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Rural Affairs and Islands Committee  
The Scottish Parliament

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Dear Committee,

Thank you for the invite to provide evidence on behalf of Police Scotland regarding the proposed Dog Theft (Sco) Bill.

I write in response to your below request for additional information after providing evidence to the Committee on 26 March 2025.

(1) *At the start of the meeting, you stated that the figure given by Police Scotland of 63 dog thefts in Scotland in 2024 was not a true reflection of the level of dog thefts. You added, however, that after the introduction of a single reporting and recording system last year, it would be possible in future to more accurately record dog thefts. It would be helpful if you could confirm the date from which the single reporting and recording system came into operation and whether this alone would improve the accuracy of the data available, regardless of whether a standalone offence of dog theft is introduced.*

I can confirm that the national crime recording system for Police Scotland, Unifi, was implemented across all local policing divisions from January 2024 and all legacy crime recording systems ceased to operate. Unifi enables the searching and filtering of specific data such as "theft", "dog". This search criteria produces results where a dog was stolen as part of any crime or offence e.g. a dog stolen in the commission of Robbery or Theft by Housebreaking. Unifi will therefore enhance the accuracy of the data available.

The introduction of a standalone statutory offence of Dog Theft would not enhance accuracy of crime recording as the theft may be committed in commission of another crime as described above. In compliance with the Scottish Crime Recording Standard the crime in these circumstances would be recorded as Robbery or Theft by Housebreaking opposed to dog theft. The same crime recording and counting rules would apply even if a standalone statutory offence of Dog Theft was introduced.

I understand due to time constraints the Committee was unable to raise questions during the evidence session and I have been asked to comment on the below;

*The Bill sets out defences to the standalone offence of dog theft in paragraphs 3-5 of Section 1.*

*(2) Do you have any views on these aspects of the Bill in particular, or any other aspects of Section 1 that you did not have the opportunity to raise at the evidence session yesterday, that you feel it would be important for the Committee to consider in their scrutiny of the Bill at Stage 1?*

In respect of Section 1, paragraph 1 of The Bill, the Committee may wish to seek clarity in The Bill regarding proof of ownership which may negate complex ownership disputes, particularly in cases where the dog is not registered with a vet or microchipped.

I trust my evidence at the Committee alongside this written response will be of assistance.

Yours sincerely

*M Booker*

Michael Booker  
Chief Inspector  
Police Scotland