

VICAS Media Release – 1 July 2010

Vets criticise scaremongering by opponents to Dog Breeding Bill

Vets have spoken out to correct misinformation that has been released in the media by opponents to the up-coming Dog Breeding Establishments Bill.

In particular, Liam Cahill of RISE, stated on Morning Ireland that “there is some evidence that microchipping could cause cancer in dogs”. This is entirely untrue. Microchipping is now globally accepted as the most effective, safe means of permanent identification of pets. The introduction of an international standard more than a decade ago has seen the availability of compatible microchips spread across the world.

Around five million microchips have been implanted in UK pets since 1996. In that time, there have been two reports of microchips at the site of tumours. With such a tiny number, it's impossible to infer any causal effect. Meanwhile, microchips have enabled many thousands of pets to be reunited with their owners. For the past four years, microchipping has been compulsory for all puppies registered with the Irish Kennel Club.

One of the stipulations of the Dog Breeding Establishments Bill is that microchips will be implanted in all breeding animals, as well as in all puppies before they leave the premises. This is a critically important aspect of the Bill. If an animal cannot be accurately identified, it will be impossible to track its origin.

Speaking on behalf of VICAS, vet Pete Wedderburn said: “The irresponsible propagation of myths about microchips is likely to cause significant damage to the ongoing efforts to deal with Ireland's serious stray dog problem, by deterring owners from having their pets implanted.”

Other aspects of the campaign against the Dog Breeding Bill that deserve clarification include:

- The Dog Breeding Bill is welcomed by all professionals working with dogs in Ireland, as the culmination of over five years of behind-the-scenes efforts to deal with the problem of unrestricted mass breeding of dogs. Following a number of raids on puppy farms, an expert committee was set up to look into the issue of puppy farms in 2004, reporting in August 2005. The then Minister of Environment Dick Roche announced on 30th May 2006 that he "intended to implement the recommendations of a working group appointed to look into the issue". The current legislation marks completion of this long standing process.
- Fears have been expressed that the dog breeding legislation will be enforced by unqualified animal welfare workers. In fact, it will be members of the Local Authority Veterinary Service (LAVS), a professional body of "government vets", who will oversee the fair, reasonable and standardised implementation of the Bill.
- The Dog Breeding Bill has nothing to do with hunting and is not designed in any way to impede this activity. The legislation has been framed as carefully as possible to avoid inadvertently allowing any loopholes. "Puppy farmers" could hide behind other activities such as hunt kennels, commercial boarding kennels or animal welfare charities, and this has to be prevented. Each of these sectors is exempt from paying fees, but they are included in registration and inspection to ensure that no hidden puppy farming can take place.

The Dog Breeding Bill is a necessary piece of legislation that will ensure that Ireland will no longer be known as the 'puppy farm capital of Europe'.

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