforms such as Facebook. PAAG's (2015b) snapshot study to assess the use of Facebook to sell animals, found 930 closed groups in a 24 hour period. PAAG volunteers were accepted as members of 230 groups, the majority of which focused on one species (60 percent of these on dogs). The majority - 58 percent (n=134 groups) - were in breach of PAAG minimum standards, in particular advertising without a photograph or providing age information.

Jones (2010) argues the increased use of online platforms to purchase puppies has correspondingly spurred a jump in the number of US puppy mills. IFAW (2012) concurs that the:

anonymous and unmonitored nature of online sales [through online advertisements] has also opened the door for unscrupulous breeders—who emphasize profit over animal welfare—to skirt existing laws designed to protect dogs from these inherently cruel high-volume operations, commonly known as “puppy mills.”

Industrial-scale puppy farms are kennelling facilities where puppies are produced in large numbers for commercial sale, in conditions consistent with commonly farmed animals (McMillan et al. 2011). Evidence suggests that the conditions prevailing in these establishments are injurious to the health and welfare of these dogs (see page 17 for further discussion). The anonymity characteristic of online advertisement and sales platforms make these a logical choice for illegal and irresponsible breeders and traders. They benefit by reducing the face-to-face contact with consumers, which conceals the poor conditions in which puppies are bred. Yeates and Bowles (2017) use rational choice theory to explain how this trade is facilitated by: (a) a lack of guardians for the animals and purchasers (with weaknesses in consumer and animal protection legislation); (b) the presence of suitable victims (that is, vulnerable animals and unwitting consumers); and (c) offenders' strong motivation for financial gain. Developments in online trade exacerbate the problems inherent in the puppy industry, including negative animal and human health, economic and environmental consequences (see 'The Impact of Non-compliance and Non-regulation in the Puppy Trade' for further details).

# Understanding Consumer Behaviour in the Puppy Trade

The thriving UK consumer market for puppies makes it a key location for supply and movement of legal and illegal puppy trade. Key agencies have identified that there is a shortage of legitimate breeders to supply current UK demand (Yeates and Bowles 2017). Nonetheless, every year local authorities across the UK kill thousands of unclaimed stray dogs who cannot find a home. According to the Dog Rescue Federation 2014 Survey of local authorities 105,931 stray dogs were handled (year ending September 2014), of which 6,515 were 'put to sleep' (see PTS category in Table 1) and the outcome was unknown for a further 12,000. Despite the availability of these 'rescues', many consumers choose to purchase a puppy. Better understanding of how consumers make their purchase decisions, and how to influence them, is needed.

**Table 1: Overall number and percentage of stray dogs and the outcome for these dogs across the UK**

UNITED KINGDOM	DOGS HANDLED	OUTCOMES							ERROR - Over reported
		RTO	Rescue	Pound	Re-homed	PTS	Unknown	Total	
ENGLAND	86782	45045	19399	9960	4434	5474	6740	91052	4270
SCOTLAND	3838	2394	933	113	207	112	163	3922	84
WALES	8618	3554	2157	1284	713	424	507	8639	21
NORTHERN IRELAND	6693	2602	1642	823	768	505	478	6818	125
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>105931</b>	<b>53595</b>	<b>24131</b>	<b>12180</b>	<b>6122</b>	<b>6515</b>	<b>7888</b>	<b>110431</b>	<b>4500</b>
PERCENTAGE OF DOGS HANDLED		48.53%	21.85%	11.03%	5.54%	5.90%	7.15%	100.00%	

(Reproduced from the Dog Rescue Federation 2014 Survey (2014:3))

The importance of animal companions to the lives and experiences of consumers is recognised in marketing literature (Aylesworth et al. 1999; Holbrook and Woodside 2008:1); the emotional bond between consumers and their animal companions is central to associated marketing and “goes far beyond anything covered by the usual observations concerning “fantasies, feelings, and fun” (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982) or “possessions as extensions of the self” (Belk, 1988)”. The decision to purchase a puppy is emotionally driven and influenced by a range of factors including fashion, family, friends and prior experiences with dogs (RSPCA 2016b). For example, the influence of fashion on consumer choices is ubiquitous in UK society. Ghirlanda et al. (2014) evaluated the impact of mass media on the popularity of dog breeds, finding an increase in ownership of breeds featured in movies, for up to 10 years after release. The popularity of these breeds correlated with the estimated number of viewers during a movie's opening weekend. These findings demonstrate that although puppy trends may seem erratic, it is sometimes possible to identify specific underlying causes and respond to these. In line with Ghirlanda et al.'s findings, the RSPCA (2012) identified three factors which created the impulse to purchase a puppy: nature, culture and cultural shift. Nature refers to the ability of puppies to eclipse rational thought. For example, in the *air* 2016(a) report the RSPCA identified the 'cute' factor (strongest between the ages of six and sixteen weeks) provides a powerful motivation for purchasing a puppy. Accurately ageing young puppies is difficult, which allows illegitimate sellers to lie about their age and advertise them to consumers at their most marketable age. Culture

applies to the positive ingrained messages and images which drive consumers to make specific breed purchases. Cultural shift refers to consumers' views of breeds as brands and their belief that dogs are consumable objects which are replaceable.

Puppies, unlike other consumable products in law, are recognised as having a unique relationship with humans, which is translated in legislation into duties of care. This unique relationship is also recognised by consumer behaviour scholars who provide an interesting perspective and understanding of human-companion animal consumption. A special issue of the *Journal of Business Research* devoted to 'Animal Companions, Consumption Experiences, and the Marketing of Pets' presents a typology which encapsulates the main ways in which animal companions enrich consumer lives. The article highlights a difference between the consumption of companion animals and objects, with the former regarded as 'good for consumers'. Animal companions are 'good' for consumers as they contribute aspects of value: 'economic' (for self-oriented extrinsic ends); 'hedonic' (appreciated intrinsically for their own sake); social (consumption used to influencing the responses of others); and altruistic (an ethical or spiritual influence viewed as an intrinsic end in itself) (Holbrook and Woodside 2008). In a similar manner, Aylesworth et al. (1999) refers to 'categorisation theory' and 'extended self theory' to explain human-companion animal consumption – suggesting consumers develop categorisations which influence how different dogs impact on our perceptions of ourselves and thereby on purchasing behaviour.

Whereby companion animals may uniquely benefit consumers, Ahuvia (2007) and Beverland et al. (2008), using Buberian concepts, argue most consumers are not 'good' for companion animals. Buber (1923) regards interpersonal relationships as either 'I-Thou' or 'I-It', with the highest forms of relationship being I-Thou (Ahuvia 2007). Through this relationship each individual is treated as intrinsically valuable, rather than as a tool to achieve some other goal (as in I-It relationships). Beverland et al. (2008) refer to this as intrinsic (I-Thou) and extrinsic (I-It) ownership - with the latter identified as the 'dark side of pet ownership' due to the negative impact on the companion animals. Using this approach Beverland et al. (2008) and Ahuvia (2007) advance our understanding of companion-animal and status-oriented consumption. Specifically, these concepts are useful for understanding the motivations of consumers in the puppy trade and their willingness to support irresponsible breeding or selling and to ignore or neglect expert advice when choosing a puppy. Of particular interest is the understanding that:

extrinsic pet consumers (a) place a high value on their dogs being cute; (b) choose small dogs, which they like to hold and cuddle; (c) like to buy their dogs clothing and toys; (d) believe that the dogs should do as they are told; (e) believe that it is the owner's job to mould and shape the dog's character; and (f) see their dogs as innocent to the dangers in the outside world and, hence, vulnerable and in need of restrictive rules for their own protection ... In contrast, intrinsically motivated dog owners (a) like larger dogs that have a more mature persona; (b) tend to see their dogs as being much closer to their existential equals; (c) praise their dogs for being intelligent and believe that their dogs understand a good deal of human speech; (d) assume that the dog is able to fend for itself out of the home; and (e) believe that to

maintain the right kind of relationship with the dog, they must respect its wishes and not expect it routinely to do whatever they say (Ahuvia 2007:498).

Kristen (2009) suggests the harms experienced in the puppy trade are directly connected to consumer's often misplaced desires and beliefs. For example, beliefs around the characteristics of certain breeds or the desire to buy an expensive breed more cheaply. These beliefs form four types of human-companion animal relationships: master–slave, employer–worker, parent–child, and friend–friend. The harms associated with the first three are evident in the growth of industrial-style puppy farms, the increased development of abnormalities and deformities through selective and irresponsible breeding, and the number of companion animals abandoned or surrendered each year to shelters. Further research would be useful in identifying if consumers involved in the different relationship types (for example, intrinsic or master-slave) are more or less likely to impulse-buy or use online platforms to facilitate their purchase.

According to Burger (2014), increasing public awareness on the harms of the illegal puppy trade and educating consumers on where and how puppies are bred and sold may decrease demand for puppies and specific puppy breeds, and create a market of consumers willing to pay more for better conditions (as with free-range foods). If consumers, for example, demanded evidence that puppies are bred humanely and ethically prior to purchase, breeders would be pressured to either comply or lose profits. However, education and awareness may not be enough. According to an RSPCA study on 7,272 adults aged 16-64, one in five puppy owners (defined as those who acquired a puppy in the past two years) surveyed no longer had their dog (University of Bristol 2011; RSPCA 2012).

Furthermore, almost a third of owners spent less than a day researching the breed prior to making the purchase, two-thirds bought a puppy from the first litter they viewed, less than half viewed the mother, while only one in five received advice from a vet and nearly a quarter of the owners (24 percent) based their decision mainly on appearance. These findings reveal that many consumers are capricious and impulse buyers. In conclusion, the RSPCA report suggests there is a need to interrupt and challenge consumers' nostalgic and brand oriented views of dogs, in particular, before they reached 'consideration phase'. Furthermore, it is crucial to offer support to consumers who have already purchased a dog, to prevent the dog being abandoned or relinquished (RSPCA 2012).

## **Regulation of the Puppy Trade**

Responses to the puppy trade involve both official and nonofficial agencies and approaches - from educational and preventative measures to punitive instruments. These responses apply to agents at different stages of the trade (that is, breeders, transporters and traders) and consumers.

## **Informal**

Key reports detail the undertakings of NGOs to educate consumers and enhance compliance. This is evident in the literature provided by the RSPCA (2012; 2016a; 2016b), Dogs Trust (2014; 2015), PDSA (2015; 2016), FOUR PAWS International (2013) and Eurogroup for Animals (Calder 2014). For example, the RSPCA's 'Get Puppy Smart' campaign helps consumers make the right decision in choosing a happy and healthy puppy (University of Bristol 2011). UK NGO's also provide a central role in regulation, through enforcement of policy and legislation, and facilitating partnership work and multiagency enforcement operations (such as Operation Delphin - ScottishSPCA 2016). In the absence of legislation to regulate the online trade, NGO PAAG (2016a) has developed a set of Government-endorsed minimum standards with which to advise and assist leading UK classified websites. One minimum standard, for example, directs these websites to display advice on many aspects of companion animal ownership, including warning messages about suspected illegal imports. Similar efforts are apparent in other EU member states, as NGO FOUR PAWS (2013) Germany has collaborated with eBay classified online ads in order to raise consumer awareness of illegal puppy trading. Since most of the irresponsibly bred and imported puppies are now sold via online advertisements, these responses are crucial.

## **Formal**

Yeates and Bowles (2017) provide a detailed overview and evaluation of the UK legislation relevant to the puppy trade, which is detailed below in Table 2. Dogs transported within the EU must comply with the Balai Directive (Council Directive 92/65/EEC), PETS (Regulation 576/2013 & 2016/429), Regulation (EC) No1/200536 and International Air Transport Association [IATA] (2016) Live Animal Regulations (for air transportation). EU regulations are enforced through various UK legislation (for example, Animals and Animal Products (Import and Export) Regulations 2004, Welfare of animals (Transport) (England) Order 2006).

**Table 2: Summary of the main legislation relating to the trade, sale and breeding of dogs in the UK**

Issue	Legislation	What it does	How effective is it at dealing with the trade?	Consequences
Breeding of puppies	Breeding of Dogs Act 1973 (England and Scotland)  Breeding and Sale of Dogs (Welfare) Act 1999 (England and Scotland)  Animal Welfare (Breeding of Dogs) (Wales) Regulations 2014	Sets conditions for licensing of commercial dog breeding establishments; dogs cannot be sold before eight weeks of age.	Enforcement is a challenge; it allows issuing of licences for any dog breeders but it is only mandatory for those breeding five or more (England) or three or more litters (Wales) a year.	Puppy dealers do not have to be licensed if they are buying rather than breeding but sell commercially bred dogs.
Identification of dogs	Microchipping of Dogs (England) Regulations 2014  Microchipping of Dogs (Wales) Regulations 2015  Microchipping of Dogs (Scotland) Regulations 2016  Dogs (Licensing and Identification) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012	Makes it compulsory to identify a dog from eight weeks and ensure that its details are kept up to date.	About 20 percent of dogs are not microchipped yet and it will be a challenge to ensure details are updated; enforcement will be a challenge as it is not seen as a priority area for local authorities and they have not been provided with any extra resources to do so.	
International trade	Health status in commercial trade covered by Directive 92/65/EC  Health status in non-commercial by PETS Regulation 576/2013 OJ L178/1 28.6.2013  Transport conditions covered by Regulation 1/2005 OJ L 3.1 5.1.2005	Sets rules on numbers, certification, age and vaccination of dogs traded between countries.  Sets conditions on the times, feeding and watering of puppies being transported commercially.	Enforcement is a challenge; illegal trade occurring through PETS being used by commercial dealers and rescue organisations; challenges with fraud and illegal declaration of puppy age.  The transport times are limited to 24 hours before a break is required and do not seem to be enforced.	Dogs that are not microchipped, too young or not vaccinated coming into the UK from Ireland and continental Europe; disease, behaviour and health risk of puppies being sold.
Sales of puppies/dogs	Pet Animals Act 1951  Licensing of Animal Dealers (Young Cats and Young Dogs) (Scotland) Regulations 2009  Pet Shop Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2000	Sets up a licensing scheme for pet shops and sale of pet animals; the Scottish law aims to regulate the trade in young cats and dogs.	Enforcement is a challenge; updates under the Animal Welfare Act have been postponed so dealing with the internet is challenging.	Puppy dealers should use a pet shop licence to sell even though they don't have a pet shop.
Welfare/cruelty	Animal Welfare Act 2006 (England and Wales)  Animal Health and Welfare Act (Scotland) 2006  Welfare of Animals Act (Northern Ireland) 2011	The framework law to ensure good animal welfare and prevent unnecessary suffering. Further information is provided in the Welfare of Dogs Code of Practice in the relevant countries.	The law provides a good framework; enforcement is done through the Police in Northern Ireland, SSPCA and Procurator Fiscal in Scotland and local authorities and the RSPCA in England and Wales.	

(Reproduced from Yeates and Bowles (2017: 28))

In summary:

Under PETS the conditions for the non-commercial movements of pet animals were relaxed. Up to 5 companion animals may travel with owners with a valid PET passport (issued by an authorised vet) that contains proof of their identity, anti-rabies vaccination and other relevant disease preventive health measures. Anyone importing a puppy under PETS with the intention of selling it is operating illegally.

The Balai Directive harmonises the commercial trade in dogs and imposes more stringent controls on importers. Dogs imported to be sold must be declared to authorities (through a TRACES certificate), come from a recognised (registered) breeding place; be identified and vaccinated as per PETS rules. The European Commission manages the TRACES database, providing certification and tracking which helps competent authorities in each member state enforce EU regulations.

Under Council regulations (EC) No 1/2005 transporters must be registered to move dogs across borders and provide suitable transport conditions.

The IATA Live Animal Regulations provide the worldwide standard for handling and transporting live animals by commercial airlines in a safe and humane manner.

In addition to urgent demands to regulate the online trade, the literature also emphasises the need for harmonised EU animal welfare legislation which addresses the welfare concerns of companion animals. As detailed above, current EU legislation only concerns the transport of dogs in connection with an economic activity or where their movement or trade poses an animal or public health risk. The failure to implement harmonised welfare legislation results in fewer enforcement options to tackle the variety of problems surrounding breeding and trade of puppies from production countries. Linked to this, the Eurogroup for Animals argues that there is a worrying lack of traceability across Europe of responsible commercial practices, as well as responsible ownership (CAROcat 2015). Traceability is not possible due to the absence of an EU-centralised identification and registration system for dogs.

As Yeates and Bowles encapsulate in Table 2, there are significant problems in the compliance and enforcement of UK and EU regulations. A recent DEFRA (2016) consultation on animal breeding and selling regulations indicates these are outdated, inflexible, incompatible with current welfare legislation and cumbersome for both enforcers and businesses. The key problems raised by respondents to the consultation were: inconsistencies in enforcement and resource limitations; increased financial (or other) incentives to breed illegally due to enhanced licensing conditions; difficulty revoking licenses; too few (particularly random unannounced) inspections; no regulation of online sales; and no strategy in place to reduce consumer impulse buying (DEFRA 2016). DEFRA has published guidance for companion animal owners to help them avoid buying an illegally imported puppy, however there has been no move to formally regulate online trade. A formal strategy is required as NGO reports suggest illegal traders adapt their procedures (such as using a bank of mobile phones to ensure a different contact number is used for each breed) to deceive consumers and undo efforts to educate them (Calder 2014).

A study authorised by the European Commission on the welfare of dogs (and cats) in EU commercial practices, involved a survey of almost 30,000 key stakeholders from the twelve member states which comprise 85 percent of the EU dog population (IBF International Consulting et al. 2015). The majority of national competent authorities reported high compliance (value 5) *with relevant national welfare legislation*, as detailed in Table 3. The UK, however, reported high non-compliance. Broader national opinion on compliance with transportation legislation identified non-compliance (value 1) in three of the five countries (where data was available), as detailed in Table 4. Information was not available for the UK, while other member states indicated non-compliance due to poor communication between stakeholders. Non-compliance by member states provides opportunities and loopholes for the illegal trade. In response, 36 percent called for better implementation and enforcement of existing standards, which would be best implemented by relevant competent authorities or the EU.

**Table 3: Level of compliance with national legislation on the welfare of dogs and cats reported by competent authorities**

	Case study Member State											
	BE	DE	ES	FR	HU	IT	NL	PL	RO	SE	SK	UK
Compliance rating	5	5	1	6	5	6	4	1	NA	4	5	1

(1= no compliance, 7= full compliance; NA= not applicable).

The level of compliance is as perceived by the respective competent authorities.

**(Reproduced from IBF International Consulting et al. (2015:31))**

**Table 4: Level of compliance with national legislation on the transport of dogs and cats by general national opinion**

	Case study Member State*											
	BE	DE	ES	FR	HU	IT	NL	PL	RO	SE	SK	UK
Compliance rating	NA	1	1	5	NA	5	NA	NA	NA	1	NA	NA

\*1= no compliance, 7= full compliance; NA= not applicable

**(Reproduced from IBF International Consulting et al. (2015:28))**

Highlighting the problem with PETS enforcement, Dogs Trust (2014) imported a soft toy puppy into the UK multiple times using a fake passport and microchip. Their subsequent study (2015) identified similar inadequacies in the checks conducted by carriers (as required by DEFRA) on dogs entering the UK. In particular, these studies emphasised the inadequacy of current practice, which requires the carriers to only check the passport and microchip number, rather than conduct sight checks and scan the dogs themselves. Illegal traders can use microchips not implanted in the dog, and then, post entry implant a UK microchip to conceal all traces of a dog's international origin. VIER PFOTEN/FOUR PAWS [Four Paws] (2016) also confirm the current system can be used to deceive consumers as to the 'real' origin of the puppy they purchase, and the conditions in which it was bred, as the nationality of the passport cannot guarantee the puppies country of origin. UK Chief Veterinary Officer, Gibbens (BVA 2014), argues it would require a huge input of resources to boost current administrative checks with physical checks. Rather, he suggested the new PETS requirements should enhance compliance with rabies regulations, prevent passport fraud and permit traceability back to the issuing vet in the country of origin.



Further concerns are raised on the use of TRACES to enable enforcement. As previously noted, inconsistencies in TRACES and marketing records of member states are evident (IBF International Consulting et al. 2015). This discrepancy may be facilitated by database recording procedures. Dogs are categorised under 'other mammals' and thereby unidentifiable on the system (Four Paws 2016). It is notable that TRACES is significantly more efficient at monitoring and enforcing the movement of animals intended for human consumption. A similar rigorous system could be developed for the puppy trade. Further, while the use of TRACES is compulsory for the competent authority of the EU member states of departure, checks are not mandatory for other authorities. Four Paws (2016) also warns the expansion of TRACES (in 2008 to 76 states), without the respective expansion of resources to enforce movement, may have in fact reduced the effective and usefulness of the system.

Further responses to enhance enforcement and compliance were noted in other member states. The Italian Ministry of Health recognised the increasing illegal movement of puppies (and kittens) from Eastern Europe to Italy (Ferri 2013). In response, the Ministry developed two new operational tools: the procedural manual for the implementation of inspections in the EU movement of dogs and cats and the "Law ratifying and implementing the European Convention for the protection of companion animals, and internal adaptation standards" (Law no. 201/2010). The latter, identifies penal and administrative punishment for the illegal commercial trade and non-commercial movement of companion animals, ranging from €100 to €2,000 euros. Those found guilty of puppy smuggling may be detained for 3 to 12 months and fined €3,000 to €15,000 euros (Ferri 2013). Belgium bans the sale of imported dogs and provide an online listing of authorised breeders (IBF International Consulting 2015). Belgium, alone, requires the registration of all puppy breeders, including hobby breeders.

It is noteworthy that Jones (2010) raises very similar concerns (archaic legislation with gaping loopholes, poor animal welfare protection, unregulated puppy mills and online trade, and enforcement budget and personnel constraints) in the regulation and enforcement of the US puppy trade.

## **The Impact of Non-compliance and Non-regulation in the Puppy Trade.**

The substantial growth in the commercialisation of dogs has had far reaching consequences for animal welfare, due to irresponsible genetic selection, mutilations and inhumane disposal, and behavioural and physical abnormalities linked to industrial-style puppy farming. Further problems result from non-compliance by member states, enforcement agencies and puppy breeders and traders, and non-regulation of key issues innate in the puppy trade, such as

animal welfare, online trade and traceability. Non-compliance and non-regulation result in well documented animal and human health, environmental, and economic/financial consequences, as detailed below.

## Animal Health

Animal welfare problems are evident at every stage of the puppy trade due to the financial incentive for many non-professional<sup>14</sup> breeders to cheaply produce and quickly bring to market and sell 'popular' breeds. Problems start with the choice of breeding dog (for example, with genetic diseases), the breeding and rearing of the puppies, transportation to markets and sale. According to data from France, professional breeders spend significantly more than non-professional breeders to bring their puppy to market (€762 euros per puppy compared to less than €260 euros), with the greatest difference in cost resulting from medical treatment (vaccination, basic care, quality food) and compliance with legal practices (registration and identification, pet passport, breeding certificate and taxes) (CAROcat 2015). Further research from the UK Kennel Club (2013 survey) found 94 percent of puppies bought direct from a professional breeder were reported as having good overall health. However, almost one in five puppies bought via social media or the internet died before they were six months old and twelve percent of puppies purchased this way had serious health problems that required expensive on-going veterinary treatment from a young age (Kennel Club 2013). Poor, severe or chronic health and behaviour problems are repeatedly documented in animals bred in unsuitable environments (Yeates and Bowles 2017). Calder (2014) identifies three studies which support this link: Lockwood (1995), Appleby et al. (2002) and McMillan et al. (2011) suggest canine commercial (or non-domestic) breeding establishments can be associated with higher rates of health and behaviour problems in dogs. McMillan et al. (2011:86) found "dogs in these facilities are routinely housed for their entire reproductive lives in cages or runs, and provided with minimal to no positive human interaction or other forms of environmental enrichment". A total of 1,169 former CBE breeding dogs, who had been living in their adoptive homes for an average of 2 years, were included in the study. When compared with a convenience sample of similar dogs, former CBE dogs were reported as showing significantly higher rates of health problems, fear (both social and non-social), house-soiling, and compulsive staring and significantly lower rates of aggression (toward strangers and other dogs), trainability, excitability and energy.

Transportation facilitates further harms, as evidenced by the many underage puppies entering and being sold in the UK (BVA 2014). Underage puppies do not have a fully developed immune system and cannot regulate their own body temperature. Consequently, the stress of travelling can result in hypoglycemia, which is exacerbated by factors such as intestinal parasites, vomiting and diarrhoea

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<sup>14</sup> Although professional breeders are also responsible for harms linked to selective breeding, which may increase the incidence of inherited diseases or harmful exaggerated features, these breeders are not commonly associated with the illegal puppy trade.

((Ministero degli Affari Esteri (Ministry of Foreign Affairs) 2011). An inquiry by the Italian Veterinarian Council (FOUR PAWS International 2013) found over half of 'controlled' puppies were unwell, infected with endoparasites (34 percent), parvovirus (23 percent), and fungal infections (17 percent), while 10 percent carried distemper. This level of infection may be due to a biological phenomenon called 'microbisme', which according to veterinarians can occur when a large amount of healthy animals are transported or housed together.

## **Human Health**

Although the UK is currently free from terrestrial rabies (Goddard et al. 2012), human health concerns largely focus on the risk of rabies being introduced through the illegal puppy trade. The risk posed by EU dogs under the current PETS rules is low, according to UK Chief Veterinary Officer Gibbons (BVA 2014), however he warns that puppies for sale entering under the PETS regime is "going to be bad for the risks, especially for Echinococcus [tapeworm], and it's going to be bad for puppy welfare and it's going to be bad for the people who buy the puppies" (BVA 2014:552). Goddard et al.'s (2012:1781) support this by concluding that although the risk of rabies entering the UK was low, with either the UK PETS or EU policy, the level of risk "is highly sensitive to noncompliance with the regulations".

A more common harm to human welfare stems from the distress experienced by some consumers who are required to meet the financial and emotional costs of caring for a puppy with severe health and behavioural issues, and possibly euthanasia of their recently acquired companion (RSPCA 2016a).

## **Environmental**

An outbreak of rabies or other controlled disease or parasite may require the culling of UK wildlife or domestic animals (DEFRA 2011), a negative and expensive environmental impact. Environmental harm may be more likely to result from irresponsibly-managed industrial-scale commercial puppy breeding establishments. A study by Gill (2013) on the environmental impact of a US puppy mills, found pathogens such as bacteria, viruses, and parasitic protozoans in dog faeces, may be present in concentrations harmful (that is, more than 80,000 per 100 litres of water) to waterways and humans. Although there is no research available on UK puppy farms, these types of establishments are growing. Thereby, environmental harm should be considered a significant impact of non-compliance and non-regulation of breeding establishments.

## **Economic/Financial**

Due to the scale of the legal puppy trade and associated businesses and profits in the UK and EU, non-compliance and non-regulation can have substantial economic impact. As previously argued, the availability of cheap puppies from Eastern European member states distorts prices in consumer countries (such as the UK), and consequently legitimate UK breeders and traders cannot compete in the

market (FOUR PAWS International 2013). This will also impact on businesses providing (health or registration) services in the puppy trade. CAROcat (2015) estimated a loss of €312 million euros annually in government income from unpaid taxes for such services. Similarly, the RSPCA (2016a) suggests the illegal trade cost the UK Government millions in undeclared income. These unpaid taxes and illegal profits may fuel other serious and organised crime, for example, trade companies involved with Eastern European breeders were linked to the mafia and police (FOUR PAWS International 2013).

## Recommendations

In recognition of the issues identified in the puppy trade and the problems relating to regulation of the trade, many authors provide recommendations for an enhanced response to the legal and illegal puppy trade. Recommendations focused on the European Union (and member states), UK government agencies, consumers and agents involved in the trade. This report concludes by summarising the recommendations for each of these stakeholders.

### EU/Europe

**Improve animal welfare legislation.** The FECAVA (2011) urged the EU to recognise the importance of companion animal welfare as a relevant issue for EU legislation, and to include references to companion animals in the second Animal Welfare Action Plan. Respondents to the IBF survey supported further action from the EU on animal transport and animal welfare (IBF International Consulting 2015). Their preferences were for enhanced enforcement and implementation of legislation, in addition to information and education campaigns.

**Mandatory identification and registration of dogs across the EU with data held in a central database.** An EU-wide compatible identification and registration system for dogs would facilitate identifying the scale of the puppy market, enhance responsible breeding, trade and ownership of dogs, reduce health risks and the number of abandoned and euthanized dogs, and enable transparency in the puppy trade to reduce non-compliance and enhance enforcement. While member states have compulsory and non-compulsory identification and registration systems, according to FOUR PAWS (2016), FECAVA (2011) and IBF (2015) the databases and traceability systems are not uniform across the EU. To facilitate the level of traceability required for enforcement, an access point at the European level to all the national databases is required.

**Harmonise, standardise and improve TRACES entries with regard to dogs.** FOUR PAWS (2016) maintain member states should be required to harmonise, standardise and improve TRACES data entry (that is, transponder numbers, tattoo numbers, passport numbers, registration numbers, licence plates) and record the total number of checks carried out concerning the non-commercial movement of companion animals. Furthermore, they argue for compulsory training of an

adequate number of personnel and specialist agents to increase the number of TRACES checks carried out.

**Enhanced communication between member state competent authorities on detected non-compliance in the movement of dogs.** Enforcement and transparency would be enhanced if competent authorities in destination member states were required to inform the competent authority of the country of dispatch of instances of non-compliance (CAROcat 2015).

## **UK Government Agencies**

**Provide clarity on the scale of the UK puppy market.** The RSPCA (2016b) identify the lack of clarity on the scale of the UK puppy market as a key issue requiring urgent attention.

**Provide additional funding and training for enforcement personnel.** The RSPCA (2016b) argue the need for greater surveillance at ports to identify and prosecute illegal puppy dealers, training for local authorities on new micro chipping legislation and licensing of puppy breeding and selling, and adequate budgets for response demands. IFAW (2012) recommend the Government increase funding in order to adequately enforce regulation of puppy sales online. Competent authorities should be trained to verify the age of a puppy when it is vaccinated (FOUR PAWS 2016). More generally, Dogs Trust (2014) urge enhanced training for all front-line staff.

**Provide additional opportunities for multi-agency work.** Dogs Trust suggested key enforcement agencies, such as APHA, DEFRA and Trading Standards, provide further focus on agency availability and multi-agency cooperation (Dogs Trust 2014). Currently a great deal of multi-agency work is led by NGOs (Scottish SPCA 2016).

**Enhance current licencing and movement regulations.** The RSPCA (2016b) support: model license conditions (which detail consistent standards and practice) for puppy breeding and selling to provide greater harmonisation between local authorities; the need for anyone selling a puppy to be licensed; an increase to eight weeks for the age at which a puppy can be sold and reduce the threshold for a breeding licence to two litters or more. Overall there was support from the DEFRA (2016) consultation to update the licensing system for animal establishments (including breeders). Support from the 1,709 key stakeholder respondents involved: a single animal establishment licence (70.5%); the requirement of model conditions by local authorities; (71%); prohibiting the sale of puppies below the age of eight weeks (90%); a statutory licensing threshold for breeders at three or more litters of puppies a year (64%); to remove calendar-year restrictions on licenses (83%); prohibiting the transfer of licenses to new owners (61%); and requiring license owners to notify Local Authorities of major changes to the premises or scale of activities (94%). Dogs Trust (2014) recommend enhancing movement legislation, for example, not permitted movement of dogs into the UK before 6 months of age.

**Develop further legislation to regulate online advertisement of dogs.** IFAW (2012) declare the government should promulgate regulations that effectively address industrial-scale breeders using the internet and remove advertisements from illegal breeders. A review of legislation to tackle the problem of online advertising is urgently required to enable enforcement, according to PAAG (2015a). The aforementioned PAAG advertising standards should be made mandatory for all UK online advertisements.

**Enhance relevant agency powers to investigate offenders.** Further powers are needed for agencies to investigate the credentials of puppy dealers' and access data to support prosecution. 72 percent of respondents to DEFRA's (2016) consultation support powers of entry for Local Authorities. FOUR PAWS (2016) argue relevant government agencies should investigate the credentials of any company moving dogs internationally and provide tax numbers of these organizations to the EU. The use of other legislation (for example, fraud) was also suggested to prosecute offenders.

**Enhance penalties for non-compliance.** Dogs Trust (2014) suggest introducing a fixed penalty charge for those apprehended illegally bringing dogs into the UK for both commercial and non-commercial offenders (as identified in the Italian enforcement approach). Holzer (2009) suggested similar strict administrative regulations and penalties for US breeders, facilitators and commercial retail sellers.

**Investment in targeted educational programmes.** Dogs Trust (2014) argue the need for official agencies to target consumers purchasing puppies online rather than relying on welfare charities to carry out this work. IFAW (2012) also emphasise the importance of educating consumers about the cruelty inherent in irresponsible and illegal breeding and trading to encourage consumers to source puppies from more reliable and appropriate sources. A strategy is required to interrupt and challenge consumers' nostalgic and brand oriented views of dogs, in order to prevent impulse and trend buying (RSPCA 2012). The UK Chief Veterinary Office (BVA 2014:1) underlined the need to develop a strategy to stop people buying cheap puppies, suggesting this is "a message that we all have a responsibility to carry".

## **Consumers**

**Mobilise consumers to monitor and reject internet sales platforms.** PAAG (2015a) emphasise the importance of mobilising the public to monitor online advertisement platforms to facilitate enforcement and to reject those sites which do not offer adequate information, advice and guidance to enhance compliance among breeders and traders.

**A mandatory cooling-off period for consumers.** DEFRA (2016) recommend a mandatory cooling-off period for consumers purchasing a puppy to reduce impulse buying.

**Enhanced consumer protection laws and advice.** Holzer (2009) suggests generous provisions are needed to encourage consumers to 'sue' irresponsible traders.

## Market Traders

**Encourage online platforms to provide transparency and refuse advertisements from irresponsible and illegal breeders.** Encourage advertising websites to strengthen efforts to identify and block irresponsible and illegal breeders from using their sights to post puppies for sale. Online platforms could provide more transparency for consumers looking to buy a puppy online by giving clear information on the puppy breeder or dealer and introducing a pop-up warning (about breeders) page on the puppy advertisement (Four Paws 2013).

In summary, the recommendations indicate there are many opportunities for improvement. Essential responses to the puppy trade include enhanced consumer knowledge, guidance and empowerment; enhanced licensing and movement laws and regulation of online advertisements and sales, harmonisation of EU animal welfare legislation, improved resources to enable current and enhanced measures at UK and EU-level, mandatory and enhanced recording and traceability across the EU, and further collaboration between key stakeholders.

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## Appendix III: Interview Schedule

### 1. Professional and Agency Role

- What is your role in the puppy trade/in responding to the illegal/grey trade?
- SWOT in role/agency?
- Who do you work with in this role?

### 2. Key Agencies/Strategies

- Who/what are the key agencies involved in responding to the illegal puppy trade/puppy farms in Scotland?
- What are the main strategies in place (e.g. PETS scheme, Balai directive)?
- Do these work – SWOT (policy, enforcement, resources, etc.)
- Does non-commercial trade (or other trade) provide loopholes for this trade?

### 3. Multi-agency work

- Experience of co-operation and co-ordination among stakeholders in and outside Scotland (who, where, what)?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of these approaches?
- Examples of successful and unsuccessful cross-border co-operation within the UK and outside the UK

### 4. The trade /unregulated farms

- Understanding of the nature and scale of the trade/farms? How much is undetected/reported/recorded?
- Understanding of the main problems in the trade/farms?
- Where does it take place (online/specific locations – motorway stations)?

### 5. Understanding consumer behaviour:

- Who are the consumers – of legal/illegal/grey?
  - What is your experience of these consumers/what are they looking for/how do they access the dogs?
- Are there specific locations/areas where this is more problematic?
- Have you identified strategies which successfully change consumer behaviour?
- What else can be done to change consumer behaviour?
- How best to access these consumers for the focus groups?

### 6. Extending Research to the UK

- Do you think similar research is needed in E&W? Why, what would the benefits be?

## **Appendix IV: Online Survey**

A copy of the Online Survey has been published as a supporting document and can be accessed as a PDF along with this report

## Appendix V: Focus Group Guide

### A. Experiences before you bought your dog

1. Tell me a little about your dog and experiences of buying or looking for a new dog
2. Were you looking for a specific age and breed of dog? Why were you looking for this age & breed of dog?
3. What characteristics were important to you?
4. Did you research breeds before buying?
5. Did you research how to go about buying?
  - a. Did you learn about good practice in buying/choosing a puppy?
  - b. Did you learn about the signs for farming and smuggling? How aware of these issues were you?
  - c. How much time did you spend researching?
  - d. Did you get advice from anywhere (would you recommend any sources for advice?)
  - e. Where did you look for your puppy? (problems and benefits)

### B. Experience of buying your dog

6. Where did you find your puppy?
7. What happened when you bought your puppy (who, where, when – positive/negative experience)?
8. Was the puppy as advertised?

### C. Improving the experience

9. How can seller behaviour be improved?
10. How can buyers' behaviour be improved?
11. What would you like to see in future to help purchase a puppy?
12. What would you prefer not to see in future?
13. What would help influence your decisions in future (pop ups online, celeb endorsements, etc.)?

## Appendix VI: Detailed Analysis of the Seven Monitored Website's (Oct-Dec 2016) Adherence to PAAG guidance

PAAG Requirement	Viva Street	Pets4Homes	Epupz	Gumtree	Free Ads	Dogs and Pups UK	Craigslist
Run automated checks for 'blacklisted' words/terms such as banned breeds and filter for misleading or inappropriate adverts	Not entirely clear but possible	Not entirely clear but possible	Website unavailable but only small number of advertisements identified	Not entirely clear but small number of adverts found that breached guidelines	Possible	Possible	Small number of pets (including dogs) for sale
Require all vendors to include a recent photograph of the animal that they are advertising and monitor for suspicious usage of images.	Yes	Yes	Website unavailable but only small number of advertisements identified	Yes	Yes	Yes	Small number of pets (including dogs) for sale
Require that all adverts display the age of the animal advertised. No pet should be advertised for transfer to a new owner before it is weaned and no longer dependent on its parents.	Yes	Yes	Website unavailable but only small number of advertisements identified	Yes	Yes	Yes	Small number of pets (including dogs) for sale
Permanently ban vendors – on a three strikes and you're out basis – who attempt to post illegal adverts, and take down illegal/inappropriate adverts	Possible	Possible	Website unavailable but only small number of advertisements identified	Possible	Possible	Possible	Small number of pets (including dogs) for sale

within 12 working hours of notification							
Ensure that every view item page includes prominent links to PAAG advice on buying and selling a pet (and specific advice for commonly advertised species), including "pop ups"	No	No – but various links to information, advice and guidance on responsible selling and purchasing on each advertisement webpage.	Website unavailable but only small number of advertisements identified	No	No	No – but links to other information, advice and guidance.	Small number of pets (including dogs) for sale
Label clearly on each ad whether it is a private sale, commercial sale or from a rescue/rehoming centre	Yes	Yes	Website unavailable but only small number of advertisements identified	No	Yes	No	Small number of pets (including dogs) for sale
Not include adverts for farmed animals or adverts specifying that the animal is to be used for working, hunting, or guarding in the pet section	Such adverts banned and none found	Such adverts banned and none found	Website unavailable but only small number of advertisements identified	Yes	Yes	Each advert has warning puppy farming and link to further information, advice and guidance.	Small number of pets (including dogs) for sale
Monitor for multiple mobile/telephone numbers and email addresses in private sales and investigate and potentially ban frequent/repeat breeders. 'Frequent' is defined as the same vendor offering a third different animal in a twelve	Unclear but is possible	Unclear	Website unavailable but only small number of advertisements identified	Unclear but possible	Unclear but possible	Unclear but possible	Small number of pets (including dogs) for sale

month period							
Ban adverts of live vertebrate animals as food	Such adverts banned	Such adverts banned	Website unavailable but only small number of advertisements identified	Such adverts banned	Unclear but no such adverts identified	Unclear but no such adverts identified	Small number of pets (including dogs) for sale
Ban adverts offering stud animals, animals in season or animals 'for rent' or 'loan' in pet section. Note that adverts offering horses or donkeys for loan are acceptable	No – adverts for stud dogs identified	Such adverts banned and none found	Website unavailable but only small number of advertisements identified	Such adverts banned and none found	No – adverts for stud dogs identified	No – adverts for stud dogs identified	Small number of pets (including dogs) for sale
Ban adverts offering pregnant animals for sale	No such adverts identified	Yes	Website unavailable but only small number of advertisements identified	Yes	Unclear but no such adverts identified	Unclear but no such adverts found	Small number of pets (including dogs) for sale
Ensure that no pets are advertised for swapping with other pets, services or goods	Yes	Yes	Website unavailable but only small number of advertisements identified	Yes	No (swapping adverts located but not for dogs/puppies)	Unclear but no such adverts found	Small number of pets (including dogs) for sale
Ensure that species scheduled by the Dangerous Wild Animals Act are clearly marked as such and make clear to vendors that it is an offence to offer a species covered by EU Wildlife Trade Regulations Annex A and listed by CITES for sale without a valid Article 10	N/A	N/A	Website unavailable but only small number of advertisements identified	N/A	N/A	N/A	

Certificate. Non-human primates should not be offered for sale.							
Exclude any advert where there is a reasonable concern for the health and welfare of the animal involved	Possible	Yes (advert mentioning 'designer breeds' banned).	Website unavailable but only small number of advertisements identified	Possible	Possible	Possible	Small number of pets (including dogs) for sale
Provide a clearly visible function for purchasers to Report illegal or inappropriate adverts	Yes	Yes	Website unavailable but only small number of advertisements identified	Yes	No	No	Small number of pets (including dogs) for sale
Ensure that no live vertebrates are advertised for sale as deliverable through the postal system, national or international	Yes	Yes	Website unavailable but only small number of advertisements identified	Yes	Unclear – evidence of links with courier service	Yes	
Require all vendors to state the country of residence from which the animal is being sold	Yes	Yes	Website unavailable but only small number of advertisements identified	Yes	Yes	Yes	Small number of pets (including dogs) for sale
Require all commercial vendors to provide Local Authority licence information when submitting an advertisement	Unclear	Commercial vendors required to submit proof of licence when creating an account	Website unavailable but only small number of advertisements identified	Unclear but such sellers require business account	Commercial sellers required to have licence to sell commercially.	Unclear	Small number of pets (including dogs) for sale
Other Observations	-All those posting agree to abide by PAAG guidelines  -The PAAG	-If an advertiser is breeding and advertising dogs for sale and requires a dog breeding license from		-Supports PAAG and website includes a link to PAAG. -A max. of 2 litters per year to be sold on site by any	-Does not allow puppy farms to advertise. If you sell more than 4 litters of	- No link to PAAG. -Stud adverts found -Not clear if ads are	



	<p>link is not visible on individual advertisement pages. However, is mentioned on terms and conditions page with hyperlink</p>	<p>their local council, the person needs to be registered as a licensed breeder on the site, and provide with a copy of the license. If site suspects that a licence is required and details have not been provided, we will report this to your local authority</p> <p>-Does not accept adverts for 'designer dogs'</p> <p>-All pets for sale must be available for viewing with their mother (and ideally their father</p> <p>-</p> <p>Advertisements of banned breeds prohibited</p>		<p>single seller</p> <p>-Adverts from puppy farms not accepted. Any such adverts found will be reported to the RSPCA and Trading Standards</p> <p>-Adverts for dogs with docked tails/ears not allowed.</p> <p>-Website provides link to advice <a href="https://www.guamtree.com/content/pet-education/puppies-checklist/">https://www.guamtree.com/content/pet-education/puppies-checklist/</a></p> <p>Pet passport required</p>	<p>puppies in a year, by law you must have a "dog breeders license".</p> <p>- Evidence of breeders licence required to place commercial advert.</p>	<p>domestic, commercial or rehoming (no categories to select)</p> <p>-No clearly visible information on how to report any concerns on advertisement page</p> <p>-Has advice about buying pet in each ad</p>	
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## Appendix VII: Summary of Responses to Animals Welfare in England

### Response to each recommendation

#### Secondary legislation

Paragraph 16: We recommend that the Government set out a timetable for the secondary legislation that was foreseen ten years ago in the Animal Welfare Act 2006.

The Government has been reviewing the animal establishments licensing schemes which

include dog breeding, pet vending, cat and dog boarding, riding establishments and performing animals. We are currently aiming to have new regulations in place in 2018. Regulations on racing greyhounds, compulsory microchipping of dogs and welfare of wild animals in travelling circuses were all introduced under the Animal Welfare Act 2006 (the 2006 Act).

### **Progeny of dogs**

Paragraph 21: We recommend that the Government pass regulations to protect the genetic viability and welfare of offspring as well as adult dogs.

The Kennel Club's Assured Breeder Scheme already includes requirements for genetic screening of breeding dogs to reduce the risk from inherited conditions. We will explore the possibility of further protecting the progeny of dogs within the proposals to modernise the dog breeding regulations.

### **Breeding of dogs**

Paragraph 38: We recommend that anyone breeding two litters or more per year should be licensed as a breeder.

Paragraph 39: We recommend that those falling below the threshold of a licensed breeder should be registered with their local authority.

Following the Government's review of the animal establishments licensing schemes in England, we propose that anyone breeding and selling three litters or more in a twelve-month period would need to be licensed by their local authority. We will retain the existing exemption in the dog breeding legislation for breeders who can show they do not sell any of their puppies as well as the requirement that each breeding bitch should have only one litter per year.

We consider that three litters or more per year provides the right balance of being proportionate and reasonable to enforce, and will help target regulatory effort on those breeders producing dogs on a commercial basis. In terms of the impacts, there are around 600 licensed dog breeders in England at the moment. Taking into account information provided by the Kennel Club, we consider that up to around 5,000 breeders might be breeding either three or four litters per year, and that up to around 10,000 breeders might be breeding two litters per year. These figures should be viewed as indicative estimates.

A requirement for breeders who breed three litters or more per year to be licensed would already increase local authority licensing requirements noticeably

If people falling below the threshold had to register with their local authority this would cover every household which had just one litter of puppies and sold them. We consider that such a registration requirement would be disproportionate and would also be challenging to enforce by local authorities. Evidence from similar regimes, such as the dog licensing regime, which used to exist in the past, are that they are difficult to enforce with compliance rates being low. Such a regime would present a burden on responsible hobby breeders and families who choose to breed from their dog once in its lifetime and in such situations there are far less likely to be welfare concerns that demand a registration or licensing system.

Paragraph 48: Breeders have an important responsibility to provide for the social development and broader welfare requirements for puppies in their care. We recommend that the legislation governing the breeding of dogs should be updated with a licensing regime.

The Government agrees that the dog breeding legislation needs to be updated and proposes that the welfare requirements of the 2006 Act are spelt out in new regulations.

We also propose that many of the standards within the Model Licence Conditions and Guidance for Dog Breeding Establishments 2014, as published by the Chartered Institute for Environmental Health, be incorporated into the new regulations and we will work closely with the Canine and Feline Sector Group on this work.

Paragraph 57: We recommend that a national inspectorate should be established to liaise and support local authorities in enforcing the licensing regime, undertaking inspections and dealing with complaints.

We agree with the Committee that bringing all local authority inspection regimes on animal welfare up to the level of the best is the challenge. As noted, some local authorities have been able to specialise in this area and offer support to and share best practice with others, not least through the use of Primary Authority<sup>1</sup> which has been employed extensively in some areas, for example by the City of London in relation to the transport of certain animals. Thus if expertise is lacking in one local authority it can be obtained from another area. In line with this

approach, and in support of the review of animal establishment licensing, the Government has started work with the local authority led National Companion Animal Focus Group, to develop: standards for competency of inspectors; a risk based assessment framework; guidance and documentation for local authorities; and user-friendly information for licensed establishments. Against that background, Government considers that the principal regulatory entity should remain as the local authority. We consider the creation of a national inspectorate could be confusing for those regulated and may cut across the established licensing system, and this might not support our welfare objectives. The Committee points out (paragraph 54), that the Secretary of State appoints inspectors for the purpose of assisting local authorities administer the zoo licensing scheme. A team of inspectors comprising not more than three appointed by the local authority, and two nominated by the Secretary of State, will generally assess the standards in a zoo. One nominated inspector from the Secretary of State's lists will be a competent veterinary surgeon, and it is usual for the local authority to appoint a vet also. This model is required because of the complexity of animal species and their welfare needs within zoos. We would not expect many district councils to possess the necessary expertise to cover this. This situation is quite different to that applying to pet shops and to dog breeding, animal riding and boarding establishments.

Paragraph 62: UKAS accreditation is a good thing, and we encourage its pursuit on its own merits. However, we do not believe that it is a substitution for local authorities' inspection. Therefore we do not support the Government's proposal to establish a complete local authority exemption licensing exemption for businesses accredited by the United Kingdom Accreditation Service. Following analysis of the public consultation on our licensing proposals and in the light of comments from key stakeholders as well as this recommendation from the Committee, the Government has decided not to pursue the option of a full exemption from licensing for businesses certified by a UKAS accredited body. Whilst there was some support for the proposal, there was also significant opposition. Instead, the Government proposes to incorporate the concept of earned recognition into the new licensing system. This will include consideration of affiliation to a body accredited by UKAS in the risk-based assessment process that we are currently developing with the National Companion Animal Focus Group. This would ensure a reduced burden on low risk businesses and on local authorities whilst maintaining overall local authority control over the licensing scheme.

Paragraph 73: We recommend that the Government increase spot checks at entry points into the United Kingdom to enforce the rules on non-commercial trade on domestic animals.

Paragraph 74: We recommend increased working between government agencies and charities to understand how the puppy smuggling trade works and how to reduce it effectively.

One hundred per cent of checks are carried out on pet animals entering Great Britain on approved routes under EU Pet Travel Scheme. The checks are performed by carriers, or pets checkers acting on their behalf. Defra's Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) are responsible for training and appointing carriers and pets checkers. APHA undertake random checks of pet animals to ensure the carriers are performing checks to the required standard. In 2015 APHA completed checks on 5,663 animals travelling into GB. Of the 5,663 animals checked, 73 animals were found to be non-compliant with the EU Pet Travel Regulations. APHA work closely with carriers and pets checkers to address any issues identified and provide any additional training required.

Government agencies and charities are working closely together to tackle puppy smuggling. We are currently considering the lessons learned from the Dover puppy pilot, where APHA worked closely with Kent County Council Trading Standards, Border Force, the Police, and Dogs Trust in tackling puppy smuggling and gaining a better understanding of pet movements under the EU Pet Travel Scheme.

### **Sale of Dogs**

Paragraph 91: We recommend that the Government ban third party sales of dogs. Dogs should only be available from licensed, regulated breeders or approved rehoming organisations.

We have considered the matter very carefully including in light of the views of many welfare charities. The Government agrees that it is sound advice for prospective buyers to try to see the puppy interact with its mother. A ban on third party sales would in effect be a statutory requirement for puppies to be sold only by breeders. It is unclear how well such a ban would be enforced and local authorities are already under pressure to regulate the existing regime as

effectively as possible. Given the demand for dogs there is a risk that a ban on third party sales would drive some sales underground, and welfare charities are already concerned about the number of good breeders. We note that a number of established welfare charities with experience and knowledge of the sector have advised against a ban on third party sales. We consider that such a ban has the potential to increase unlicensed breeding in addition to a rise in the sale and irresponsible distribution of puppies, and may be detrimental to our welfare objectives.

The Government still wishes to address issues relating to the sale of dogs other than by the breeder, and we have considered other approaches. We support the robust licensing of all pet sellers including third party sellers. Through the Government's revision to the licensing regime anyone in the business of selling pet animals will require a licence. Local authorities will be able to ensure that animal welfare requirements are met through the regime, including the application of many of the requirements from the Model Conditions for Pet Vending Licensing 2013 published by the Chartered Institute of Environmental Management which will be incorporated into the regulations. In addition we are encouraging consumers to source dogs from reputable breeders and to see puppies interact with their mothers.

Paragraph 100: We recommend that PAAG's minimum standards should be made mandatory for all websites where pets are advertised and sold.

The Government has endorsed the Pet Advertising Advisory Group's (PAAG) Minimum Standards which were developed with input from Defra. They provide an important step in improving the way pets have been advertised on line, and the Government encourages all on line advertising sites operating in this country to apply them. However as the Committee recognises, many of those sites operate from premises overseas and some, such as UK Classifieds and Free Ads, have failed to engage with PAAG on improving the advertisements on their sites despite frequent promptings. We would encourage people not to sell or purchase a pet from sites that do not comply with the PAAG minimum standards. Whilst buying a pet is a serious undertaking, and should not be taken lightly, the Government recognises that people will look to the internet as a source, and reputable breeders do advertise on line, so the internet can be a way to find such a reputable breeder and then make a physical visit to their premises for example see the mother interacting with her puppies in the case of a dog. As the Committee notes, six established online advertising sites seek to apply the minimum standards, and we would encourage PAAG to publicise the existence of these sites for the public. Defra working with PAAG will continue to engage with them and any other site willing to apply the standards, to improve the way pets are advertised. Ministers have already held three round table meetings with the six websites and another is planned for early 2017. In the meantime, we have not been convinced that it would be practicable to legislate to require all websites advertising pets for sale in England to be subject to the PAAG minimum standards, not least because of the difficulties in the enforcement of those operating offshore.

In studying the detail of the standards themselves it is clear that a number of them are relevant to the advertiser as well as the website provider—for example, but not exclusively the need to supply a recent photograph of the pet, that the age of the animal is stated and that all commercial sellers provide their licence details.

To encourage better traceability and assurance for those seeking to acquire a dog, and in support of the recommendation in paragraph 102 (on internet advertisements including licensing numbers), we propose to include in the new licensing regulations a requirement for licensed sellers of pets to display their licence number when advertising. This will allow responsible consumers to check that they are securing a dog from a properly licensed breeder. In addition we will explore the scope for requiring other elements of the PAAG minimum standards to be applied by licensed pet vendors through the application of conditions.

Paragraph 101: We recommend that legislation should state specifically that those advertising the sale of animals on the internet should have a licence. It is essential that legislation remains relevant and effective in the digital age.

We consider that the focus of regulatory attention should be on repeat breeders and on the sellers of animals. Websites and others have access to software that can identify such sellers on line

despite attempts by such sellers to evade detection. This has and is being used for example by HM Customs and Revenue to detect any on line pet vendors making substantial sums of money but paying no tax which is covered in more detail below. If everyone advertising an animal for sale on the internet was required to have a licence this might be disproportionate on the one-off seller and on those seeking to enforce the requirement.

Paragraph 97 of the Committee's report implies that in giving evidence, the Minister, George Eustice suggested that anyone advertising animals for sale over the internet needed a licence. However, Hansard records<sup>2</sup> the Minister said: "If you are commercially running a business on the internet then you are a pet shop, you should be licensed as a pet shop". This makes clear that it is only business sellers that need to be licensed.

Paragraph 102: We recommend that the Government make it compulsory that all internet advertisements should include the registration or licence number of the seller. We also recommend that the Government look at the new regime in France where the seller's tax code is included in the advertisement, to see whether such a regime could be put in place in the United Kingdom.

We agree that licensed pet animal sellers should include their licence number in any advertisement they post online or in a publication. We have proposed, therefore, that such a measure be included in the new animal establishments licensing regulations. As stated above, we do not agree that everyone who uses the internet to advertise a pet needs to be licensed. As regards the use of a tax code, the UK has a different system to France but it is very relevant that HMRC have established a taskforce to target those involved in the breeding and selling of puppies and kittens within the UK. The taskforce is looking at all aspects of this business sector, from registered, recognised breeders including those involved on a commercial basis and those who facilitate this trade, as well as those that trade on line.

HMRC taskforces bring together various HMRC enforcement teams for intensive bursts of activity targeted at specific sectors and locations where there is evidence of high risk of tax evasion and fraud. Task forces often work with other law enforcement agencies to recover tax from the dishonest minority, and there are likely to be significant animal welfare gains from this work as any unscrupulous traders are detected. The Government will review the results from this work.

Paragraph 104: We recommend that Defra establish a publicly accessible list of registered and licensed breeders and sellers.

People can already readily identify and access reputable breeders, including on line, through schemes such as the Assured Breeder Scheme run by the Kennel Club<sup>3</sup> (see below), and we would encourage potential pet buyers to source from this type of breeder. These schemes also establish and promote enhanced welfare standards in a number of ways. Furthermore, if licensed dog breeders and pet sellers are required to publish their licence details when advertising, that will be a significant step forward and lead to greater public scrutiny of the industry. Working with the sector, Government is also looking to develop a risk based approach to regulation of the industry. This could encompass a "scores on the doors" system whereby high performing low risk operators are able to offer more reassurance of the quality of their operation. The Kennel Club has presented evidence on the Assured Breeder Scheme in relation to dog breeding. The scheme requires breeders to go beyond the requirements of the Animal Welfare Act 2006 and the operation and standards in the scheme are subject to close scrutiny by the independent United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS). The scheme provides a further reassurance to potential dog owners and a means for the public to identify reputable breeders. Furthermore at a basic level, if anyone wishes to know whether a particular establishment is licensed to breed dogs or sell animals they can contact the appropriate local authority. Overall we consider that there is already sufficient public accessibility to registered and licensed breeders and sellers.

### **Central reporting system**

Paragraph 107: We recommend that Defra work with local authorities to investigate the possibility of creating a central reporting system for complaints relating to the breeding and sale of pets.

We understand that the main motivation for people calling for a central reporting system for complaints is to make it easier for them to make such complaints. However regulation of the industry is local authority led. Thus if anyone has any complaints about a pet seller or dog breeder

they should report it to the relevant local authority which has powers to investigate or, in the case of a member of the Assured Breeder Scheme, to the Kennel Club.

### **Sentencing**

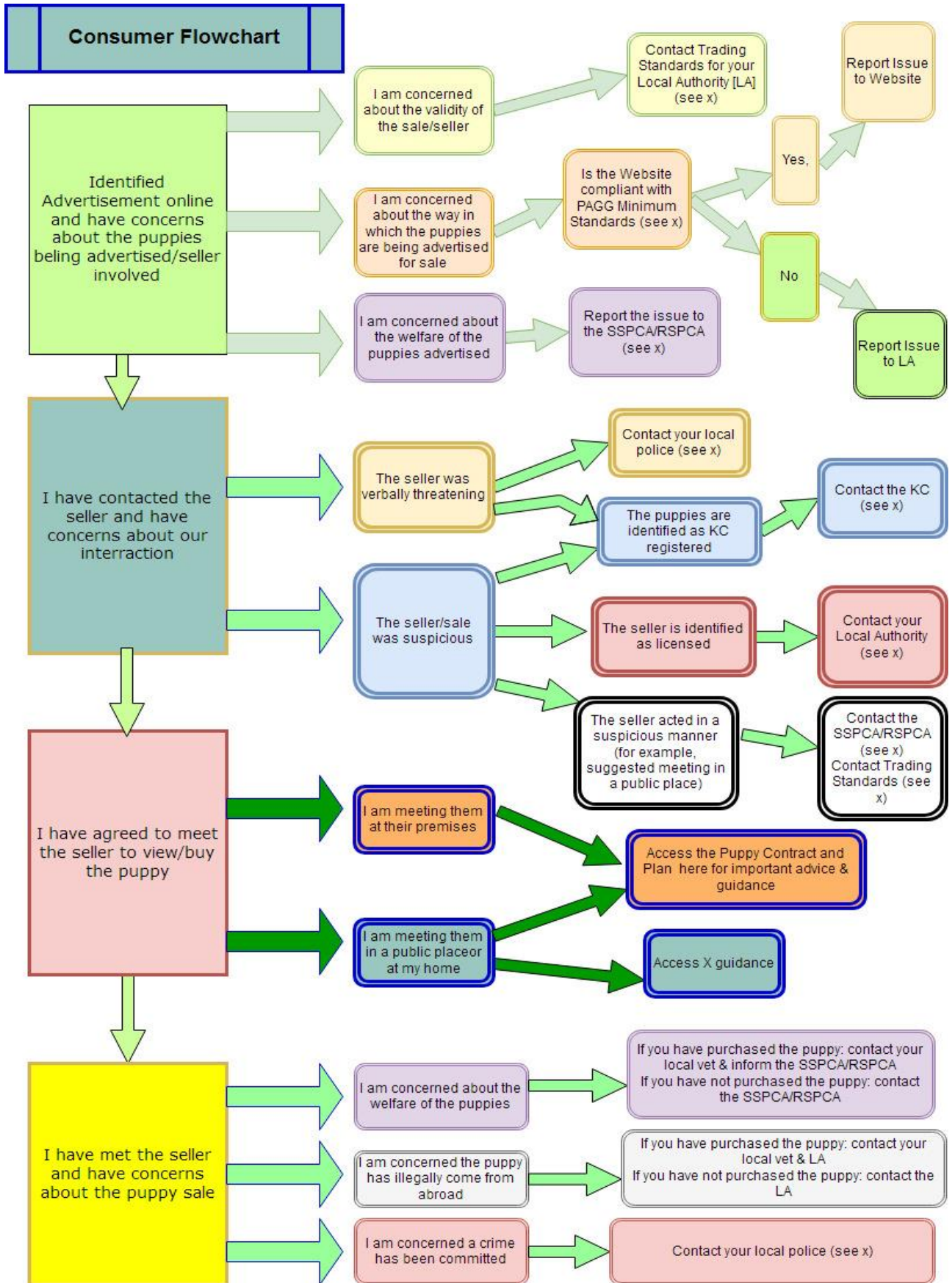
Paragraph 175: The current penalties for animal welfare offences in England are amongst the lowest in Europe. We recommend that the maximum penalty is increased to five years. We recommend that Defra should start discussion with Ministry of Justice by the end of the year to achieve this.

Defra is in regular dialogue with the Ministry of Justice in relation to sentencing policy for animal welfare offences. Current sentencing practice for offences of animal cruelty in the Animal Welfare Act 2006 does not suggest that the courts are finding current sentencing powers inadequate. In 2015, 936 people were sentenced for offences relating to animal cruelty under the Animal Welfare Act 2006. Of which 91 were given an immediate custodial sentence. The average custodial sentence length is 3.3 months. 202 offenders were given a suspended sentence and 341 received a community sentence. 177 offenders were punished with a fine. The average fine amount in 2015 was £244. Since 2010 the number of prosecutions has fallen but the conviction rate has remained stable at 75%. The average custodial sentence length remains relatively stable. It should be noted that a suspended sentence is a custodial sentence. The offender is subject to supervision and may be subject to other requirements and if they breach that supervision, any of the other requirements or commit a further offence the presumption is that the court will activate the custodial element.

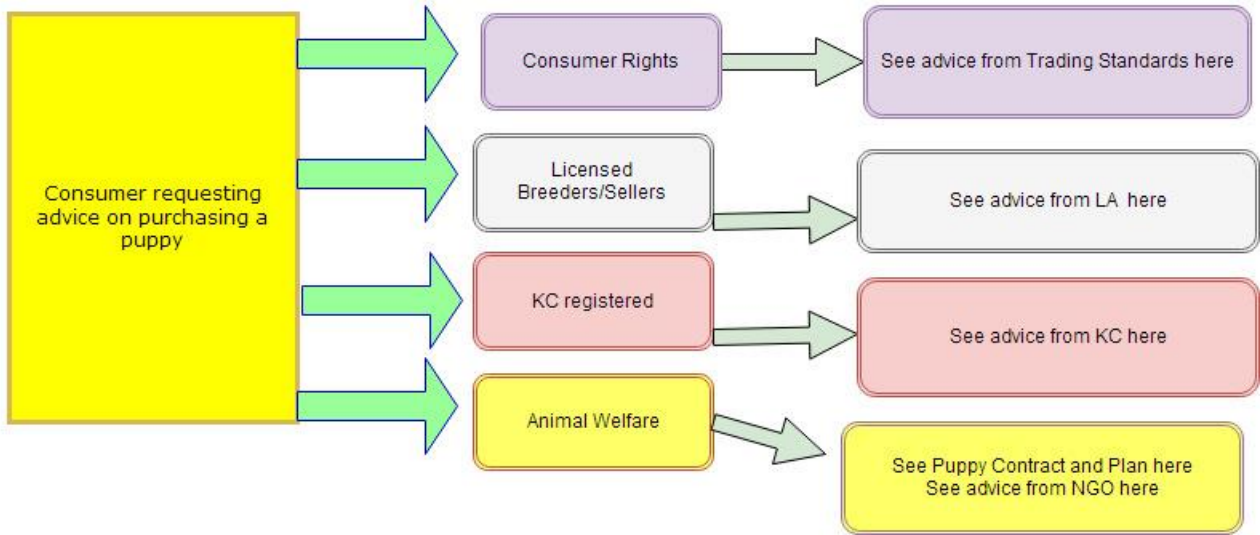
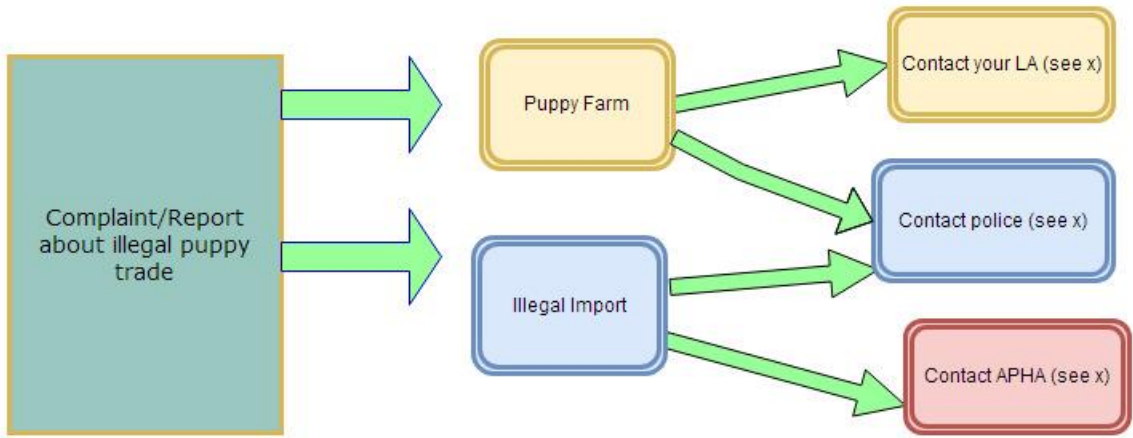
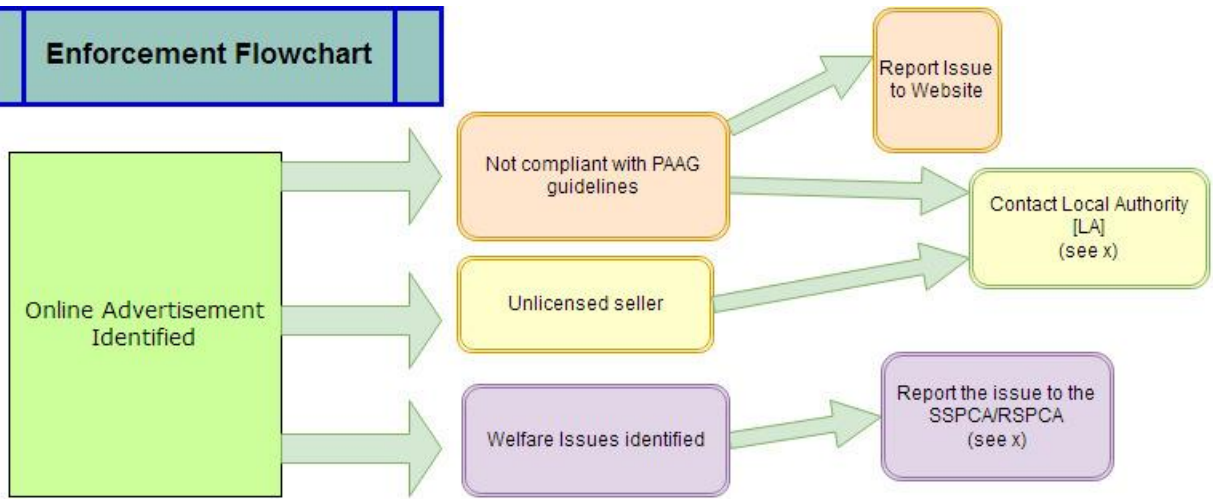
In addition to the maximum penalty of 6 months' imprisonment and/or an unlimited fine, the courts can also disqualify offenders from keeping animals for as long a period as they consider appropriate. The use of community orders should also be highlighted. The courts are in the best place to decide whether a community order might be the most appropriate outcome in a particular case. The impact on reoffending is also important from an animal welfare perspective.

The Sentencing Council has reviewed the magistrates' court sentencing guidelines, including those in relation to animal cruelty cases. In their revised guideline, published on their website, the Sentencing Council aims to ensure that the most serious cases of animal cruelty receive appropriate severe sentences, within the available maximum penalty.

# Appendix VIII: Example Flow Charts for Consumers and Enforcement Agencies/Stakeholders



# Enforcement Flowchart







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