



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

The review of animal establishments licensing in England

A summary of responses

September 2016



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Contents

Introduction	1
Background.....	1
Summary of responses	2
Responses to individual questions.....	3
Animal establishments licences	3
a) Generic licences	3
b) Model Conditions	4
c) Breeding and sale of dogs	6
d) Pet sales	10
Length of licences	13
a) Removing the calendar-year restriction	13
b) Increasing the maximum licence length.....	15
c) Transferring licences	17
d) Notification of major changes	19
Performing animals registration.....	21
Powers of entry	24
Accreditation	26
a) UKAS accreditation of independent regulators	26
b) Voluntary accreditation	29
Additional responses	31
Next steps	33

Introduction

This document provides a summary of responses to Defra's consultation on the review of animal establishments licensing in England. This consultation ran for 12 weeks, from the 20th December 2015 until the 12th March 2016.

Background

Local authorities are required by law to issue licences for specific animal-related establishments and activities, with the aim of maintaining good standards of animal welfare. There is a registration requirement for performing animals, and licensing systems for pet shops, animal boarding, riding establishments and dog breeding.

Estimates show that there are approximately 2,300 licensed pet shops, 650 licensed dog breeders, 1,800 licensed riding establishments, and 6,300 licensed animal boarding establishments in England. These comprise the fourth largest group of business licences issued by local authorities, after premises, taxi and gambling licences.

There is a strong public expectation that animal welfare standards will be robustly enforced by local authorities. However the laws, and their specific requirements, are often decades old, and difficult to adapt to the changing types of animal-related businesses, and to new standards of good practice in animal welfare. Moreover, the current process is complex and burdensome for both businesses and local authorities. For instance, primary legislation limits licences to a calendar-year framework, arbitrarily focussing inspections at the end of the year, and forcing some businesses with multiple functions to have as many as three separate licences.

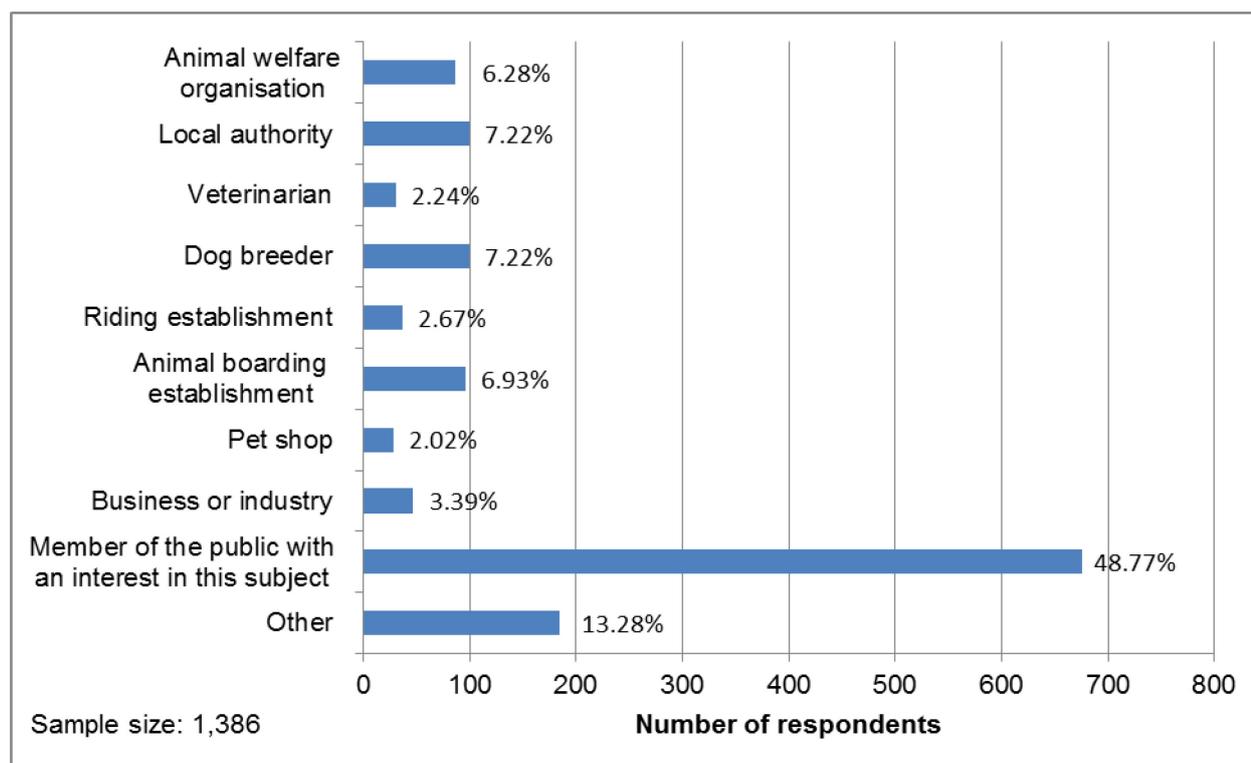
The Government is committed to improving the effectiveness of existing regulation whilst lifting the regulatory burdens on businesses to support growth, productivity and innovation. This consultation suggests changes that could relieve the administrative burden on local authorities, simplify the application and inspection process for businesses, as well as maintain and improve existing animal welfare standards by modernising the current animal licensing system in England.

The consultation covers proposals to introduce new secondary legislation under the Animal Welfare Act 2006, as had been anticipated when the Act was originally enacted. This proposed a single 'Animal Establishment Licence' for animal boarding establishments, pet shops, riding establishments, and dog breeding.

The consultation provided an opportunity for all interested parties to scrutinise and comment on these proposals, and, if needed, supply further evidence. This will inform the final regulations we will lay before Parliament.

Summary of responses

A total of 1,709 responses to the consultation were received. Of these, 1,386 were substantive responses that specifically addressed the questions in the consultation document. These 1,386 respondents are summarised in broad categories in the following figure:



Defra also received a total of 151 formulaic responses relating to a Kennel Club campaign. These responses focussed only on Question 14 and are discussed in the relevant section later in the document.

Defra received a total of 136 formulaic responses relating to a Cats Protection campaign. These responses did not specifically address any of the consultation questions, but suggested the following changes:

- A prohibition on sales of kittens under eight weeks
- The closure of loopholes that allow repeat commercial breeding for sale from the family cat or cats
- A clear definition of commercial pet sales (which might include a threshold of two or more litters bred or acquired for the purpose of sale per 12 month period and/or other factors suggesting trading)

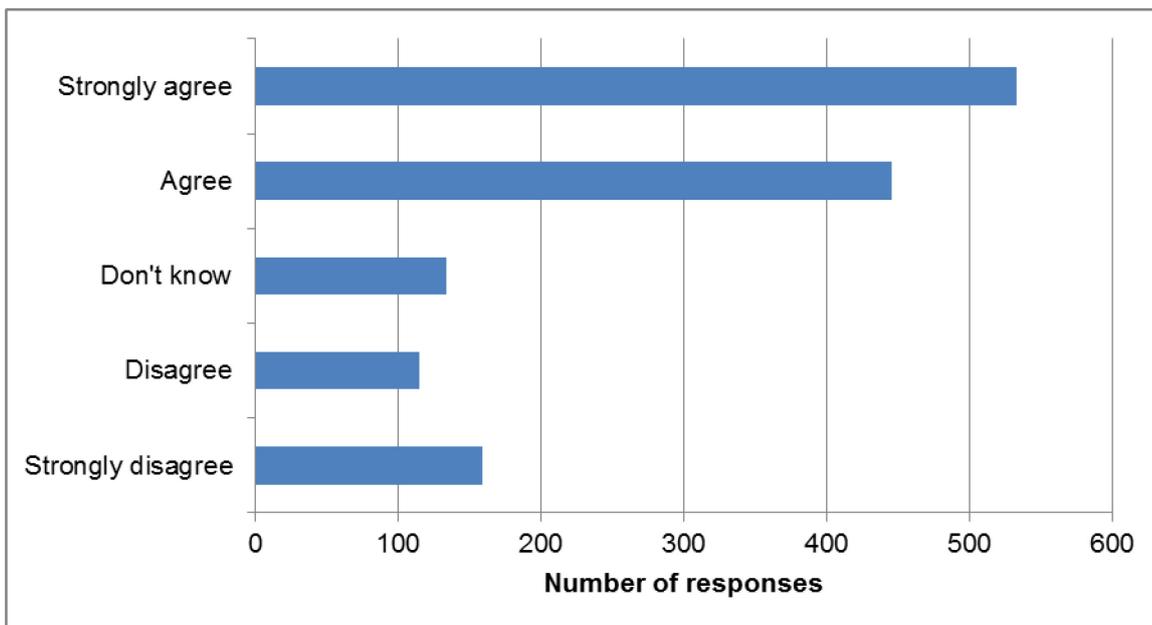
An additional 27 email responses from members of the public and 9 emails/letters from organisations were received that did not specifically address the questions in the consultation. These are discussed later in the document.

Responses to individual questions

Animal establishments licences

a) Generic licences

Question 1: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to introduce a single Animal Establishment Licence?



Of the 1,386 responses to the question, 70.5% were positive about the proposal, 20% were negative and 9.5% did not know.

Of those that were positive, the most common comment was that it would reduce the burden on businesses and local authorities (LAs) and simplify the process. Other frequent positive comments were that the changes would improve enforcement and that the current legislation is outdated and needs to be improved and updated.

A point raised repeatedly was that the licence would need to incorporate different requirements for the different types of establishment covered. This was mentioned by a large number of respondents. Many of these cited this as the reason they did not support the proposal, while others supported the proposal, but on the condition that there would be separate requirements for each establishment type.

“We do not see how one licence can be used to cover ALL animal establishments when the activities are so vastly different.”

“The difficulty with blanket laws is that they do not consider that some requirements are species specific.”

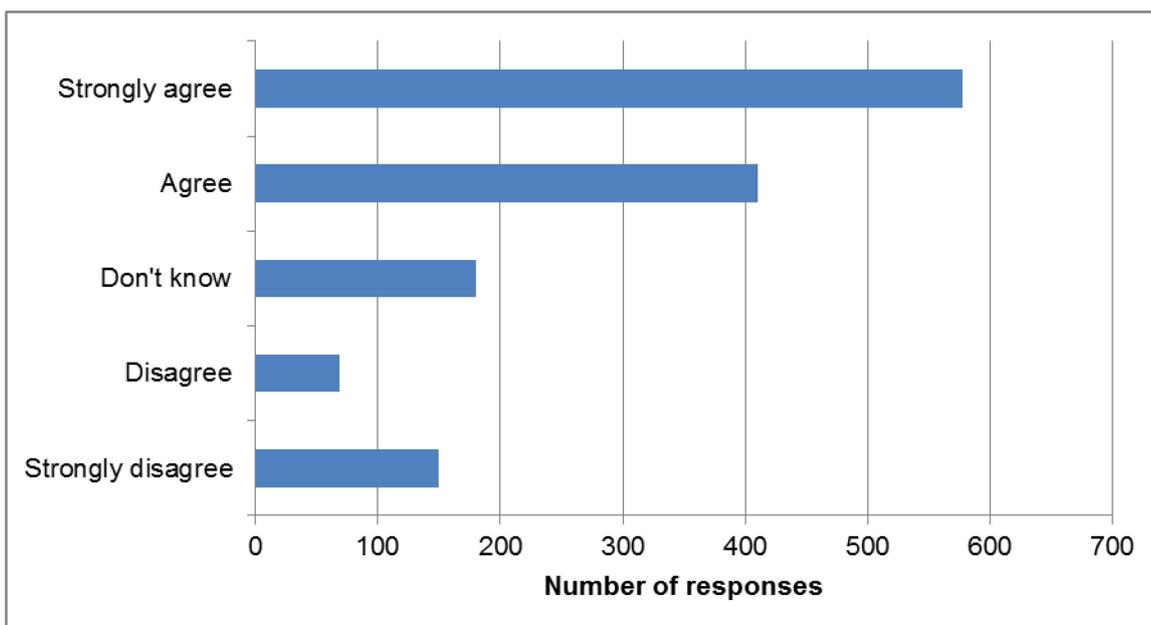
Another major reason for disagreeing with the proposal was that it could impact negatively on small hobby breeders who might not be able to afford a licence. Many respondents also highlighted the need for stricter controls, for example, the inclusion of currently unlicensed activities (e.g. dog grooming and walking, livery yards, performing animals, mobile animal encounters), better training for LA inspectors and the standardisation of costs and practices across LAs.

9.5% of responses were ‘don’t know’. Many of the comments stated that more information was needed on how it would work, while others commented on the need for separate requirements for the different establishments.

Separating responses by respondent type showed that the majority of animal welfare organisations, LAs and the industry were positive about the proposal, although largely with the caveat that different requirements should be applied to the different types of activities.

b) Model Conditions

Question 2: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to promote or require use of the Model Conditions by local authorities, for activities where they have been agreed?



Of the 1,386 direct responses to this question, 71% were positive about the proposal, 16% were negative and 13% did not know. Many of those that responded ‘don’t know’ wanted

more information on the contents of the Model Conditions (MCs), while others were unsure of the value of the proposal.

Common reasons for agreeing with the proposal were that it would improve clarity and standardisation across LAs and that it would be beneficial to be able to easily update the standards. In addition, a large number of respondents agreed with the proposal, but on the condition that the MCs are regularly updated by a group of experts. It was commented that LA inspectors may require additional training to be able to implement the MCs effectively.

There were conflicting views on whether to recommend or require the use of the MCs. Many people felt that they needed to be mandatory:

“...licensing for selling, boarding and breeding animals varies depending on the area and local authority. This ‘postcode lottery’ means welfare conditions for the animals can also vary. Standard conditions should be mandatory to safeguard animal welfare, and to make licensing clear and consistent across the country.”

Others felt that LAs needed to retain some flexibility, in particular to add additional premise specific conditions where necessary. Many of the responses from LAs highlighted the need to retain this ability.

“We like the idea of standard conditions to create consistency across all local authorities. However, we would wish to retain the ability to depart from these if there is good and documented reason and add specific local or premises specific conditions if appropriate, proportionate and justified.”

Several industry and LA responses also highlighted the need for flexibility in relation to different sized businesses and different types of establishments. For example, the requirements for a home boarder may be quite different to those for large kennels.

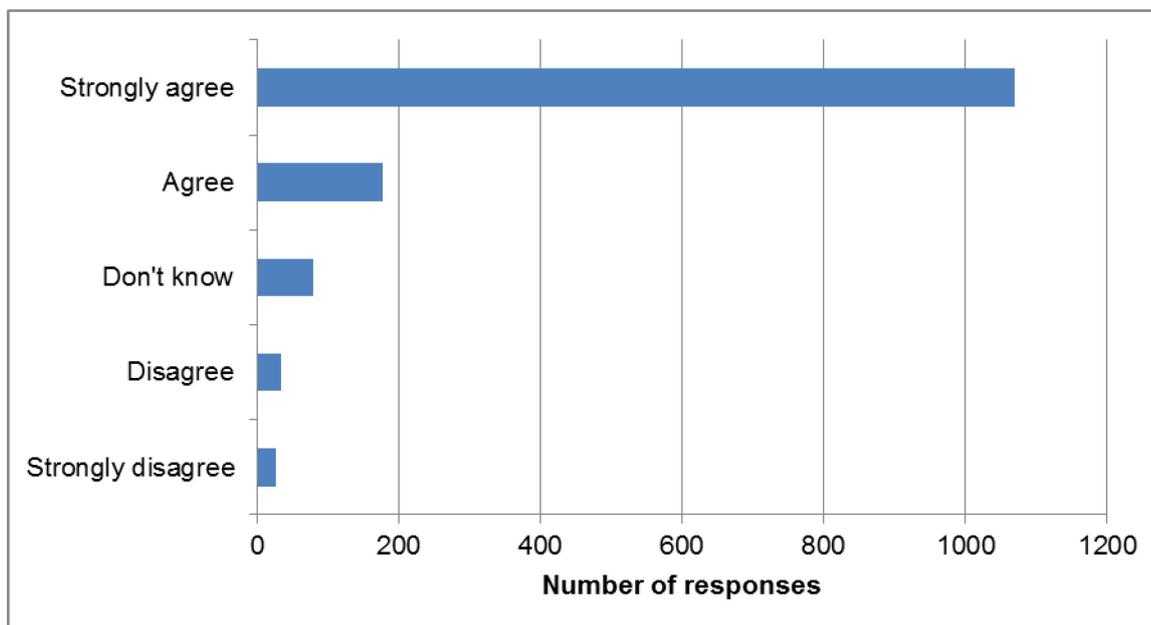
The majority of the responses from welfare organisations and the industry were positive about the proposal, but several highlighted the need for the MCs to be regularly updated by experts.

Of the negative responses, some respondents commented that the current MCs are inadequate and so should not be used. Others commented that LAs would not have the time or resources to implement them, and that updating them would be time consuming.

A lot of respondents commented that they would not support the adoption of the MCs as they did not feel that vaccination should be mandatory. These respondents disagreed with a statement in the Model Conditions for Dog Boarding Establishments that establishments should ensure that dogs boarded are vaccinated against four key diseases. These responses made up 42% of those that disagreed with the proposal. These responses appear to be part of a Pet Welfare Alliance campaign. When these responses are excluded 76% of responses are positive about the proposal.

c) Breeding and sale of dogs

Question 3: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to prohibit the sale of puppies below the age of eight weeks?



The large majority of responses were positive about this proposed change (90%), while 6% of respondents did not know and 4% were negative about the proposal. The most common comment was that puppies need to stay with their mothers and siblings until they are 8 weeks old for socialisation, support, training, learning bite inhibition and to develop immunity against diseases.

“A puppy needs to be with the mother for at least 8 weeks to get the correct training to equip it to be a well behaved dog and also it receives the support of the mother to help to ensure it has a stable temperament and immunity from the mother to minimise disease following correct weaning procedure.”

A few respondents felt that the proposal might help to prevent backyard breeding as it would reduce potential profit (breeders would have to feed the puppies for longer).

A lot of responses highlighted the difficulties inherent in enforcing this proposed change.

“But who is going to enforce it and how. I know of several people who have bought puppies recently and the breeder has said they are 8 weeks old, only for the purchaser to be told later by their vet; i.e. when they take it to be vaccinated that it is younger than 8 weeks.”

A lot of respondents commented that the proposal could go further, in particular to include other animals, such as kittens (but with species specific age limits). Regarding puppies, some respondents felt that 8 weeks was still too young, particularly for giant breeds, and that this should be extended to between 9 and 14 weeks. Other additional requirements mentioned were compulsory vaccination, provision of pet passports and microchipping

prior to sale. It was highlighted that prohibiting the sale of puppies below 8 weeks would mean the responsibility for microchipping would lie with the breeder.

There were several general comments about it being unethical or unacceptable to sell puppies below 8 weeks. A number of respondents commented that puppies should not be sold in pet shops at all or that they should not be sold without the mother present.

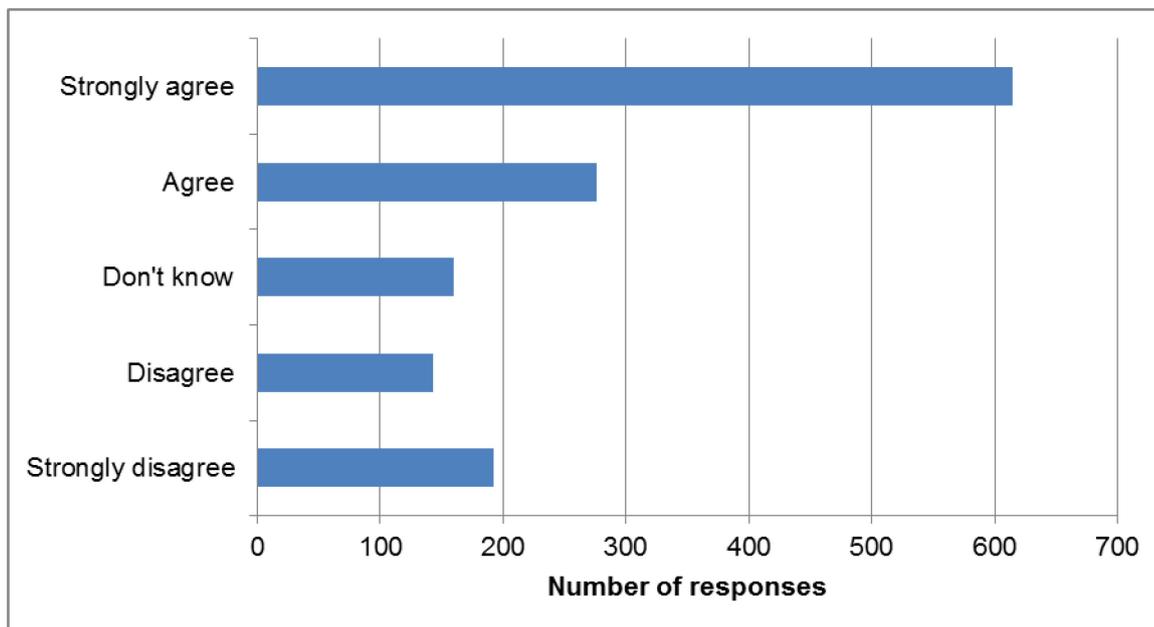
Of the responses that were negative about the proposal, many considered that 7 weeks was a more appropriate age for the optimum socialisation of the puppies with their new owners. Many dog breeders commented that letting puppies be collected a few days before 8 weeks of age did not make a difference to the puppy, and could be much more convenient for the purchaser (i.e. in allowing them to collect the puppy before the weekend).

Several respondents raised a concern over the use of the word 'sale' in the question. These respondents highlighted that what is important is the transfer of the puppy, not sale, as some puppies may be given as gifts but should still be covered by the legislation, in which case the 'sale' terminology is not appropriate. In a similar vein, a number of respondents highlighted that the restriction should be applicable to *all* breeders, not just those that are licensed.

A number of respondents mentioned that the current exemptions for guide dogs and service dogs should be retained, and that it should also be possible to gain an exemption when advised by a vet (e.g. if the bitch has an infectious disease).

Separating the responses by organisation, almost all LAs and welfare organisations that responded were positive about the proposed change. Those that disagreed with the proposal tended to be members of the public, dog breeders or industry. However, it should be noted that these were still minorities - within each of these categories the majority of respondents agreed with the proposal.

Question 4: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to make clear that the statutory licensing threshold for dog breeders is set at three or more litters per year?



Of the respondents that directly addressed this question, 64% were positive about the proposed change, 24% were negative and 12% did not know. A number of respondents misunderstood this question and interpreted the suggested threshold as the number of litters *per bitch* per year. These respondents tended to think that a threshold of three litters per year was too high. In fact, the consultation proposes to retain the existing requirements that each breeding bitch should only produce one litter per 12 month period.

Common themes among positive respondents were that hobby breeders would be unlikely to have three litters in a year, and so anyone breeding three or more litters would definitely be a business. In addition, many commented that this change might help to reduce the number of unwanted dogs.

“This level should be sufficient to include those people operating a dog breeding business but still allow people to have limited litters for showing purposes”

“Again this will help with the overbreeding problem, and help to regulate the puppies that are being sold and the poor bitches that are used as puppy machines.”

Many respondents also commented on issues with enforcement, and were concerned that backstreet breeders would ignore or get around this change, e.g. by moving dogs/puppies between households.

Of the negative responses, the large majority felt that a threshold of three litters or more was still too high. Many suggested that this should instead be brought down to two or more litters, while others suggested that anyone breeding even one litter should require a licence. Some respondents suggested extending the system to other species, e.g. rabbits

and cats. Others raised concerns about this being extended to small mammals, and stated that species specific limits would need to be defined.

Of the few respondents that did not want the litter threshold to be reduced, there were a number of common justifications. Some respondents commented that this would not be fair for the breeders of small/toy breeds, which typically have much smaller litters. It was suggested that the test should focus on the number of puppies, not the number of litters. Others commented that this would penalise hobby breeders, and that it would become too expensive for small breeders to continue in business, encouraging people to buy from larger 'puppy farms'. Several other respondents highlighted that sometimes hobby breeders can have three litters in one year, and then none for several years. It was felt that in these cases, they should not be required to have a licence.

"In my situation where I breed only to keep my dog showing hobby going and my breed produces one to three pups in a litter I have little choice where some other breeds can produce a dozen or more pups. I think breeds should be banded by the quantity of pups in a litter so bigger breeds with bigger litters are allowed less litters per year."

"This limit will not stop puppy farming at all and will only serve to put greater restrictions on the law abiding quality dog breeders"

Many of the LAs, industry and animal welfare organisations that responded felt that the litter test should be reduced to 2 or even one litter. Several LAs commented that reducing the litter threshold would aid enforcement, as it is currently difficult to prove that a breeder is a business. In fact, a number of LAs suggested removing the business test completely, or providing a clearer definition of what constitutes a business (e.g. using the HMRC 'badges of trade' definition).

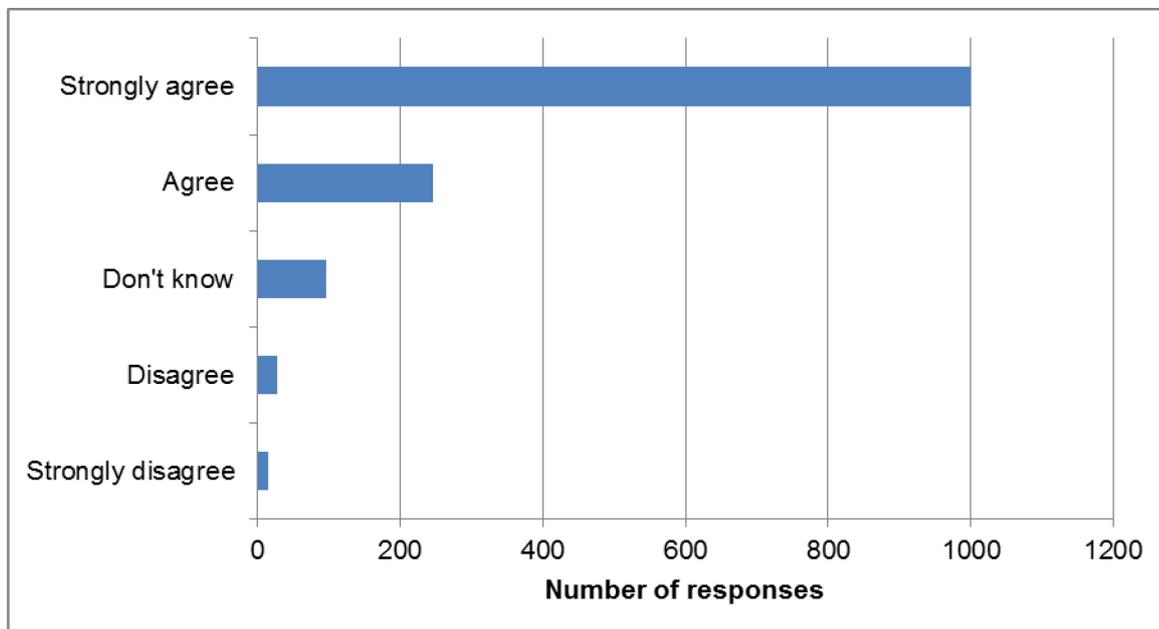
"It is virtually impossible to prove that a breeder is operating as a business particularly as there is no definition and unless warrants are granted to enable invoices etc. to be inspected, enforcement will not be possible."

Others commented on the difficulties in proving the litter test, making enforcement difficult. Several LAs, welfare organisations and industry groups suggested an alternative model whereby all breeders are required to register with their LA and receive a registration number. This number would be required when advertising and selling puppies, allowing LAs to track the numbers of litters per year. If this exceeded two, the breeder would be required to apply for a licence. It was suggested that these registration numbers could be legally required on adverts, and an online database created that purchasers could check against, to make sure that breeders were licensed. Linked to this were suggestions to provide guidance on fee setting to improve consistency between LAs.

More generally, there were several comments on the age of the bitch at breeding and the numbers of litters per bitch, however, these were not part of the consultation question and so will not be discussed.

d) Pet sales

Question 5: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to legally require pet sales to provide written information when selling animals?



Of the respondents that directly addressed this question, 90% were positive about the proposed change, 3% were negative and 7% did not know.

Of the respondents that agreed, many commented that this was good practice, and that responsible breeders and pet shops already provide this information. A common theme was that people often buy pets on impulse and then forget what they have been told about the pet, and so having written information to refer to could help to ensure that they know how to provide for the welfare of the animal. It was also suggested that the information should be provided prior to sale, for example, displayed next to the animals, so that people can consider the requirements of the animal before they commit to buying it. Several respondents commented that this was of particular importance for exotic pets, which may have more specialised care requirements.

“I work in a vets inside a pet store and I feel this is the biggest problem as we hear all the time that ‘Nobody told us that’”

“I feel this is incredibly important as a lot of pet purchases are done on a whim with no real thought to the aftercare.”

Many respondents suggested that whilst this would be a useful measure, the legislation should go further. In addition to providing information about the animal type, it was suggested that information about the specific individual animal being sold should be provided, for example, information on its parentage, vet records including vaccinations, current health status and any potential genetic disorders and microchipping details. It was proposed that this would help to improve traceability, which in turn would help to prevent

unscrupulous breeders. Other suggestions were that sellers and buyers should have to demonstrate a certain level of knowledge. It was recommended that sellers should have to pass certain qualifications, and that a questionnaire or qualification should be designed for buyers to demonstrate their competency and knowledge prior to purchase.

Background checks or home checks on buyers were suggested as another method to ensure that they would be able to provide for the welfare of the animal. Another suggestion was that there should be a mandatory cooling off period, during which sellers must be willing to take back the animal if the buyer finds it to be unsuitable. Many respondents also commented that pets, particularly cats and dogs, should not be sold in pet shops.

Another major theme in the positive responses was concern over the quality of the written information to be provided. Generally, respondents agreed that the information would need to be standardised and agreed by experts. The definition of expert varied, some respondents felt that this should be approved by Defra, others felt that a stakeholder group composed of welfare organisations, trade bodies, vets and scientists would be appropriate, whilst some respondents felt that trade bodies should be excluded from this group due to a conflict of interest.

“Many pet shops also give incorrect information, for example many exotics suffer as a consequence of misguided husbandry advice.”

“There is potential anyone could design some written information off the internet when selling the animals and the information may not be right or adequate for the species or animal. If you are to do this the information should be standardised or from an approved site.”

Of respondents that disagreed with the proposal, some disagreed because they did not think the proposal went far enough. Others felt that the requirement would be overly burdensome for businesses and involve unnecessary paperwork that would not be read. Some respondents felt that there is already sufficient information available online. It was mentioned that this could be particularly difficult for fish as there are so many types, and people tend to restock their tanks relatively regularly, and so repeatedly providing them with the same information would be unnecessary.

“I don't feel that shops can provide all the information about pet care that is necessary in a single leaflet and I consider it unlikely that purchasers would read this. So much information is found on-line these days. ...the requirement to stock written information might be quite onerous for some premises.”

Finally, concerns were raised about how this could be enforced in practice.

LAs largely agreed with the proposed change, although some commented on the need to be clear what information would be considered to be of an acceptable quality. Pet shops were more divided. Although a majority were positive about the proposal, just under a third responded negatively, with many commenting that it would be unnecessarily burdensome, particularly for certain species such as fish. The large majority of animal welfare organisations were positive about the proposal, but many suggested that there was a need

to go further and that it would depend on the quality of the information. Several welfare organisations and trade associations highlighted that they already produce care guides, and some offered to make this freely available online.

Question 6: What other proportionate measures could address concerns around the care of exotic animals?

A lot of respondents did not directly answer this question, they either stated that they had nothing to suggest or that it was not their area of expertise, and so they did not feel qualified to comment. A lot of these responses were from dog breeders and animal boarding establishments, who would not necessarily deal with exotic animals.

Many of the common themes were similar to those raised in question 5. The importance of a high level of knowledge and understanding of the needs of the animals was commonly raised, and a lot of respondents suggested that this be checked prior to purchase, for example, by asking the buyer to carry out a test, or to demonstrate that they have particular qualifications. It was suggested that buyers could be required to join a specialist club/society or to register with a specialist vet. There were concerns that there may not be enough specialist vets in the country, and it was suggested that where there are none in the local area, exotic pet sales should be prohibited. Many respondents also suggested that sellers should be required to carry out home checks before selling the animals.

A key concern with the current system that was raised was that inspectors often do not have the expert knowledge necessary to inspect premises selling exotic species. It was suggested that a central list could be compiled of people with expert knowledge in the area that LAs could go to for advice, or to carry out the inspections. It was felt that this would also ensure that the staff in the pet shop had the correct level of knowledge and expertise. Interestingly, a number of LAs raised this issue themselves.

There was a strong emphasis on the need for increased regulation. A number of respondents proposed that anyone owning an exotic pet should require a licence or be added to a central register, or that all exotic animals should require a microchip. The term 'exotic pet' was not clearly defined in the consultation, and this was commented on a number of times. It is possible that those promoting the idea of a licence were interpreting an exotic pet to be those covered under the Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976, where individual owners are indeed required to have a licence.

One of the other main suggestions was the drafting of a positive list of animals that it is legal to keep, with all other animals not on the list being prohibited. This system is used in Belgium, and a number of respondents commented that this has been a success. Others raised concerns about a positive list approach, questioning how this could be enforced and how the composition of the list would be decided. An alternative suggestion was to design a traffic light system to indicate the level of expertise required to meet the animal's welfare needs (basic = green, advanced = amber or expert/professional = red). Other suggestions related to increased regulation included raising the age limit at which people can buy pets (currently 16 years old), limiting imports, including corals and invertebrates in the

legislation and regulating/licensing mobile animal encounters. Several respondents felt that exotic pet sales should be banned completely.

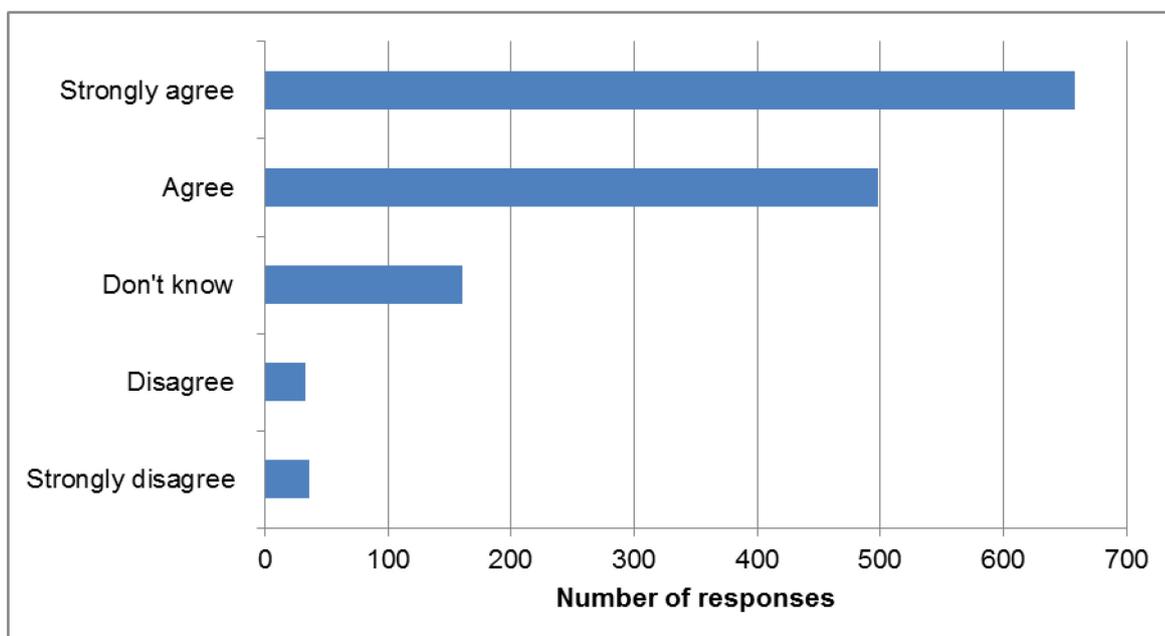
Another major theme was that sellers could bring in cooling off periods between registering an interest in an animal and being allowed to collect it. Periods of one to two weeks were commonly suggested. It was felt that this may help to reduce impulse buying and as a result reduce the number of abandoned animals. Many respondents also suggested that sellers should be required to accept the return of the animals if the buyer changed their mind following purchase.

Other comments included suggestions that animals should be allowed to live as natural a life as possible, and that there should not be a distinction between exotic and other pets (ultimately, the majority of pets including dogs and cats could be considered to be exotic to the UK, as they are not native species). It was also suggested that this be the subject of a full review.

Length of licences

a) Removing the calendar-year restriction

Question 7: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to allow licences to be issued for a fixed term, set at any point in the year?



The majority of respondents (83%) agreed with this proposal. Less than 5% of respondents disagreed with the proposal and 12% did not know.

Many of the respondents did not seem to understand the question or the current situation. For example, a number of respondents were supportive of a one-year licence – these respondents did not seem to appreciate that the licence length is already one year, and that we were asking about the timing of issuing the licence.

The positive responses largely focussed around the benefits to LAs and businesses. A common theme was that this would reduce the administrative burden for LAs and allow them to plan their workload more effectively. It was felt that if the renewals were spread out across the year, this would reduce the backlog and delays that can occur towards the end of the year in the current system. Many respondents also commented that the LA inspectors would be less rushed and so the quality of their inspections may improve.

“This has been a primary concern for us as the administration of all applications at the end of the year is difficult to manage.”

In terms of benefits to businesses, the key point raised was that this would prevent applicants from having to renew their licences shortly after they have been issued. Under the current system, all establishments have to renew their licences at the end of the year. This means that an establishment could apply for its first licence in October and then have to pay for a renewal 3 months later at the end of the calendar year. Allowing licences to be issued at any point in the year would mean that all licences would last for the full 12 month period. This was seen to be much fairer to businesses. In addition, many respondents commented that under the current system, new establishments often run without a licence until the end of the year, to avoid having to pay twice. It was felt that under the new system this illegal activity would stop. It was also highlighted that the new system would allow businesses to choose a time of year for renewals when their workload is lower, which would reduce the burden on them.

“The current Jan - Dec term is artificial and can mean that a business which doesn't time their business opening correctly has to pay twice. Other licences already operate in this way with no detriment.”

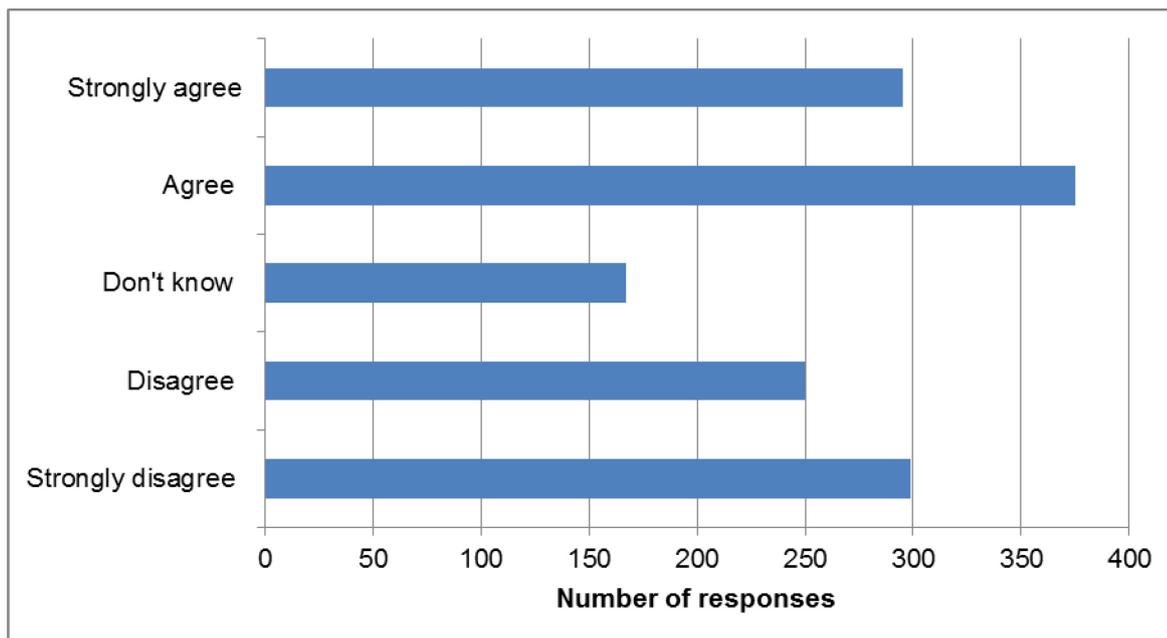
“This will reduce workload for local authorities and ensure that new businesses/people who are nearing the end of the year will not operate illegally so that they can save money until the new year.”

Of the few respondents that disagreed with the proposal, some felt that this would actually increase the administrative burden on LAs. Interestingly, a number of these negative responses were from LAs. It was argued that having to keep track of all the licences would be resource intensive. It was suggested that for continuity purposes, it would be better for both LAs and the industry if all licences expire together. One suggestion was that there would need to be an automatic system to alert the provider when their licence is about to expire, to remind them to reapply. Another suggestion was that LAs could decide when their licences would run from, so that they could plan their workload and coordinate inspections. Comments were also made about the timings of the inspections, that winter is a good time to inspect as the establishments will likely be at their worst, or that summer is preferable for boarding establishments when they are at maximum capacity.

Overall, 90% of LAs and 83% of animal welfare organisations were positive about this proposal. Of the industry respondents 84% were positive about the proposal.

b) Increasing the maximum licence length

Question 8: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to increase the maximum length of a licence that local authorities may issue to up to three years?



Responses to this question were very mixed. 48% of respondents were positive about the proposal, 40% were negative and 12% did not know.

Of those that were positive, many respondents commented that this would be more efficient, both for LAs and businesses. It was highlighted that this could allow LAs to allocate more resources to the poorer performing, higher risk establishments, and that the reward of lower fees and fewer inspections for good practice may help to drive up standards. It was also mentioned that very little changes from year to year and that where problems occur, these can be dealt with using the complaints mechanism.

Of those that disagreed with the proposal, the most common theme was that a lot can change over a three year period, and that this would allow standards to slip between inspections. It was highlighted in particular that staff changes within this period could have a large impact on the welfare levels.

“Given variations in staff, finances, experience and training, much can change in a business in three years. It can go from thriving to struggling and, when animals are involved, this can have a significant impact upon welfare.”

There were concerns raised about the ability of LA inspectors to use a risk-based system, and their general capability in terms of undertaking inspections. Another major concern

raised was that LAs with stretched resources may be inclined to issue longer licences in order to save time and costs for themselves rather than based on the level of risk. More generally, there were a lot of comments about the need for the risk-based system to be robust and consistent. Many respondents suggested that there would need to be very clear guidance issued on the risk-based approach to ensure that it was implemented appropriately and consistently across LAs. Guidance and consistency in fee-setting was suggested by numerous respondents. As part of a risk-based system, a number of respondents suggested that establishments should only be eligible for the extended licence if they have demonstrated their quality over a 3-5 year period of annual inspections. Many of these concerns were also raised by respondents that answered 'don't know'.

“For premises that operate well and have done so for many years they should have the benefit of being able to have a longer licence if deemed suitable at inspection. Guidelines and risk assessments for such a change should be provided and be consistent across councils otherwise it will lead to confusion and inconsistencies”

“Such an approach would require a transparent, risk-based methodology, that would need to be applied consistently across the country, and be robust enough to withstand challenge from any aggrieved business operators.”

It is clear that the development of a robust, transparent and consistent risk-based system could address a lot of the concerns around this proposal.

Some LAs reported that they have already adopted a risk-based system and that they have not noticed a deterioration in standards, and that it gives them more time to target the poorer operators. LAs commented that this would bring the system in line with other licensing practices that already use risk-based systems. However, other LAs raised concerns that due to the small number of licences that they issue, a risk-based system may actually involve more work for them.

There were a lot of comments about inspection frequency, with respondents highlighting the importance of regular inspections. Some felt that these should continue on an annual basis, even if an establishment was issued a 3 year licence, while others felt that random, unannounced inspections should be undertaken over the licence term (the number required could be determined using the risk-based system). Many respondents focussed on the need for these inspections to be unannounced. There were some comments about the need to take into account differences in types of establishments when determining inspection frequency. A number of respondents from the equine sector as well as a number of LAs argued that riding establishments must continue to require an annual vet inspection to ensure horse welfare but also the safety of riders. Others argued that large pet shops that are visited by thousands of people per year are under much higher public scrutiny than small online sellers, and so should not need the same frequency of LA inspections.

Some respondents agreed with the principle of extended licence lengths but suggested that 2 years may be more appropriate. A few respondents argued that licences should be

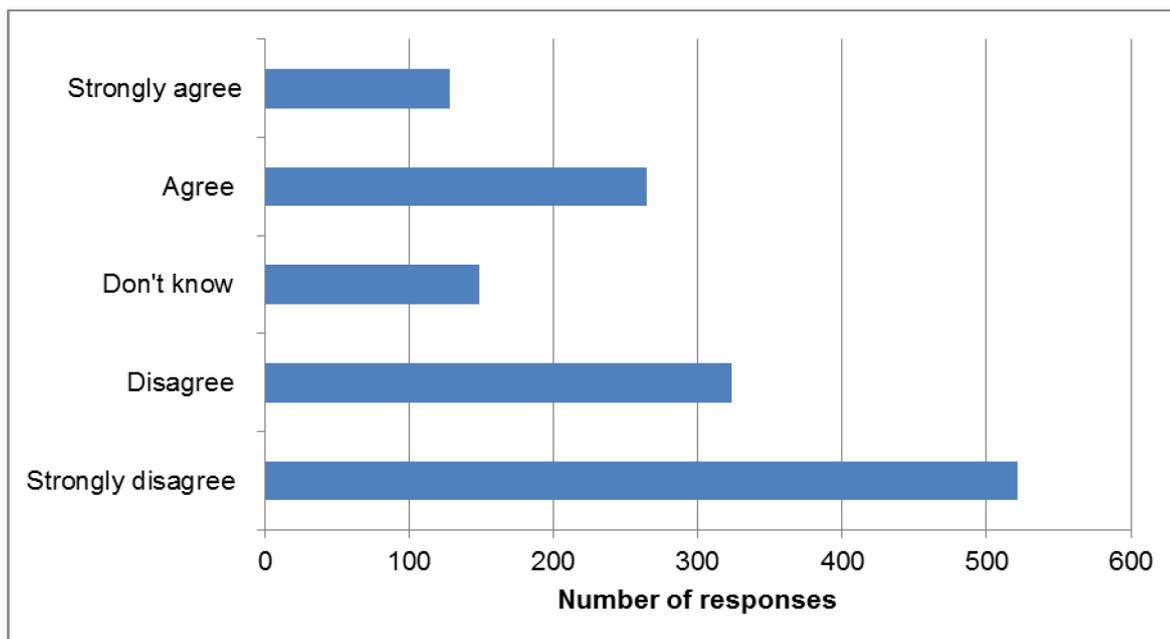
permanent, but with an annual fee and inspections undertaken on a risk-based system, as this would reduce the administrative burden even further.

Other general comments about the proposal were that small businesses would need to be able to pay for an extended licence in annual instalments, otherwise the cost could be prohibitive for them. Others commented that establishments with 3 year licences would need to be re-inspected if the ownership changed. A number of respondents (including several LAs) commented that it needs to be made easier to revoke licences, particularly if licence lengths are extended. Currently, this was reported to be a burdensome process and it was reported that LAs commonly wait for the licence to expire and then refuse to renew it rather than revoking it.

Overall, around 60% of the LAs agreed with this proposal, although many added caveats such as the need for this to be based on a consistent risk-based system. More than half of the animal welfare organisations that responded disagreed with the proposal. Comments about standards slipping over a three year period and the need for regular inspections were common. Almost two thirds of the industry respondents were positive about the proposal. Half of these positive respondents did not provide any comments to support their answer, but those that did mentioned the efficiencies and benefits of earned recognition. However, many also stated the need for continued annual inspections and a robust risk-based system.

c) Transferring licences

Question 9: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to allow licence holders to transfer licences to new owners of the same premises, subject to notification of and approval by the local authority?



Overall, 61% of respondents were negative about this proposal, 28% were positive and 11% did not know.

The most common comment given for this question was that the licence should be given to the person, not the premises, or that it should take both into account. It was argued that the experience, qualifications, standards, plans and morals of the owner had a great impact on the level of welfare in an establishment, and so it was felt essential that these be checked through a new application process.

“Absolutely not. These licences should be given on the competency, experience and knowledge of the licence HOLDER, not the premises.”

“Inevitably animal welfare, to some degree, will always involve the premises in which animals are kept. However, I feel that high welfare standards are much more closely linked to the individual people providing care for animals, and hence the licences themselves should be issued to those ensuring that welfare.”

A number of respondents were concerned that the proposal would allow puppy farms or people convicted of cruelty to transfer their establishment to a relative, and thereby continue trading, while others were concerned that people with convictions would be able to buy establishments without being checked. Some were also concerned that it would be easier for establishments to slip through the net, and LAs would lose track of ownership details.

“All new owners should be licensed separately. We have always done this and it has not caused any problems as our fees are not very high. I believe by using a transfer method premises would change and we would not be notified.”

Of those that were positive, some commented that this would be good for businesses and would make it easier to sell establishments, while a few respondents agreed that if the premises stayed the same, there was no need to reapply. However, the majority of respondents that agreed with the proposal did so with a number of caveats. The most common of these were that the establishment would need to be inspected following the transfer of the licence, or on the condition that there was a clear, rigorous and transparent process in place to vet the new applicant. It was felt that simply notifying the LA was not sufficient. A number of respondents suggested that establishments could be given an interim licence, to allow them to continue trading whilst they waited for an inspection. Others felt that the transfer of licences should only occur after the new applicant had been interviewed by the LA or had a full background check, to ensure that they had no previous convictions or had licences revoked in the past.

A number of respondents commented that there should be an exemption in the case of bereavement or serious illness, where the licence could be transferred to close family members (but that there should still be an inspection shortly afterwards to ensure standards are being maintained). There is already a provision that an interim licence can be given in the case of bereavement. Others argued that a transfer of licences would be acceptable if the licence was only for 1 year, but a 3 year licence would be too long to run with no checks.

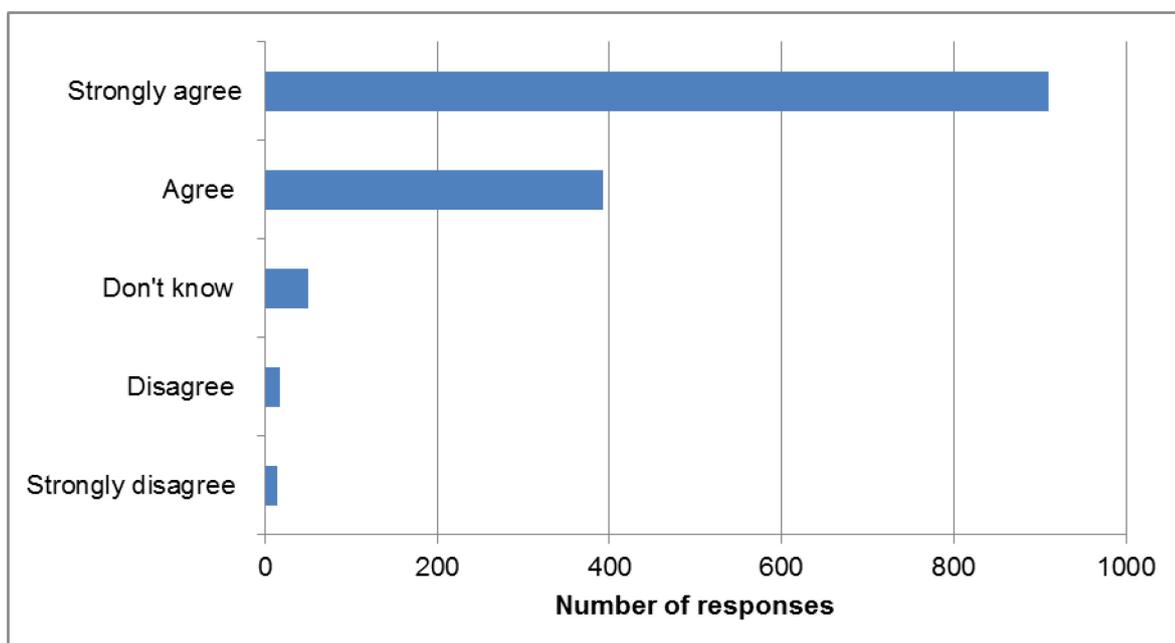
More than half of LAs that responded agreed with the proposal, but most added the caveat that there would need to be an agreed transfer mechanism, with a fee to cover the LA work. Those that disagreed all argued that there was a need to properly vet the new applicant. It was highlighted that if the system moves towards a risk-based system, then a new owner needs to be assessed and given a risk score.

The majority (72%) of animal welfare organisations disagree with the proposal, mostly highlighting the need for the new applicant to be vetted or inspected. Just over half of the industry disagreed with the proposal, for the same reasons.

Overall, the clear message from the responses is that there is a perceived need for the new applicant to be thoroughly vetted and inspected. Whether this requires a new licence application or could be carried out within a set time after the transfer of a licence is more contentious.

d) Notification of major changes

Question 10: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to require licence holders to notify local authorities of major changes, such as a change of premises or scale of activities?



A large majority of respondents were positive about this proposal (94%). Only 2% were negative about the proposal and 4% did not know.

The majority of respondents commented that major changes could have an impact on animal welfare and so LAs need to be aware of them. It was highlighted that people may apply for a basic licence and then increase their size considerably, at the cost of animal welfare. A lot of respondents suggested that LAs may want or need to follow up with inspections to make sure that welfare had not been compromised.

“This would give the local authority the opportunity to ensure that the changes would not adversely affect the animals”

In addition, it was argued that the changes may affect whether or not the licence would have been granted in the first place, and so it is important that the LA are notified of these changes.

“This is sensible, as new premises may not necessarily be of the same standard as those used when the licence was issued, and a change of scale of activities carries with it a risk that standards may slip as a result.”

A number of respondents were surprised by this question and felt that it was already a requirement. Some of the LAs that responded mentioned that they already insist on it, which may explain this.

Some respondents commented that notifying LAs may not be sufficient, they should in fact need to seek permission which LAs should have the power to refuse. It was argued that this would be similar to the process used in other forms of licences. Another suggestion was that if an extended licence is brought in, any major changes should cause the licence to automatically revert back to a one year licence.

One of the key concerns raised with the proposal was the need for a clear definition of ‘major changes’. Some respondents suggested that *any* changes should require notification, while others suggested that in addition to changes of premises and scale of activities, ‘major changes’ should include an extension to new activities, refurbishment, long-term changes in staff numbers, keeping different species and keeping more animals. Concerns were raised about how this could be enforced, and the need for LAs to have powers to penalise non-compliance.

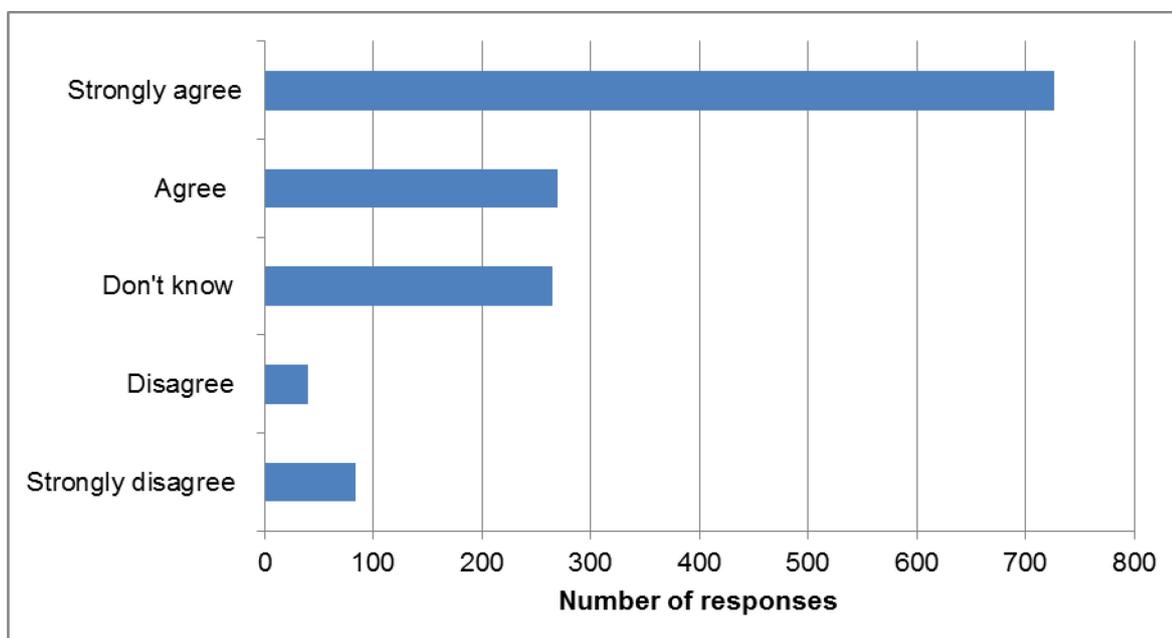
The few respondents that were negative suggested that this was additional and unnecessary red tape as any changes would be picked up the inspections, and that the burden should be on LAs and not the businesses.

“People running a business should be allowed to get on and run their business without undue, unwanted, and unwarranted interference from the local authority.”

Overall, 94% of LAs agreed with the proposal, 98% of animal welfare organisations and 89% of the industry.

Performing animals registration

Question 11: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to maintain the registration requirement for performing animals?



Overall, 72% of respondents were positive about this proposal, 19% did not know and 9% were negative. A common comment from those that did not know was that performing animals are outside their area of knowledge or business and so they were not qualified to comment. In addition, many of the respondents did not provide any comments to support their answers.

A common theme among respondents that were positive about maintaining the registration requirement was that this would help to ensure the welfare of the performing animals, which were felt by many to be at greater risk of abuse. It was considered important that LAs know who is carrying out activities with animals so that they can follow up any concerns raised by the public. It was also highlighted that the Animal Welfare Act is a discretionary function for LAs so would not be as effective as retaining the current system.

“Even if the number of performing animals is low I think the maintenance of the register is important to a) know where these animals are b) know what species they are c) ensure their welfare as they could otherwise be unknown”

A lot of the respondents felt that performing animals should be banned completely. Some mentioned circus animals specifically, and it was not clear if others had interpreted the question as covering only circus or wild animals as well, as opposed to all performing animals (which includes performing domestic species such as dogs). Many of those respondents that called for a ban felt that if this did not happen, the registration requirement should be maintained to help to protect the welfare of the animals.

“I wish that performing animals were illegal. They should definitely still be registered as a requirement though so that authorities know where they are and can keep a close eye on their welfare.”

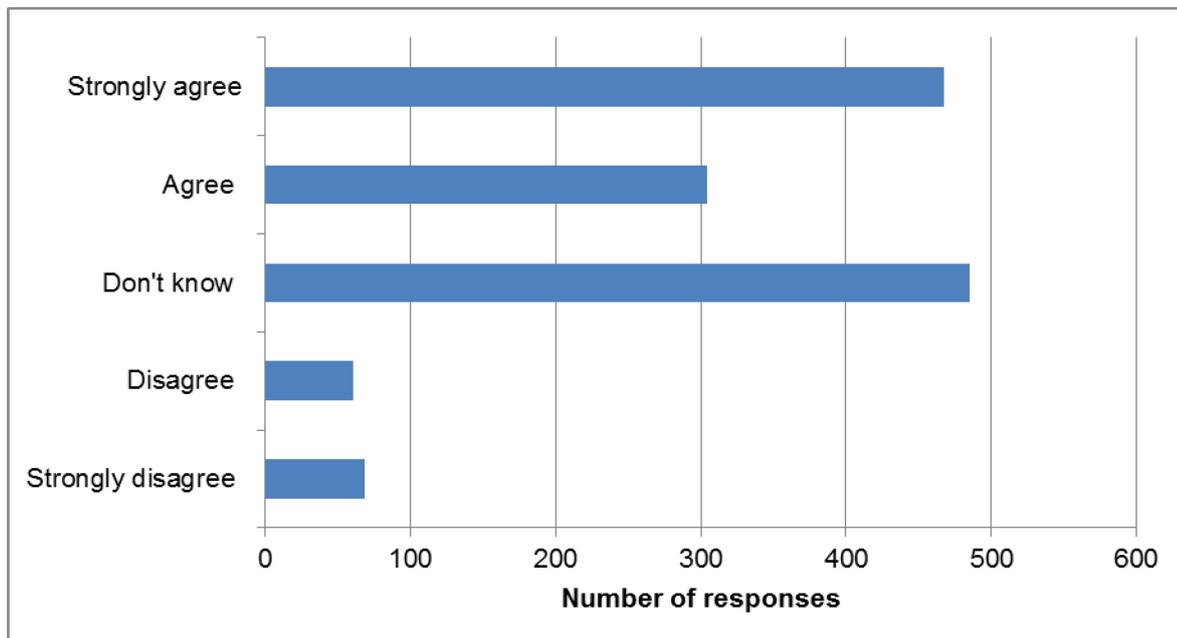
Another common theme was the need for increased regulation in this area. A lot of respondents felt that performing animals should be incorporated into the proposed animal establishments licensing scheme, or that inspections or tighter requirements should be incorporated into the registration requirements to improve welfare and oversight of these activities. There were a lot of comments about the definition of the term ‘performing animals’. Some respondents highlighted that this only covers animals in live shows, and needs to be updated to include modern mediums such as film and the internet. Others commented on the need to include mobile animal encounters. Animals in these establishments are often not classed as performing animals as they do not perform, but it was argued that there are still health and welfare risks. In particular, the risks of the transmission of zoonoses from animals to children during animal encounters was raised by a number of respondents. It was suggested that the terminology should be changed to ‘exhibiting’ or ‘working’ animals, to cover these additional activities.

There were a few more specific points raised about the registration system. It was commented that it would be useful to put a time limit on it, otherwise it never expires. It was mentioned that it is essential to retain LA powers of entry, and that including where animals perform and are transported would be useful. It was also suggested that this be consolidated with other licensing functions at district level, rather than being at county council level, or that copies of the registration should at least be sent to the district councils, as they tend to receive the complaints.

Of those that were negative about the proposal, the large majority felt that either performing animals should be banned or that a licensing system should replace the registration system. Some respondents felt that there were few activities covered, because there are not very many performing animals, and that the Animal Welfare Act offered sufficient protection. It was commented that the Performing Animals Act is not useful as it is not properly enforced.

Overall, 59% of LAs agreed with maintaining the registration requirement. A third of those that disagreed and more than 20% of those that agreed felt that a licensing system would be more effective than registration. Similarly 65% of animal welfare organisations were positive about the proposal. Of those that disagreed with the proposal, almost all felt that performing animals should either be banned or subject to licensing. Thus, overall there was very strong support for maintaining regulation of performing animals as well as a prominent suggestion that the system needs to be strengthened.

Question 12: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed changes to the registration system for performing animals?



Overall, 56% of respondents were positive about the proposal, 9% were negative and 35% did not know. The changes proposed were to update the legal standards to explicitly refer to the welfare needs set out in the Animal Welfare Act, remove the need for local authorities to send copies of the paperwork to Defra and to extend powers of inspection to premises where performing animals are kept. These changes were outlined under the 'more information' link and were stated in the consultation document. Despite this, a lot of respondents said that they did not know what the changes were and a high proportion of respondents answered 'don't know'. This suggests that the proposed changes should have been stated more clearly, and perhaps included directly in the question.

Of those that were positive about the proposal, common statements were that this could improve welfare and reduce the administrative burden on LAs. A number of respondents were positive about extending powers of entry and commented on the benefits that inspections would provide in terms of ensuring animal welfare.

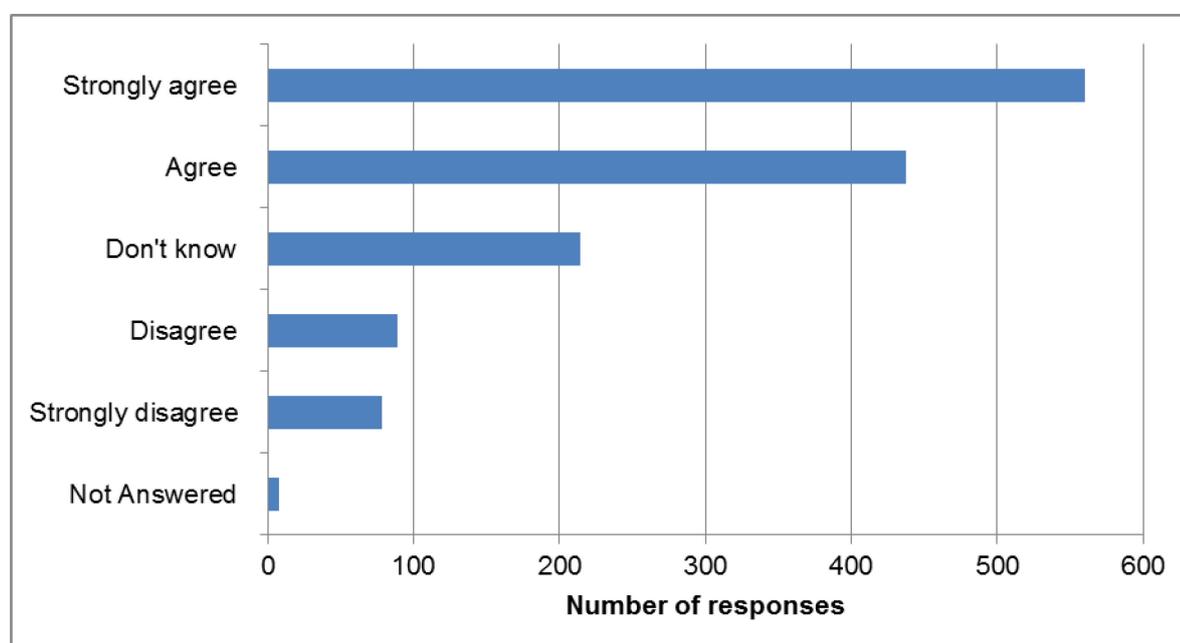
Again, there was a strong call for incorporating performing animals into a licensing system, with an emphasis on the importance of inspecting these establishments. Several respondents disagreed with the statement in the consultation document that the Performing Animals Act now covers relatively few activities, and highlighted mobile animal encounters as an area that should be included under this Act. Many of those that disagreed with the proposal thought that it did not go far enough, and that licensing or banning the industry were better alternatives.

Regarding specific changes, some respondents felt that paperwork should continue to be sent to Defra, to act as a central record and accountability check. A small number of respondents disagreed as they felt that the Performing Animals Act should be repealed.

Of the LAs, 43% agreed with the proposal and 44% did not know. This high percentage of 'don't know' responses is likely to reflect the fact that district councils do not currently administer this Act, and so a large number of those that responded felt that it was outside their remit to respond to this question. Of the welfare organisations, 48% agreed with the proposal, 28% did not know and 24% disagreed. Those that disagreed tended to want the legislation to go further. Of the industry respondents, 55% agreed with the proposal, 39% did not know and 6% disagreed (again, primarily stating that the proposal does not go far enough).

Powers of entry

Question 13: To what extent do you agree or disagree with these proposals on powers of entry?



Overall, 72% of respondents were positive about the proposal, 12% were negative, 15% did not know and less than one percent did not answer.

Generally, respondents were positive about the need for LAs to have powers of entry, highlighting that this would be important for enforcement and to ensure high welfare standards. However, there were a lot of concerns about the details within this. The most common theme in all of the responses (including both those who were positive and negative about the proposal) was concern over the need for a warrant and the need to give prior notice of the application for a warrant. There were a lot of concerns that this would give the establishments time to hide or dispose of animals and evidence, which would make enforcement much more difficult. Many respondents commented that the phrase 'unless such notice would defeat the object of entry' was crucial here, and that, in most cases, providing notice of the warrant application would indeed defeat the object. The importance of unannounced visits was repeatedly mentioned. If the need for a warrant

is brought in, many respondents mentioned that these would need to be issued very quickly, ideally within 24 hours.

“It seems pointless to even include that reasonable notice will be given as we would think that it would always defeat the object of entry.”

There were also concerns about limiting the number of people that can make use of the powers of entry to four. Many respondents highlighted that large establishments with 10s or 100s of animals would require more than four people in order to collect the evidence and seize all the animals in a timely manner to prevent additional suffering. There were also concerns that this may compromise the safety of the people inspecting, again particularly for larger establishments. It was also highlighted that experts should attend to ensure animal welfare, as well as the police.

Several of the respondents commented that it will be essential that powers of entry are extended to currently unlicensed establishments that are suspected of carrying out animal activities. These establishments were mentioned as likely to have poorer welfare, and so it is seen as particularly important that these can be inspected and the evidence collected that will allow them to then be brought into the licensing scheme or prosecuted. Other extensions to powers of entry that were suggested were to include dealers who trade from the backs of their cars as well as closed websites.

A number of respondents raised concerns about the RSPCA and commented that they did not want powers of entry to be extended to the RSPCA, whilst others suggested this would be a positive change. This was not the subject of the consultation and so will not be addressed further.

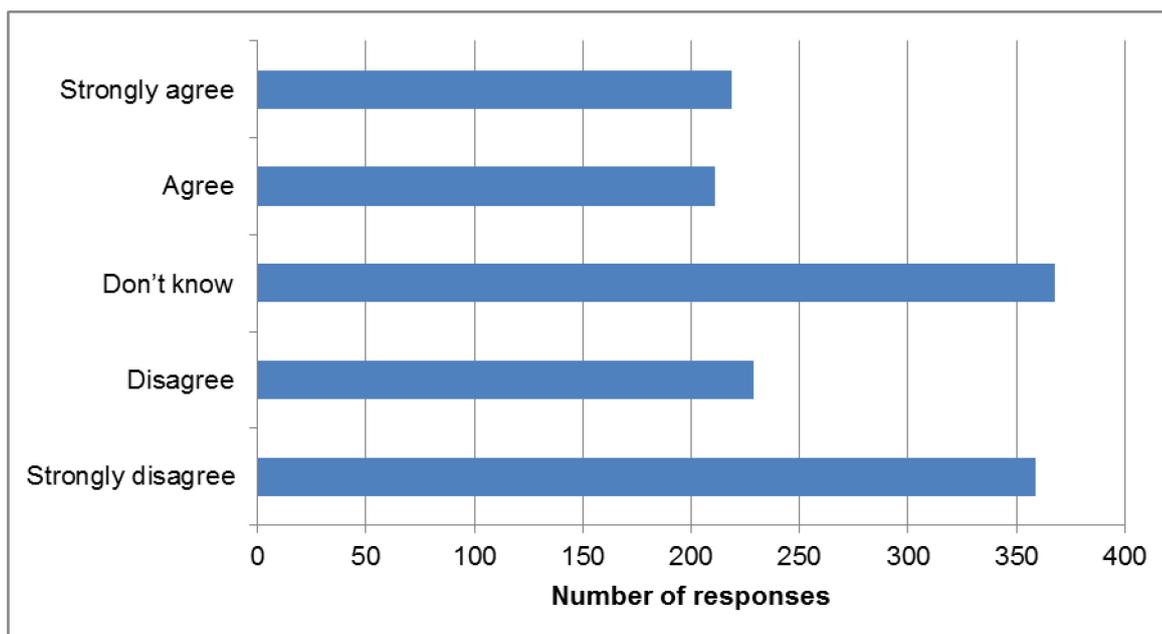
Of those that supported the proposal, the most common justification was that this would improve consistency with other legislation and would provide important safeguards to protect both animal welfare and the rights of the establishment owners.

Of those that disagreed with the proposal, some were concerned that this presented a security risk, in that LAs may enter whilst they were away. Others were worried that it may scare their children or animals to have LA inspectors entering without prior notice. These concerns were particularly common amongst home boarders and breeders – generally, these respondents felt that these powers of entry were inappropriate for private dwellings but suitable for larger-scale establishments.

Accreditation

a) UKAS accreditation of independent regulators

Question 14: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to allow an exemption from licensing requirements for businesses affiliated to a body accredited by UKAS?



The most common response to this question was 'don't know' (26.5%). Less than half of respondents disagreed with the proposal (42.5%), while a third were positive about it (31%).

The high number of 'don't know' responses could suggest that there was not enough information in the consultation document to clearly explain the proposal, or that the wording of the question was confusing. Alternatively, it could be interpreted that the proposal itself is complicated. A common theme amongst respondents that disagreed with the proposal was that the system would be too confusing and as a result could lead to people 'slipping through the net'. That many people did not understand the proposal could be interpreted as supportive of this argument, that the proposed system would be too complicated.

“While animal establishments are regulated by the local authority there is one point of contact for concerned members of the public, there is one point of responsibility; to confuse this risks the welfare of the animals involved.”

Other reasons for disagreeing with the proposal were that everyone should be treated the same, that there should be a consistent process, and that the proposal would lead to a two tier system, with higher welfare establishments gaining licences from UKAS accredited

bodies and lower welfare establishments going to LAs. There were particular concerns among LAs that this would reduce their revenue and lower their levels of expertise, leaving them with less resources and skills to assess establishments and follow up on complaints effectively.

“Although the principle of this proposal is sound, unless all establishments elect to be covered by the body, local authorities will still need to retain officers and skill sets for the ones that don’t, which could lead to inefficiencies and lack of consistency.”

A number of practical concerns were raised, for example, whether complaints would continue to go to the LAs or if these would need to be sent to the UKAS accredited body. It was felt that this might be confusing for the general public, and that the UKAS schemes would not have the powers of entry or sufficient sanctions to deal with non-compliance. It was also highlighted that currently inspection reports are subject to Freedom of Information requests from LAs. There was a concern that UKAS accredited assurance schemes would not be subject to this level of transparency.

A potential alternative model was suggested by a number of respondents, that UKAS accreditation could form part of the proposed risk-based system, allowing for longer licences to be issued by LAs to those that are part of a UKAS accredited scheme. This would reduce the burden on LAs whilst ensuring that all of the licences remain within their control, thereby avoiding issues about complaints, sanctions and powers of entry.

Many respondents raised specific concerns about the perception of the proposal as self-regulation by the industry, stating that there is a clear conflict of interest and that this would lead to poorer welfare overall. Specific concerns were also raised about UKAS accreditation, as a number of respondents felt that the accreditation system was too process/paperwork driven and would not actually check on welfare or the quality of the standards being audited. There seemed to be some misunderstanding about the role of UKAS. UKAS accredits evaluators or certification schemes to established international standards. To become accredited by UKAS, the evaluator needs to prove that they are impartial and technically competent to perform their evaluation to the required level. This would include a thorough assessment by UKAS that the animal welfare standards of the scheme are at or are higher than those required by the legislation and that there is a properly operating inspection regime in place. Thus, while UKAS do not inspect animal establishments themselves, they ensure that the inspections carried out by the accredited certification body are of a high standard and meet the requirements of the legislation.

Some respondents criticised current UKAS accredited schemes for not enforcing their standards effectively.

Of the positive responses to this question, the main themes were that it would save time and money (for both LAs and businesses) by preventing duplication, and would lead to better welfare and higher standards. There was a lot of criticism of LA inspectors for not having the required expertise and it was felt that inspections by experts associated with UKAS accredited bodies would be more rigorous, particularly for more specialised areas

such as exotics. It was also mentioned that a UKAS system would be more standardised than the current LA model.

The Kennel Club ran a campaign alongside this consultation, asking members to submit responses highlighting the value of their Assured Breeder Scheme and the benefits of allowing an exemption for UKAS accredited bodies. We received a total of 151 such responses. Including these responses in the total increases the percentage of respondents that were positive about the proposal to 42%.

A lot of the respondents that agreed with the proposal did so with some caveats. For example, a number of respondents mentioned that UKAS accredited bodies would have to be able to carry out unannounced inspections. Many respondents suggested the need to ensure Continuous Professional Development, both of inspectors and members of the schemes. It was suggested that there would need to be an effective system of data sharing with LAs or a central database accessible to the public where they could check if an establishment was licensed.

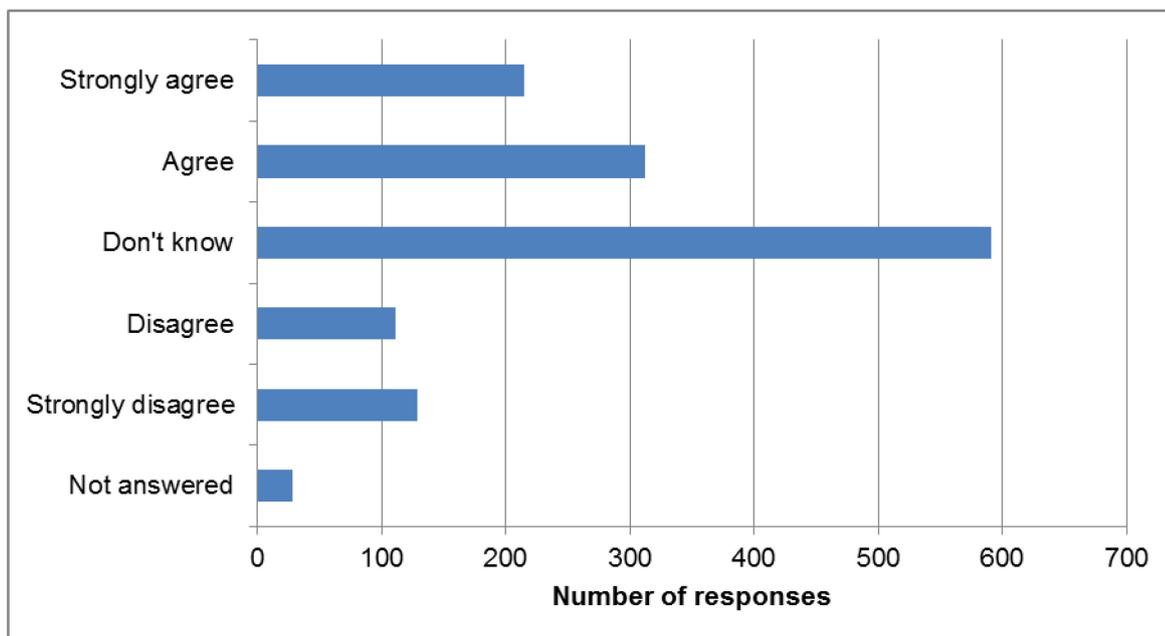
More than half of LAs and animal welfare organisations that responded to the consultation disagreed with this proposal, raising concerns about a loss of revenue and expertise in LAs, issues over dealing with complaints and concerns about the UKAS system. Many of the LAs and animal welfare organisations that responded felt that incorporating UKAS accreditation into a risk-based system would be a positive alternative. Approximately a quarter of LAs and a quarter of the welfare organisations that responded were positive about the proposal, highlighting the benefits in terms of reduced duplication and increased quality of inspections.

In contrast, almost half the respondents from the industry were positive about the proposal. Many of the responses commented that this would help to improve welfare, as the standards would be higher and the inspections undertaken by experts. In addition, it was highlighted that this would be particularly positive for national companies that currently work with a large number of LAs, as well as smaller companies, such as home boarding, where additional regulations are seen as burdensome. Just under a third of the industry disagreed with the proposal.

A number of respondents commented specifically on the greyhound industry, as this was referred to in the question. This was not the subject of the consultation and so these responses will not be discussed.

b) Voluntary accreditation

Question 15: To what extent do you think sector-led UKAS-accredited certification schemes could improve animal welfare in unlicensed areas? If so, what would work best and how could this process be encouraged?



Similar to the previous question, the most common response to this question was 'don't know', with 43% of responses. 38% of respondents were positive about the proposal, while 17% were negative, and 2% didn't respond. Of those that answered 'don't know', many commented that they didn't understand the question or know enough about the area to comment, but many others explained that they were undecided on the value of the proposal, rather than that they didn't understand it.

A lot of respondents that did respond did not seem to understand the question fully. Some respondents thought that we were suggesting UKAS accreditation as an alternative to licensing for currently licensed activities, as in Question 14. Some of these respondents reiterated that Kennel Club assured breeders should be exempt from licensing, however, this question actually referred to areas that *are not currently licensed*.

The most common theme in the responses was that unlicensed areas should be licensed. Many respondents commented that any activity related to animals should require a licence, including pet ownership. Others highlighted specific activities that should be licensed, such as livery yards or dog grooming.

“If animal welfare is the important issue here, then I see no reason why the full licensing process should not be extended to cover other ancillary trades and organisations. The document quotes “a burden” on these businesses/charities, and while this is clearly important, it should not override animal welfare issues.”

Many of these respondents mentioned that whilst extending licensing to all animal activities would be preferable, encouraging sector-led accreditation schemes would still be a move in the right direction or ‘the next best option’. Some respondents highlighted that LA licensing could be cheaper than UKAS accredited schemes, and so extending the licensing system to these other activities could be more efficient.

Many of the respondents that disagreed had concerns about the effectiveness of self-regulation. Others commented that a voluntary scheme would not make a difference, as only establishments with high welfare/best practice would join these schemes.

“The responsible persons will get themselves accredited and those who are not responsible and possibly not be to standard will not.”

Several respondents highlighted that whilst this could be beneficial for animal welfare, the costs may be prohibitive for small businesses, particularly if this became a mandatory requirement. There were concerns about who would decide on the standards to which UKAS would accredit to. Others felt that this was a complex area that warranted a full evidence based review before any decisions are made.

Of those respondents that agreed with the proposal, many commented that this would help to improve welfare and provide a mark of assurance of businesses. It was not felt that this would be overly burdensome relative to the potential benefits.

“I am aware of many unlicensed providers in my area who are 'getting away with it' simply because of lack of resources at the council. I would welcome the opportunity to become accredited and help to stamp out the problem.”

Some respondents agreed with the principle, but only if it is enforced or regulated by the Government, or as long as it included robust inspections.

Regarding suggestions for how this process could be encouraged, the most common theme was the need for publicity and the education of the general public about the system. It was suggested that the Government should carry out an advertising campaign to encourage people to look for UKAS accreditation. A rating system similar to that used for food hygiene was suggested, with 5 stars indicating an outstanding establishment, and one star indicating that they just meet the minimum standards.

Some respondents commented that there would be a need for data sharing between LAs and UKAS accredited bodies. Other suggestions included that LAs should publish a list of accredited businesses on their websites, or that there should be a central online database that people could use to search for accredited organisations.

Almost half of the LAs and animal welfare organisations agreed with this proposal, although about 20% thought that these activities should ideally become licensed. Around a third of LAs and a quarter of welfare organisations were unsure about the value of the proposal. Over half of the industry respondents were positive about this proposal, and 30% undecided.

Additional responses

In addition to the consultation responses, we received 27 emails from members of the public about the proposals. A number of general points were raised in these emails:

- All dog breeding should be licensed
- Pet shops should be banned from selling animals
- Online pet sales should be banned
- All pet sales should be licensed
- Concerns about the perceived low level of expertise of LA inspectors
- Concerns about the impact of licensing on small hobby breeders

We also received a number of letters and emails from organisations. Key points raised by these organisations were:

- Small sanctuaries and rehoming charities could be negatively affected by encouraging sector-led UKAS accreditation, as these organisations may not be able to afford such accreditation. It was recommended that a registration scheme may be more appropriate for smaller organisations.
- Concerns about the quality and applicability of the Model Conditions, particularly in relation to home boarders.
- Concerns over a lack of enforcement and the high numbers of unlicensed establishments.
- Lack of consistency between LAs, particularly in fees. Concerns were raised that many LA fees are prohibitively high, which means that establishments don't apply for licences. A number of respondents commented that veterinarian inspections should not be mandatory, as this increases the licence cost considerably.
- Concerns about lack of expertise among LA inspectors. It was suggested that required qualifications/training for inspectors could be stated in the Model Conditions. Authorities without an approved inspector could then 'buy-in' an inspector from an adjacent LA when required.

- A point was raised about livestock breeders, who can fall under the Pet Animals Act, but whom would not be able to be assessed according to the current Pet Vending Model Conditions.
- A call for licensing to cover all commercial animal activities, as defined under HMRC's Badges of Trade
- The issuing of licence numbers which would be required by law to be included on pet sales advertising.
- A comment that the dog breeding legislation should only cover establishments that **sell** the puppies, and therefore not include those breeding for their own use, such as farmers, game keepers or hobby breeders.
- Increased regulation was proposed to cover rehoming centres and pet fairs.
- There was a response from the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association raising concerns that Guide Dogs should be exempt from some of the requirements as they do not sell their puppies.
- The RCVS called for the mandatory inspection of all veterinary practices to be incorporated into the regulations. They also recommended the continuation of annual vet inspections for riding establishments, and the creation of a list of competent vets for the inspection of dog breeding facilities.

In addition to the responses from individual organisations, a number of responses from groups of organisations were received. The key points raised were as follows:

- A proposed risk-based system for local authority licensing was provided by the **National Companion Animal Focus Group**. They also expressed concerns over the proposed UKAS exemption.
- The **Pet Advertising Advisory Group (PAAG)** emphasised the importance of incorporating online sales into the licensing scheme. As an additional measure, PAAG recommended a registration system for all those breeding, selling or dealing in pets, and that registration numbers should be a mandatory requirement on adverts. PAAG also suggested that 'a centralised, publicly accessible list of registered and licenced sellers of pets should be kept or facilitated by Defra to enable websites and buyers to check the legitimacy of the seller.'
- The **Companion Animal Sector Council (CASC)**, the **Canine and Feline Sector Group (CFSG)**, the **NCAFG** and a combined response from the **British Veterinary Association**, **British Small Animal Veterinary Association** and **British Veterinary Zoological Society** were also supportive of a registration system with an online database.

- **CASC** argued that animal rescues, sanctuaries and performing animals be brought under the animal establishments licensing scheme.
- A joint response was received on behalf of the **Ornamental Aquatic Trade Association** (OATA), the **Pet Industry Federation** (PIF) and the **Reptile and Exotic Pet Trade Association** (REPTA). In their cover letter, these organisations stated that the ‘overriding principle should be that any activity which has a commercial aspect involving animals should be regulated, preferably by licensing’. Inconsistency between LAs and a lack of expertise of inspectors was also raised as a key issue, and support provided for a UKAS accreditation model, but only if LAs could uphold the same standards of regulation to ensure consistency across the country.
- Concerns about the competence of LA inspectors were also raised by the **CFSG**.

Next steps

Defra is very grateful to all those who took the time to respond to this consultation.

Overall, the responses were very positive about updating the licensing system for animal establishments, which has reassured us that we are taking the right approach. Over the next few months, Regulations will be drafted regarding the specific proposals, which will take into account the views expressed in the consultation.