

Veterinary profession, Irish Kennel Club and welfare groups strongly welcome imminent introduction of Puppy Farm Legislation

A coalition of leading organisations representing dog welfare has joined together to issue a statement welcoming the imminent introduction of the Dog Breeding Bill, safeguarding key aspects of animal health and welfare.

Veterinary Ireland (the representative body for vets) has joined with the Irish Kennel Club and animal welfare groups including the ISPCA, DSPCA, Irish Blue Cross and Dogs Trust to express their broad support for the Dog Breeding Bill that is currently passing through the Seanad and the Dail.

Joe Collins, President of Veterinary Ireland, states that his organisation has for many years been calling for legislation to control dog breeding, and especially the so-called “puppy farms”. According to Mr Collins, *“Ireland has become known as the “puppy farm capital of Europe”, exporting tens of thousands of puppies annually to the United Kingdom and Europe, where the breeding of dogs is now well regulated. The unregulated Irish trade contributes to an animal welfare nightmare for the RSPCA and other dog charities in the UK. Low quality, intensively-bred Irish puppies exported to the United States have seriously damaged the reputation of Irish dog breeding in North America, too. Licensing and monitoring of the industry in Ireland is long overdue, to ensure that animal welfare standards are improved and to restore Ireland's international reputation in this area”*.

The proposed legislation limits its impact to breeders with six or more female dogs with breeding potential. Individuals who breed a small number of dogs as a hobby or small enterprise will not come under the remit of the Bill. *“Additionally”* states Mr Collins, *“the new regulations will not be draconian, and those breeders who are already keeping dogs in reasonable living conditions, with adequate attention to the animals’ health and welfare needs, will have nothing to fear from their implementation”*.

Sean Delmar, of the Irish Kennel Club states that *“the proposed legislation has been drafted following extensive consultation and submissions from all interested parties, including the large scale dog breeders. The Irish Kennel Club has always insisted on its members abiding by our code of ethics for breeding and we were happy to be part of the process which contains many of our proposals. In its present form it represents a balanced approach to addressing important welfare issues for dogs in our country and we are supportive. We have made a few suggestions for minor adjustments to some of the detail in the bill, in the belief that these will strengthen the overall aim which is to improve animal welfare.”*

The animal welfare groups supporting the joint statement, including ISPCA, DSPCA, Irish Blue Cross and Dogs Trust, have already issued their own commentary on the details of the Dog Breeding legislation.

The principal aim of the Breeding Establishments Bill is to regulate and safeguard the welfare of dogs and to protect the public. We believe no organization or group should be above regulation and inspection under the terms of the Bill.

The combined group of organisations is calling for the Government to stand firm on this issue and to act now to safeguard animal welfare.

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