



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

**Veterinary Guidance for the completion of
VCN01
Update to Dangerous Dogs Act 1991
May 2024**



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Contents

Background	1
Updates	1
Key Dates.....	1
Role of the Veterinary Surgeon	1
Payment.....	3
Instructions for Vets.....	3
Contact.....	3

Background

The Government has added XL Bully dogs to the list of banned breeds under section 1(1) of the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991. In England and Wales, owners are only able to keep these dogs if they have successfully received a Certificate of Exemption. Applications for a Certificate of Exemption to keep an XL Bully dog closed on 31 January 2024.

As part of the exemption conditions, owners must ensure that their dog has been permanently neutered. Male dogs must be neutered through castration, and female dogs must be spayed. The procedure must be carried out by a Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS)-registered veterinary surgeon, or an RCVS-registered veterinary surgeon must confirm that it has been previously neutered. Evidence of this must be provided to Defra via a [Confirmation of Neutering Form \(VCN01\) form](#).

Updates

The date by which dogs that were 12 months or older on 31 January 2024 must be neutered remains 30 June 2024, but owners now have until 26 July 2024 to send Defra a Confirmation of Neutering Form (VCN01). The form must show that the dog had been neutered on or before 30 June 2024.

This applies in England and Wales.

Key Dates

Owners must provide Defra with evidence that their XL Bully dog has been neutered on or before the relevant deadline. The deadline depends on the dog's age on 31 January 2024.

Dogs age on 31 January 2024	Deadline for receipt of form
12 months old or older	26 July 2024 (but the dog must have been neutered by 30 June 2024)
At least 7 months old, but less than 12 months old	31 December 2024
Less than 7 months old	30 June 2025

Role of the Veterinary Surgeon

The VCN01 form must be completed in part by the owner and in part by the veterinary surgeon who performs the neutering of the dog or determines that the dog has been neutered. It is also acceptable for neutering to be carried out by one vet in the practice and

the form completed by another after completing internal or in-practice verification checks. Separate guidance for owners is available on gov.uk.

The vet's role when completing the VCN01 form is to:

- confirm that the dog presented to them has been surgically neutered
- record the dog's microchip number
- if the dog is unfit to be microchipped, confirm that a veterinary certificate of exemption from microchipping has been issued
- if the dog was not microchipped at the time of neutering, the Veterinary Surgeon should check that the dog identified on the VCN01 matches the dog in the related Certificate of Exemption
- sign the declaration on the form and add your RCVS number and practice details.

The veterinary surgeon's declaration can be completed based on either:

- the veterinary surgeon having carried out neutering on the dog in question, or,
- the veterinary surgeon having used an appropriate method to confirm neutering.

The table below sets out some suggested options to ascertain whether a dog has been surgically castrated or spayed.

	Male	Female
Clinical records and physical examination	Hormone testing/serology: GnRH- or hCG-response test	Hormone testing: AMH and progesterone testing
Ultrasound	Laparoscopy subject to additional criteria below*	Laparoscopy subject to additional criteria below*

However, it is up to the Veterinary Surgeon to decide on the best methodology to use, depending upon circumstances and with regard to the [RCVS Code of Professional Conduct requirements](#), including that an individual Veterinary Surgeon should operate within their area of competency. In some instances, the vet may need to use more than one method to ascertain that a dog has been castrated or spayed and is no longer able to breed.

Invasive methods should only be used as a last resort or if the dog is otherwise due surgery, and ***in addition**, if the owner has agreed in advance that if during a laparoscopy or laparotomy the dog is found not to be neutered, neutering by surgical means, for example laparoscopy or laparotomy, is carried as part of this confirmatory option.

Veterinary practices should direct any queries from owners on both the wider ban and exemption scheme to the relevant [gov.uk pages](#).

Payment

It is the owner's responsibility to cover the costs of neutering or any necessary veterinary time and/or procedures to determine whether the dog is neutered.

Instructions for Vets

1. Once neutering has been confirmed, please complete the relevant sections on VCN01 as accurately as possible and in compliance with the [RCVS principles of certification](#).
2. The information you provide is important to reduce possible cases of owners falsely declaring they have met the exemption conditions.
3. Advise the owner to submit a scanned copy or photo of the form, either by email to XLBneuteringcerts@defra.gov.uk or by post to:

Dogs Index (Neutering Forms)
PO Box 68250
London
SW1P 9XG

If the owner sends the form by email, we recommend they include the dog's Certificate of Exemption number in the subject line and include all scans or photos of the form in a single email.

If sending by post, we recommend owners use a signed-for or special delivery service.

Defra must receive the form by the relevant deadline.

Contact

Veterinary practices should direct any queries from owners on both the wider ban and exemption scheme to the relevant [gov.uk pages](#).