

<b>Report on</b>	Consultation on Proposed New Rules for the Sale and Supply of Puppies and Kittens in Northern Ireland
<b>Date of Meeting</b>	16 <sup>th</sup> October 2025
<b>Reporting Officer</b>	Kieran Gordon, Assistant Director, Health, Leisure and Wellbeing
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<b>Is this report restricted for confidential business?</b>  If 'Yes', confirm below the exempt information category relied upon	Yes	
	No	X

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report</b>
1.1	To provide Members with opportunity to respond to the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs' (DAERA) consultation on proposed "new rules for the sale and supply of puppies and kittens in Northern Ireland"
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Background</b>
2.1	In Northern Ireland currently, anyone can sell, give away, or transfer the ownership of, a puppy or kitten. Some people operate a licensed dog breeding establishment and sell the puppies they breed, and others sell the offspring of the family pet. The People's Dispensary for Sick Animals PAW Report 2024 indicates that 33% obtained their dog from breeders; 25% from private sellers; 17% from rescue and rehoming centres; and 16% from a friend, family, or neighbour ( <i>from a sample of 2,371 owners</i> ).
2.2	Since the introduction of Lucy's Law in England, Scotland and then Wales, which each ban the third-party sales of puppies and kittens, there has been significant interest in examining how puppies and kittens are sold or acquired by new owners in Northern Ireland. There have also been calls to end third-party sales of puppies and kittens in Northern Ireland.  <u>The laws about selling pets in other jurisdictions</u>
2.3	Prior to 2018, the systems in place across England, Scotland, and Wales were similar to the system currently in place in Northern Ireland. That is, separate pieces of legislation set out the rules for pet shops, and dog breeding establishments.  <u>England</u>
2.4	In England, the Licensing of Activities Involving Animals (England) Regulations 2018 introduced a new single system based around licensable activities, one of which being selling animals as pets in the course of a business. Since then, a licence is required by anyone selling animals as pets in the course of a business, either directly to the public or to any other business that will later sell them as pets,

	and they must adhere to licence conditions such as not selling puppies or kittens aged under eight weeks.
2.5	Lucy's Law was introduced, from 2020, and provides that a person who is licensed to sell animals as pets, is also banned from selling any puppies or kittens that they did not breed. This particular provision takes its name from Lucy, a rescue dog which had suffered from the effects of intensive breeding and mistreatment on an illegal breeding establishment.
	<u>Scotland</u>
2.6	Since 2021, Scotland has also operated a system of licensing activities involving animals under the Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (Scotland) Regulations 2021. Selling animals as pets in the course of a business requires a licence and the licence conditions are comparable to those in place in England.
	<u>Wales</u>
2.7	Similar legislation applies in Wales for selling animals as pets in the course of a business; however, the Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities involving Animals) (Wales) Regulations 2021 enacts a Lucy's Law which differs slightly from that in place in England and Scotland, in that the puppy or kitten must be sold from the premises where the animal was bred.
	<u>Republic of Ireland</u>
2.8	In the Republic of Ireland, the Animal Health and Welfare (Sale or Supply of Pet Animals) Regulations 2019, require sellers or suppliers of six or more pet animals in a calendar year to be entered into the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) Register of Sellers and Suppliers of Pet Animals, and premises used in connection with the sale and supply of pet animals must be entered into the DAFM Register of Premises.
2.9	In order to afford a high degree of protections for puppies and kittens, that are sold or supplied in Northern Ireland, DAERA wishes to deliver a version of Lucy's Law which includes measures that would not only ban third-party sales of puppies and kittens but would also make new rules for all people who decide to sell, give away or otherwise transfer ownership of a puppy.
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main Report</b>
3.1	On 2 <sup>nd</sup> June 2025, The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) launched a public consultation on proposed new rules for the sale and supply of puppies and kittens in Northern Ireland. Council received written notification of the consultation exercise which was due to run until 25 <sup>th</sup> August 2025 (appendix A). Given the constraints around various Councils' committee structures and reporting timelines, an extension was granted to local government, allowing submission of Council responses up until 15 <sup>th</sup> September 2025.
3.2	The consultation (set out in appendix A) details proposals for the introduction of a registration system for persons selling, giving away, or otherwise transferring

ownership of puppies and kittens aged under six months. The consultation also details proposals to end the third-party sale and supply of puppies and kittens.

3.3 The consultation is aimed at anyone who has an interest in animal welfare, stakeholders who work within the animal welfare sector, councils which have responsibility for enforcement for companion animal welfare, and any person or organisation involved in the breeding, sale or transfer of ownership of puppies and kittens.

<https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/consultations/public-consultation-proposed-new-rules-sale-and-supply-puppies-and-kittens-northern-ireland>

3.4 The consultation also includes (see appendix A):

- A regulatory impact assessment (RIA)
- Equality and Disability Screening
- Rural Needs Impact Assessment

3.5 A key element of the proposals is the requirement for these individuals to register with their local council and comply with a set of statutory conditions, such as ensuring young animals are not separated prematurely from their mothers and restricting sales to the premises where the animals and their biological mothers are kept.

The proposals also include an end to third-party sales, stricter advertising requirements, and the creation of a public register of sellers.

3.6 The consultation reflects growing concerns around irresponsible breeding, illegal sales, and poor welfare conditions for young animals.

3.7 While the proposals are intended to promote transparency and safeguard animal welfare, they raise significant practical and financial implications for councils, particularly in relation to enforcement, inspection, and administration.

3.8 The consultation proposals have been discussed both at regional officer groups and at Environmental Health Northern Ireland (EHNI). Following these discussions there was broad agreement in relation to the impact of the proposals.

MUDC officers subsequently prepared the attached draft consultation response (appendix B) to DAERA's proposals on new rules for the sale and supply of puppies and kittens in Northern Ireland.

While the draft response notes a supportive view of the overarching aim of improving animal welfare standards, the MUDC draft response reflects both local and regional operational concerns, resourcing implications, and enforcement challenges identified by councils in relation to DAERA's proposals.

<b>4.0</b>	<b>Other Considerations</b>
<b>4.1</b>	<b>Financial, Human Resources &amp; Risk Implications</b>
	Financial: Given the recent lack of animal welfare funding from DAERA, the additional proposals set out in the consultation would likely have potentially significant financial implications for Council in terms of resourcing additional staff to implement the proposals in addition to funding the required ICT infrastructure (see enclosed draft response for further details). Without a clear, sustainable resourcing strategy (human and financial), Council would find it extremely difficult and challenging to assume these enforcement responsibilities
	Human: Given the recent lack of animal welfare funding from DAERA, the additional proposals set out in the consultation would likely have potentially significant implications for Council in terms of sourcing and training additional staff to implement the proposals in (see enclosed draft response for further details). Without a clear, sustainable resourcing strategy (human and financial), Council would find it extremely difficult and challenging to assume these enforcement responsibilities
	Risk Management: Given the continued regulatory burden placed upon Council without adequate and sustainable resourcing being provided by central government, there is a risk that the delivery of existing regulatory functions may suffer as a result.
<b>4.2</b>	<b>Screening &amp; Impact Assessments</b>
	Equality & Good Relations Implications: See appendix A
	Rural Needs Implications: See appendix A
<b>5.0</b>	<b>Recommendation(s)</b>
5.1	It is recommended that Members agree the enclosed response the enclosed draft MUDC response to DAERA's "Consultation on new rules for selling and supplying puppies and kittens"
<b>6.0</b>	<b>Documents Attached &amp; References</b>
6.1	Appendix A - <a href="https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/consultations/public-consultation-proposed-new-rules-sale-and-supply-puppies-and-kittens-northern-ireland">https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/consultations/public-consultation-proposed-new-rules-sale-and-supply-puppies-and-kittens-northern-ireland</a>
6.2	Appendix B - Draft MUDC Consultation response