

PE1396/H

**Public Petition Committee Consideration Of PE1396
Questions arising from Committee Meetings**

Response from South Lanarkshire Council

Q. What are your views on the issues raised in the petition?

South Lanarkshire Council recognises many of the issues raised in this petition and would broadly agree with the some of the views expressed with regard to the over-breeding and subsequent abandonment of Staffordshire Bull Terriers (SBT's).

The legislative framework associated the dog breeding and rearing, dog welfare, dog behaviour, stray dogs and owner behaviour is extensive and, in that respect, provides sufficient scope to address the majority of the emerging issues. Therefore, it is our opinion that new breed-specific legislation is not required at this time. However, a review of existing legislation, in light of the Animal Health and Welfare Act 2006 and the Control of Dogs(Scotland) Act 2010, may be required.

It is important in this issue to focus on the deed and not the breed: the majority of issues relating to SBT's are a consequence of owners' behaviour or the breeders' activity. In that respect, control over licenced breeders can be exerted with existing legislation and the Control of Dogs (Scotland) Act 2010 was specifically enacted to encourage positive owner behaviour.

However, South Lanarkshire would suggest that local authorities are not sufficiently resourced to deal with current demands placed upon them by the Control of Dogs(Scotland) Act 2010 and would require additional resources to extend the remit of this Act or to significantly increase regulatory activity in relation animal welfare licensing or the management of stray dogs.

There is a significant gap in the legislation framework: there is no mandatory scheme of dog licensing/registration which creates the responsibility for owners to register their dogs. Generally, the absence of such a scheme is restrictive to enforcement organisations in this context.

Q. Can you provide the Committee with details of your own experience of the situation with reference to SBT's?

The problems associated with stray dogs are well known to most local authorities. In that respect, South Lanarkshire does not appear to be disproportionately affected. However, the number of stray dog enquiries has remained fairly static in recent years which tends to suggest that existing legislation is working to a limited extent. That said, the costs associated with the management of stray dogs have been steadily increasing and is not balanced by the penalties associated with the offence.

SBT's do not appear to be the predominant breed in relation to stray dogs uplifted by South Lanarkshire and initial data suggests that SBT's are not the subject of a disproportionate number of complaints in relation to the Control of Dogs(Scotland)

Act 2010. The experience of our Dog Warden is that the majority of SBT uplifted are not aggressive or otherwise problematic. In that sense, the reputational issue is not reflected in practice.

Q. Are you able to provide us with information on the number of dogs that are euthanased in your area, and of those dogs, how many are SBT?

For the period 2010-2011:

Year	Total Uplifted	Returned to Owner	Rehomed	Destroyed
2010/11	86	42	N/K	N/K

Unfortunately, the uplifted dogs are not sub-categorised by breed and the specific information is not available. South Lanarkshire Council does not retain the information relating to the fate of a stray dog. Those figures may be supplied by the SSPCA at Bothwell Bridge Welfare Centre in Hamilton who become responsible for dogs not returned or reclaimed.