

SCOTTISH SPCA

Scotland's Animal Welfare Charity

CONSIDERATION OF PETITION PE1396

The Scottish SPCA is Scotland's oldest and largest animal welfare organisation.

The Society's main objective is to prevent cruelty to animals and to promote kindness and humanity in their treatment.

To enable this, the Society has an effective and efficient Uniformed Service, comprising of 54 Inspectors, 10 auxiliary Inspectors and 26 ambulance drivers.

All Scottish SPCA Inspectors are authorised by the Scottish Minister to enforce the welfare provisions of the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006.

The Scottish SPCA also operates 13 Animal Rescue and Rehoming Centres throughout Scotland that deal with abandoned, unwanted and cruelly treated animals. The Scottish SPCA also cares for stray dogs for 8 Local Authorities in the west of Scotland and Strathclyde Police.

At the time of writing, the Society had 365 dogs in our care; of these 82 are Staffordshire bull terriers, this equates to 22.5% of the dogs currently in our care. That number obviously rises when cross Staffordshire bull terriers are taken into account.

In 2010 the Scottish SPCA received 529 Staffordshire bull terriers.

Staffordshire bull terriers come into the care of the Scottish SPCA for a variety of reasons.

The majority come into the care of the Scottish SPCA through the stray dog contracts operated in the west of Scotland, however, many come into our care through being abandoned by their owners or as subject of cruelty or neglect cases.

Other than on the instruction of a Court, the Scottish SPCA operates a non destruction policy for healthy animals, the only animals put to sleep are on the grounds of veterinary necessity or where the veterinary surgeon and staff deem that an animal (regardless of species or breed) would present an un-acceptable risk to the public.

In 2010, of the 529 Staffordshire bull terriers that came into our care, 61 were put to sleep for veterinary reasons or for severe behavioral problems, this is not surprising given the condition or the way some of these dogs have been treated prior to coming into our care.

There is obviously an issue with the sheer number of Staffordshire bull terriers being bred at this current time.

However, this is not a new phenomenon, this has occurred over the last couple of decades and usually occurs when a breed becomes popular, usually for the wrong reasons. The Scottish SPCA has experienced a similar situation in the past, albeit on a smaller scale with German Shepherds, Dobermans, Rottweiler's and Greyhounds to name but a few.

In recent years the Staffordshire bull terrier has developed an un-welcome and false reputation as a dangerous breed, this is at odds with the breed itself, which is a loyal family pet.

Since the introduction of the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 and the illegalisation of the Pit bull terrier, many people have associated the Staffordshire bull terrier with the Pit bull terrier, simply because there is bull terrier in the name of the breed.

Any breed of dog can present a danger if it is badly reared, poorly socialized, neglected or cruelly treated.

Given the over-breeding of many breeds, the Scottish SPCA has a policy to spay or neuter all dogs prior to being re homed by the Society. In 2010 the Scottish SPCA re homed just under 4000 dogs throughout Scotland.

There are currently several statutory instruments dealing with the issue of dogs, however, the current issue of the abundance of Staffordshire bull terriers, falls out with the remit of these statutory instruments.

There is legislation dealing with the breeding of dogs, however, this only comes into effect if the individual is breeding or supplying five or more litters of pups per year. This is not the case with the vast majority of those indiscriminately breeding Staffordshire bull terriers.

The current cost of buying a Staffordshire bull terrier pup on line, ranges from £1.00 to £1000.00, the cost can be more if the pup is bred from show lines.

The Control of Dogs Order introduced in Scotland recently does not specifically deal with the breeding of dogs and as the indiscriminate breeders are selling directly to the public they are not covered by the legislation relating to dealers.

The Scottish SPCA has repeatedly recommended compulsory micro-chipping of all dogs, for a variety of reasons, one of which would be to trace breeders, but also to identify those who intentionally abandon animals.

While the Scottish SPCA would welcome a solution to the current problem, the Society would not support any attempt to ban the breed or any action that further damages the reputation of the breed or indeed the many thousand responsible Staffordshire bull terrier owners.

Yours sincerely

Michael Flynn
Chief Superintendent
Scottish SPCA

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