

PE2083/F: Review the rules to ensure that no dog becomes more dangerous as a result of breed specific regulations

Petitioner written submission, 22 April 2025

Thanks to the Committee for considering my petition on 12th June 2024, for making further enquiries of the Scottish Government, and for keeping the petition open.

The [Summit on Responsible Dog Ownership](#), which was held in private, has now reported. The key recommendations, to provide more funding to dog wardens and the police and to continue ministerial engagement with some stakeholder groups, are welcomed.

However, it appears that this summit did nothing to address or investigate the concern of this petition, which is that current breed specific regulations are resulting in otherwise healthy and well-behaved dogs being restricted in their exercise and welfare and this is causing them to become more dangerous, especially in the home.

As outlined in previous submissions, restricting a dog's welfare and capability to exercise is very likely to result in an increase in dog attacks in the home, and these attacks become more likely to be fatal.

Unfortunately, a mounting weight of evidence supports the concern raised by this petition. A recent well-researched report in the Guardian newspaper¹ outlining the effects of the ban in England and Wales states –

“In the first year of the ban, there have been nine reported fatal dog attacks in England and Wales. Five of these incidents have involved XL bullies. **All the attacks have been in people's homes**” [my emphasis].

Of even more concern to Scottish Ministers must be the situation in Scotland. A reported incident in Aberdeen² in December 2024 involved an American Bulldog which appears to have been regularly muzzled outdoors. This dog unexpectedly killed its owner in her own home. I would suggest this incident may have happened as a direct result of this dog having had its welfare and exercise restricted by the Scottish Government. This becomes an extremely serious issue, if dog restrictions are resulting in more human fatalities rather than making things safer for the public.

Death by dog attack was previously extremely rare in Scotland: a FOI request showed only two fatalities from dog attack from 2013 to 2021. So this one recent fatal attack in Aberdeen, committed by a dog which was apparently being kept either in accordance with the XL Bully restrictions or under the restrictions of a Dog Control Notice, is extremely concerning and should certainly ring alarm bells in the Scottish Parliament.

¹ Guardian article: *'I was screaming at people to get my little girl': one year on from XL bully dogs ban*, 29 December 2024

² BBC News article: *Woman killed by dog was charged over earlier attack*, 10 December 2024

Christine Grahame MSP highlighted her ongoing concerns about the issue of dog attacks in private property at the Summit on Responsible Dog Ownership, but from the published recommendations report it appears that her concerns remain unaddressed. No actions were taken to relieve any of the restrictions, in order to help some of these dogs to become safer in their own homes.

However, the report also clearly shows that the group of dog experts who were consulted at the Summit “would like to see a repeal of the breed specific legislation in the 1991 Act. It is recognised that many stakeholders have concerns about this aspect of the 1991 Act”. This was suggested and agreed as a medium to long term goal.

I would urge the Scottish Government to give much greater urgency to repealing or at least revisiting the breed specific rules which they introduced over a year ago, because it is now absolutely clear that the unnecessary restrictions being placed on otherwise healthy and well-behaved dogs is causing some, if not many, to become more dangerous in the home and garden. These dogs’ welfare being restricted is bringing no benefit and instead is resulting in more dog bites, more injuries, and more deaths, not fewer.

Suggested potential steps:

- Every restricted dog to be visited annually by their local dog warden to check and ensure the dog’s welfare. (Understanding that the current restrictions do limit welfare and even the very best and most responsible of owners cannot currently address those welfare issues without active support from the government and the backing of their local police and dog warden. This is not just a responsible owner issue; this is a responsible Government issue.)
- Where dog welfare issues as a direct result of unnecessary restriction are raised by a dog warden, arrangements should be made to address these, perhaps by agreeing safe spaces where the dog can run off leash while muzzled or allowing a well-trained dog to be on-leash without a muzzle. Or identifying secure areas where the dog can run off lead without a muzzle. Actively addressing the safety of each individual dog is much more important than the implementation of blanket restrictions which are making some dogs less safe.
- Where a dog warden finds a dog dangerously out of control in its own home due to the owner lacking control, that dog should be removed and rehomed to a more suitable home where it can be trained and properly exercised.

Please, no more deaths as a result of these rules. Please do take responsibility for investigating the one fatal dog attack in Scotland so far and then, please, take appropriate action to prevent any more.

Thanks for your continuing consideration of this issue.