



YOUR TEAM IS GOING TO RESEARCH

Introducing a licence to own a dog

and speak **for and against** making people get a licence before they are allowed to own a dog

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This brief has been produced as part of the *RSPCA's Animal Welfare: The Great Debate* and is a starting point for the research you will need to do, into the subject, in order to ensure a successful debate. The points for or against a subject may not be RSPCA policy and represent some of the wider thinking around the public debate.

- Dog licensing requires owners to pay a fee to keep a dog. Having a licence for a dog normally requires owners to register and keep up to date records of the identities and contact details of their dogs and themselves. Other actions may also be required e.g. vaccinations.
- It is already a requirement for all dogs in England and Wales to be microchipped and their details to be kept up to date - with new laws introduced in 2014. A tiny microchip is quickly and simply inserted under the dog's skin and can be scanned, so a dog can be easily reunited with an owner if they become lost. It is also a legal requirement currently for any dog in a public place to wear a collar with their name and address on it.
- Dogs are the most popular pet in England and Wales. There's an estimated nine million dogs in the UK, and more than one quarter of households own a dog. The introduction of dog licensing in England or Wales would therefore have a big impact. Not only would there be a lot of information available about dogs but there could also be money raised by the licensing scheme.
- In Northern Ireland, dog owners already require a licence, which lasts for 12 months before it must be renewed. It costs £12.50 and applications are done via the local authority. Calgary - in the Canadian province of Alberta - offers an online registration system for dogs and cats, while many other countries across the world have licensing regimes in place.

FOR

Here are some points **in favour of** dog licensing – what other points can you find?

- Irresponsible dog ownership can lead to dog fouling and other social problems. The money raised from dog licensing could fund measures to deal with irresponsible owners. This is known as the 'Polluter Pays' principle.
- Councils across the UK are picking up more than 100,000 strays annually. Dog licensing could help reduce that, and mean stray dogs can be reunited more easily with their owners.
- Licensing dog owners would mean we have lots more information about the exact number of dogs – while a process of annual registration means up-to-date welfare and other information can be easily passed to dog owners.

AGAINST

Here are some reasons why dog licensing **should not** be taught in schools – can you find any more?

- It is already compulsory to get dogs microchipped. Licensing might only be undertaken by those who are already responsible for their dogs - and would just be another rule for irresponsible owners to ignore. Instead, there should just be awareness-raising about current law and keeping microchip details up-to-date.
- Dog licensing has already been tried in England, Wales and Scotland and was abolished in 1987 - because the requirement to have a licence was widely ignored and poorly enforced. It would be hard to enforce a new licensing scheme.
- Local councils already have so much to do - and face a difficult situation with regards to budgets. Asking them to licence all dogs living in their local area would be timely, expensive and may lead to cutbacks to other frontline services.

Information you may want to find out

- What benefits could be given to the dog-owning community as part of licence registration?
- Why did a previous dog licensing scheme in England, Scotland and Wales fail; and what, if anything, has changed since?
- Which other countries require dog owners to have a licence, and has that been successful?
- What other dog control problems in society could be improved, or worsened, by dog licensing?

Potential sources of information

- RSPCA website: www.rspca.cymru
- Political Animal website: www.politicalanimal.wales
- RSPCA facts and figures: <http://media.rspca.org.uk/media/facts>
- Learning Wales: <http://learning.gov.wales/?lang=en>
- <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/dog-licensing-and-microchipping>
- <https://www.calgary.ca/CSPS/ABS/Pages/Animal-Services/Responsible-pet-ownership-and-licenses.aspx>

