

# Battersea's new report exposes the murky world of dog breeding

Tuesday 29 September, 2015

Battersea Dogs & Cats Home is today casting a powerful light on the murky world of puppy breeding as it reveals its report on Licensed Dog Breeding in Great Britain. Government figures indicate 560,000 puppies are born in England each year, but the leading animal welfare charity has exposed a shocking lack of regulation of this market that could be helping breeders and dealers sell dogs from unsuitable premises long before they're ready to leave their mothers.

Enforcement in this area is carried out by Local Authorities, issuing breeding licences to anyone selling puppies commercially, or producing five or more litters per year and regularly inspecting the premises of dog breeders.

But a new report by the charity shows:

- Less than 12% of puppies born in Great Britain every year are bred by licensed breeders, meaning 88% of puppies born in the UK are born to unlicensed breeders.
- Over a third of Local Authorities do not have any licensed breeders
- 77% of Local Authorities did not issue any new licences to new breeders in 2014
- There is a huge discrepancy of up to 32 times in the charges for breeding licences, suggesting huge variations in the way breeders are inspected and approved to sell puppies
- The scarcity of breeding applications in some Council areas means that dog breeding premises are regulated by staff whose expertise may lie primarily in inspecting taxis, restaurants or other non-animal premises

Battersea Chief Executive, Claire Horton, said:

"When you're getting a new puppy, how can you be sure that you're getting your dog from a responsible breeder when our own national breeding licence system is in such a mess? The gaping holes in enforcement of breeding legislation leave the door wide open for backstreet breeders to own the market and pocket huge profits from overbreeding, without a thought for the welfare of the animals in their care."

"Every day Battersea takes in dogs that have been abandoned by owners who bought them online or from 'the man down the street', which have come from unknown breeding premises. We're seriously concerned that there's no nationwide overview of dog breeding and no consistency amongst Local Authorities when it comes to this issue."

The Battersea Breeding report showed vast discrepancies between licence fee structures in different Local Authorities – with some charging 32 times as much as others for the same service.

Earlier this year, Battersea launched its End Backstreet Breeding campaign in a bid to raise public awareness and tackle this practice that leads to misery for thousands of dogs. Battersea wants to see a ban on the sale of puppies under eight weeks old and the introduction of a required breeding licence for any household producing two or more litters per year.

Marjorie, a two-year-old Bulldog, was rescued from the streets of London as a stray in late 2014. Her body was sore and sagging and showing all the signs of overbreeding, including severely stretched teats. Poor Marjorie was also suffering from mange – so her fur was itchy and full of red, sore scabs. While the physical and mental scars of backstreet breeding may never heal, Marjorie is now settling into her new loving home where she's getting used to the normal life she deserves and learning how to be a dog.

As the six month countdown to the new compulsory dog microchipping law approaches in April 2015, where all dogs will be required to be chipped, Claire Horton adds: "Battersea's advice for anyone seeking a puppy is to never buy online – go to a rescue centre or reputable breeder, always see the puppy with its mum and make sure they're both healthy and the puppy is at least eight weeks old."

-Ends-

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## Notes to editors

- Visit [endbackstreetbreeding.org.uk](http://endbackstreetbreeding.org.uk) to show your support for the campaign.
- Tweet your support for the campaign using #MotherAgain
- Backstreet breeding is the unregistered, unlicensed and unauthorised practice of breeding dogs in an indiscriminate and irresponsible way.
- Established in 1860, Battersea Dogs & Cats Home aims never to turn away a dog or cat in need of our help. We reunite lost dogs and cats with their owners through our Lost Dogs & Cats Line or care for them until new homes can be found for them, giving them shelter and the highest standards of kennelling and veterinary care.
- Since it was founded, Battersea has rescued, reunited and rehomed over 3.1 million dogs and cats.
- The Home cares for around 9000 dogs and cats each year.
- Battersea cares for an average of 400 dogs and 250 cats across its three centres at any one time.
- 44% of dogs arrive at Battersea as strays.

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