



Our Ref: ATIC3082

[Redacted]
{By Email}

4 May 2023

Dear [Redacted]

PROVISION OF REQUESTED INFORMATION

Thank you for your request for information about illegal puppy imports, which the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) received on 4 April 2023. Your request has been handled under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000.

The information you requested and the response is detailed below:

“For the calendar years 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022

How many puppies were detected at our ports of entry that were suspected of being smuggled here illegally (illegally landed).

From previous requests it would appear that the data relates to detections at Eurotunnel and the Port of Dover.

Can you please specify if other ports are included and to list them please?”

Please see the below table showing the suspected illegal puppies that have been imported into Great Britain.

Year	Total	Dover	Eurotunnel	Coquelles	Other	Harwich	Blank
2022	524	227	106	167	23	0	1
2021	1207	602	285	283	4	33	0
2020	1352	597	127	177	0	5	0
2019	397	226	69	94	2	6	0
2018	191	72	23	17	2	4	73

The definition of ‘illegally landed’ does not necessarily mean the animal was smuggled into Great Britain. Our definition of an illegal landing is any dog, cat or ferret that is landed in Great Britain which does not meet the import requirements and therefore

requires quarantine under the Rabies Importation Order. While these figures may include some smuggled animals, it also includes:

- pet animals that arrive at UK airports and during the pets check are found to be non-compliant
- animals that are found 'inland' and after a trading standards investigation are found to be non-compliant

Whilst the number of 'illegally landed' dogs includes smuggled puppies, it also includes animals that are found to be non-compliant with import requirements at the border or inland – for example, their pet passport does not show a valid rabies vaccination.

While APHA do record whether the animal is a puppy on our licencing spreadsheet we rely on Trading Standards to advise us if an animal is a puppy when they submit the paperwork to us. Trading Standards only inform APHA of the non-compliance, this includes underage dogs, which would be recorded upon receipt of the paperwork.

The information provided is a true reflection of the information that APHA have access to. We cannot guarantee the accuracy of this data, as we can only rely on the information that has been input into external customer facing systems by third parties.

Please note the following additional information:

- The Government takes the issue of puppy smuggling very seriously and we operate one of the most rigorous and robust pet travel checking regimes in Europe. It is an abhorrent trade which causes suffering to animals and puts the health of pets and people in the UK at risk.
- All pets entering Great Britain on approved routes and are subject to individual checks. This ensures the animals meet import health requirements, have the correct documentation and are old enough to travel. The minimum age for importing a puppy from abroad is 15 weeks.
- Pet owners can help by only purchasing puppies from reputable breeders and checking on its health history - or consider adopting from a UK-based rescue centre instead.
- The strict requirements set out under the commercial regime help to protect our high animal health and welfare standards, by helping to ensure that the animals are fit to travel, by providing traceability for the animals moved, and by ensuring that the welfare of the animals is more heavily regulated during transport.
- All commercial imports of cats, dogs and ferrets from all third countries (except EU) may only be imported through an approved Border Control Post (BCP), currently at London Heathrow, London Gatwick and Edinburgh Airport. All live animals have 100% documentary, Identity and physical checks.

APHA also intercept consignments upon entry to Great Britain based on intelligence and will refuse entry or detain animals entering Great Britain in breach of the import rules at the cost of the importer

Information disclosed in response to this FOI request is releasable to the public. In keeping with the spirit and effect of the FOI and the government's Transparency Agenda, this letter and the information disclosed to you may be placed on GOV.UK, together with

any related information that will provide a key to its wider context. No information identifying you will be placed on the GOV.UK website.

An Annex is attached which explains the copyright that applies to the information being released to you and contact details should you be unhappy with the service you have received.

If you have any queries about this letter, please contact the Access to Information Team at the email address below or postal address at the top of this letter.

Yours sincerely

ACCESS TO INFORMATION TEAM

Email: enquiries@apha.gov.uk

Annex

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Complaints

If you are unhappy with the service you have received in relation to your request, you may make a complaint or appeal against our decision under section 17(7) of the FOIA or under regulation 11 of the EIRs, as applicable, within 40 working days of the date of this letter. Please write to the Access to Information Manager at the address at the top of this letter or email enquiries@apha.gov.uk and the team will arrange for an internal review of your case.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, section 50 of the FOIA and regulation 18 of the EIRs gives you the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) for a decision. Please note that generally the ICO cannot make a decision unless you have first exhausted APHA's own complaints procedure. The ICO can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

Please click [here](#) for further contact details.