

fee, is generally accepted by local authorities and animal welfare organisations. *The Government's own working party, which reported in 1976, made similar recommendations, with a proposed annual licence fee of £5.00.*

2) Statutory Responsibility

Existing dog-control functions should be transferred from the police to local authorities, the Dog Warden service being, except in areas granted exemption through lack of need, a mandatory local authority service run by district councils.

3) Licence Fee

There should be a universal licence fee which would provide local authorities with the income to provide the service. An annual fee of about £5.00 should be sufficient. (This sum is based on the costs incurred by local authorities who have already set up Dog Warden services, allowing one Warden per 100,000 inhabitants).

4) Exemptions

Exemptions from the fee should be granted for guide dogs for the blind and hearing dogs for the deaf. Consideration should also be given to exemption for the needy, especially the aged.

5) Licence Acquisition

A dog should be licensed as soon as it is acquired or at the age of four months, whichever is the earlier.

6) Identification

All dogs should be identified, preferably by means of a tattooed number in the ear or inside the thigh.

7) Neutered Dogs

After the first year of life, dogs which have been neutered should, on production by owners of a veterinary certificate to that effect and positive, permanent identification, qualify for a reduced licence fee.

8) Age of Licence Holder

Licence holders should be at least 17 years of age.

9) Short-term Accommodation for Stray Dogs

Many police stations provide kennelling facilities for stray dogs. In most instances this accommodation is used only for (and is suitable only for) overnight or weekend use prior to a dog being moved to suitable kennels. It is, however, of great value, particularly in large urban areas. It is important that members of the public, RSPCA Inspectors, veterinary surgeons etc should have access to such accommodation in areas where local authorities do not maintain a 24-hour Dog Warden service.

10) Long-term Accommodation

Stray dogs apprehended by Dog Wardens should be housed for the statutory seven days in kennels from which the rehoming can take place of any dog not claimed by the owner.

direction and shortly produce some discernible improvement. *However, for as long as the breeding of dogs in excessive numbers goes on in this country, the problem cannot ever be resolved.*

Over the years the Society has made strenuous efforts through publicity, education and neutering campaigns to awaken the public to the suffering and waste of life caused by indiscriminately allowing pets to breed. People must be persuaded that so many unwanted dogs have to be destroyed each year that breeding must be considered as normally out of the question, and resorted to only under very clear and specific conditions.

The Society's efforts have produced some positive results — more bitches are now being spayed and possibly there are fewer unplanned matings. But, on the other hand, the appearance and proliferation of commercial puppy dealers and puppy 'farms' has increased not only the over-production of animals but also the temptation to impulse buyers. When no fewer than 170 licences for people to breed puppies can be issued by just one District Council in Wales, there is something desperately wrong with the regulations.

As a first step, the Government should amend the Breeding of Dogs Act to make it more practical, more efficient and more enforceable. This Act, which has been in force since 1973, is recognised by most people as being of little practical use in either controlling the amount of breeding which is carried on or improving the standards of the breeders involved.

THE RSPCA'S MESSAGE TO THE GOVERNMENT

The RSPCA, a charity, has to shoulder an enormous burden as a result of the stray and unwanted dog problem throughout the country and this burden has now become totally unacceptable, absorbing as it does so much of the Society's time, effort and money.

Why should what is a desperate national problem be left to charity? What are Governments for?

DOG-CONTROL LEGISLATION IS DESPERATELY NEEDED

Immediately the official announcement of the Government's intention to do away with the dog licensing system was made, the Chairman of the Society's Council, Mrs Joan Felthouse, wrote the following letter on behalf of the Society to the Secretary of State for the Environment, the Rt Hon Nicholas Ridley, MP:

Dear Minister,

Your announcement regarding the Government's intention to abolish the dog licensing system has caused the RSPCA considerable dismay and anger.

The well-publicised 'leak' of this decision several weeks ago precipitated strong condemnation from several organisations such as the British Veterinary Association, JACOPIS, the National Farmers' Union, the Institute of Environmental Health Officers and ourselves. You will be aware of the letter that was written to the Prime Minister by our Chairman, Anelay Hart. It was our hope that the Government would reconsider its decision and that some sensible proposals would be put forward to try to solve the stray dog problem, as well as the anomaly of the dog licence fee.

We were encouraged in this view by a cordial and constructive meeting that we attended on 24th June with your Parliamentary Under-Secretary, Mrs Angela Rumbold, CBE, MP. It now seems that the exchange of views that took place at that meeting was a waste of effort.

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Two more 'Statistics' for the RSPCA; strong dog-control legislation would reduce the size of the problem and the suffering inflicted on unwanted and abandoned dogs

OVER-BREEDING — THE KEY FACTOR

The RSPCA's proposals, stated above, would if implemented be at least a step in the right