



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

20th December 2023

Dear Constituent,

RE: XL BULLY DOGS

Thank you for your recent correspondence in respect of your concerns about the decision to ban the XL Bully breed. I have read your comments with interest.

While I recognise that this is a sensitive issue, the Government has a responsibility to maintain public safety. XL Bully dogs are large, muscular animals which can also be unpredictable and uncontrollable, as well as highly protective to their owners and aggressive to others. There has been an increase in dog attacks in recent years, with the XL Bully disproportionately involved in this rise. Ministers have therefore added XL Bully breed types to the list of breeds prohibited by the *Dangerous Dogs Act 1991*. Ministers firmly believe that this will reduce the risk to the public.

Regarding breed classification, a group of experts was convened to define the physical characteristics of the breed type. This included representatives from the police, local authorities, devolved administrations and animal welfare experts. The official definition of the XL Bully breed provides clear assessment criteria for owners and enforcement authorities.

I understand that it is the owner or keeper's responsibility to identify whether their dog may be an XL Bully; owners need to check the dog's physical characteristics against the definition. The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) has recommended taking a precautionary approach, and therefore, owners who are unsure if they have an XL Bully should comply with all the new requirements for this dog type. The full definition can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/official-definition-of-an-xl-bully-dog/official-definition-of-an-xl-bully-dog>.

From the 31st December 2023, all owners of XL Bully breed types must comply with strict conditions. Breeding, selling, exchanging, gifting, abandoning, or allowing these dogs to stray, will be banned. XL Bully dogs should be kept on a lead and muzzled in public.

Owners who wish to legally keep their dogs have until the 31st January 2024 to register their dog on the 'Index of Exempted Dogs'. They will receive a Certificate of Exemption and will need to comply with the requirements of the index, including that all dogs on it must be neutered (there is a longer deadline to allow for younger dogs to be safely neutered). Owners must hold public liability insurance and ensure that it is microchipped, kept on a lead, muzzled in public, and kept in a secure place so it cannot escape. Further details can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/prepare-for-the-ban-on-xl-bully-dogs>.



Where owners do not wish to keep their XL Bully dogs, they can choose to euthanise them. The Government will pay a contribution of £200 towards the costs associated with euthanasia where this takes place before the 1st February 2024. Further details on how to claim this contribution can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/claim-compensation-for-an-xl-bully-dog>.

The transition period for owners to apply for an exemption is now open and application forms can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/apply-for-a-certificate-of-exemption-to-keep-an-xl-bully-dog>.

More broadly, I recognise your concerns around the need to promote responsible dog ownership of all dogs. DEFRA's 'Responsible Dog Ownership' working group, involving the police, local authorities, and other key stakeholders, has considered all aspects of tackling irresponsible dog ownership, in particular improved data collection and reporting, dog training, consistency of enforcement practices and education and communications to encourage responsible dog ownership. I look forward to reading the group's recommendations in due course.

The Government must balance the views of those who want to repeal or amend breed specific legislation within the *Dangerous Dogs Act 1991* with their responsibility to ensure that the public is protected from dog attacks. Given this rise in fatalities and other attacks, Ministers have been clear that decisive action is needed, aimed specifically at the XL Bully.

Once again, thank you for having taken the time to contact me and if I can ever be of any further assistance to you then please do not hesitate to contact me again.

With best wishes,

**TOM PURSGLOVE MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE**