

PUPPY SMUGGLING

A TRAGEDY IGNORED

Investigation into the continuing abuse of the Pet Travel Scheme
and the illegal entry of dogs into Great Britain



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FOREWORD

More than five years on from the changes to the Pet Travel Scheme in 2012, the unintended consequences of which effectively invited unscrupulous commercial dealers to traffic underage puppies into Great Britain for sale, Dogs Trust can report that, very sadly, little has changed.

Despite two in-depth investigations, one in 2014 and one in 2015, highlighting the ease with which underage puppies can be brought into Great Britain and numerous recommendations to Government and other agencies on how to get a grip on the situation, there is no doubt that the trade is still very much alive and kicking.

Since our last report in 2015, Dogs Trust has put its money where its mouth is. We launched the Puppy Pilot scheme in late 2015 to try to disrupt the puppy trade by underwriting the costs of illegally imported puppies through quarantine in order to facilitate their seizure, and then responsibly rehoming them through our network of rehoming centres. The Pilot has been hugely successful, allowing Government agency staff to concentrate on their jobs, safe in the knowledge that any puppies they seize will be cared for by Dogs Trust. Since its launch (up to May 2017) the Pilot had successfully rehabilitated and rehomed some 469 puppies.

Dogs Trust has also been working tirelessly to bring this issue up the Government's agenda, hosting a House of Commons reception for 63 MPs and Peers on the issue of puppy smuggling, and briefing MPs at individual meetings over the course of 2016. We have fed into the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), Scottish Government and Welsh Government consultation on the review of The Non-Commercial Movement of Pet Animals Order 2011 and look forward to the Government response shortly. After the EU Referendum, we shared with all MPs our position on the opportunities for improving the UK's pet travel legislation as a result of exiting the EU.

In the summer of 2016 we also launched a public awareness campaign to highlight to the end buyer the harrowing plight of illegally imported puppies. Our message reached thousands of people through coverage in national and regional print and broadcast media, and through social media.

We have presented our reports to the European Commission, including the Animal Health and Animal Welfare Unit within DG SANTE as well as the cabinet of the European Commissioner for Health and Food Safety. We have also shared our reports with the national government representations of all 28 EU Member States in Brussels and all 751 Members of the European Parliament.



We have engaged with Defra, the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA), and the carriers facilitating travel (Eurotunnel and ferry companies) at numerous stakeholder meetings and yet still there remains a reluctance to acknowledge the scale and depth of the problem, or to implement any effective change.

Our third investigation aims to prove once and for all that, despite what the Government wants the British public to believe, the problem of illegally imported puppies has not gone away and remains as serious an issue for animal welfare and public health in 2017 as it did in 2012.

Paula Boyden

Paula Boyden BVetMed MRCVS,
Veterinary Director

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Our third investigation continues on from where our last report left off. Highlighting that despite all our efforts in raising this issue on the Government's agenda, little has been done to halt the illegal trade in puppies.

After our second investigation we were delighted to hear that the Lithuanian State Veterinary Service had implemented new protocols in July 2015 aimed at tightening up procedures to obtain pet passports. Now, only Government appointed vets can issue pet passports. We hoped that this would deal a significant blow to the ease with which Lithuanian breeders and dealers could obtain counterfeit pet passports. However, although there is an apparent decline in Lithuanian puppies travelling under the Pet Travel Scheme (PETS) to Great Britain – official figures from Defra suggest a decline from 2,271 in 2015 to 726 in 2016 - our latest investigation reveals that puppies from Lithuania continue to be illegally imported into Great Britain despite the crackdown.

And despite the fact that official Government figures show that no dogs were imported commercially from Lithuania to Great Britain under the Balai Directive in 2016 and only two in 2015, our investigators found Lithuanian puppies openly for sale on the internet in Great Britain, with breeders clearly having used the non-commercial Pet Travel Scheme to import puppies.

The investigation also explores the high numbers of puppies being imported from Poland. We expanded our investigation into Poland in order to demonstrate that the puppy smuggling issue extends across Central and Eastern Europe, beyond the three countries (Hungary, Lithuania and Romania) that our two previous investigations had explored. Figures from the Dogs Trust Puppy Pilot also indicated that Poland had become a significant source country with over 20% of intercepted puppies originating from there.

Our investigation in Poland was very reminiscent of Lithuania two years ago. We did not have to look hard at all to find breeders and vets willing to break the law to get underage puppies to Great Britain.

This time around we also got aboard a Lithuanian Postbus (which transport people and goods) and made the same journey thousands of puppies have taken all the way across Europe and into Great Britain. We hope that the footage of this journey, over 1,000 miles and 29 hours in length, with no opportunity for the puppies to exercise or to toilet, with minimal, if any, food or water will provide a shocking visual image of the cruelty of the trade.

Our fake dog also makes a reappearance, highlighting the urgent need for customs checks to be more than just document checks. Central to our 2015 investigation where 'Mitzi' was smuggled into Great Britain on three separate occasions without anyone realising she wasn't a real dog, this year Mitzi's friend 'Charly' made it freely through the border twice more – once at Eurotunnel and once at Dover - without being stopped. No visual checks were made.

We wanted a fake dog to make the journey again in order to prove that really nothing at all had changed in the two years since our last report. We are pleased that the Government is now talking about the issue, but we are deeply concerned that there has not been more action on the ground to solve the problems.

The investigation also revealed the key link in the chain – the transporters – who were willing to transport underage puppies and advise on when to travel to avoid detection, and would only take puppies in ones and twos to avoid arousing suspicion.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO BRING AN END TO PUPPY SMUGGLING

IMMEDIATE ACTION

- 🐾 The focus on enforcement of PETS must be shifted from carriers to Government agencies. This should include a requirement for there to be sufficient out-of-hours and weekend cover at ports by Government agencies
- 🐾 Introduce prison sentences to reflect the seriousness of the crimes committed and deter those involved in illegally importing dogs

POST-BREXIT ACTION

- 🐾 When the UK leaves the EU, revised legislation must be introduced by Defra as a priority to effectively regulate pet travel and commercial pet movements
- 🐾 Reintroduce a requirement for a rabies blood (titre) test before entry into the UK, together with a wait period which is in line with the incubation period of rabies
- 🐾 Reintroduce a requirement for dogs and cats to be treated against ticks before entering the UK

“Despite all our efforts in raising this issue on the Government agenda, little has been done to halt the illegal trade in puppies”



SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

- 🐾 Puppies continue to be bred in large numbers in Central and Eastern Europe, sometimes in horrific conditions
- 🐾 Puppies are subjected to long journeys in cramped, filthy conditions with little or no food or water
- 🐾 Vets in Lithuania and Poland falsifying data on pet passports allowing puppies under the legal minimum age of 15 weeks to travel into Great Britain under PETS
- 🐾 Lithuanian vets suggesting it is easier to smuggle a medicated (sedated) puppy into Great Britain following the change in passport protocol. One vet went so far as to sell us the sedative for the puppy
- 🐾 Some experienced traders are importing puppies when they are 12-14 weeks of age, instead of below 10 weeks, making it much harder for the authorities to assess their age. However, puppies much younger than this are still being detected at the borders too
- 🐾 Puppies travelling in ones and twos rather than litters of four or five, again so as not to raise the suspicion of the authorities
- 🐾 Lithuanian puppies openly for sale in Great Britain, despite Balai Directive figures showing that no dogs have travelled to Great Britain for commercial reasons



SUMMARY OF THE ON-THE-GROUND INVESTIGATION ACTIVITY

- 🐾 Tracked a consignment of puppies from its source in Lithuania all the way across Europe, through the border and into Great Britain - a journey of over 1,000 miles with no food and minimal water
- 🐾 Successfully smuggled a child's toy dog 'Charly' through the British border on two out of two occasions without anyone noticing he was not a real dog
- 🐾 Filmed a vet in Lithuania selling us sedatives for puppies to allow them to be smuggled through the British border i.e. not declared at all
- 🐾 Filmed vets in Poland and Lithuania willing to falsify passports to say a puppy was actually older than it was
- 🐾 Purchased pet passports with false birth dates and vaccination records
- 🐾 Recorded transporters willing to carry underage puppies into Great Britain and advising our investigators that shipments of puppies should be small so as not to arouse suspicion
- 🐾 Identified sellers in Great Britain offering imported Lithuanian puppies for sale which had travelled on the non-commercial Pet Travel Scheme



THE CURRENT SITUATION

Since our last investigation there seems little sign that the trade in illegally imported puppies is abating. Why is this? A key reason is the huge demand in Great Britain for fashionable breeds such as French Bulldogs, Dachshunds and Pugs, and the limited supply of such puppies from reputable breeders in the UK. Great Britain remains a particular target for dealers of these puppies because of the huge prices people are willing to pay for particular breeds and the relative cheapness with which they can be produced in certain countries. The table opposite highlights the prices paid for particular breeds in countries across the EU.

Our campaigning over the years has, however, prompted some developments in the trade. An increasing number of transporters are now obtaining Type 2 licences for their vehicles (which means they have been inspected by a government appointed organisation and must meet some basic requirements) making it much harder to seize puppies on welfare grounds. Some transporters, concerned by the increase in focus on PETS movements, are also now using the commercial route under the rules of the Balai Directive. Whilst it is encouraging that this (correct) route is being used, it is also of great concern as the enforcement of the Balai Directive is carried out at the points of origin and destination, not at the port. Only a very small number of consignments are ever checked.

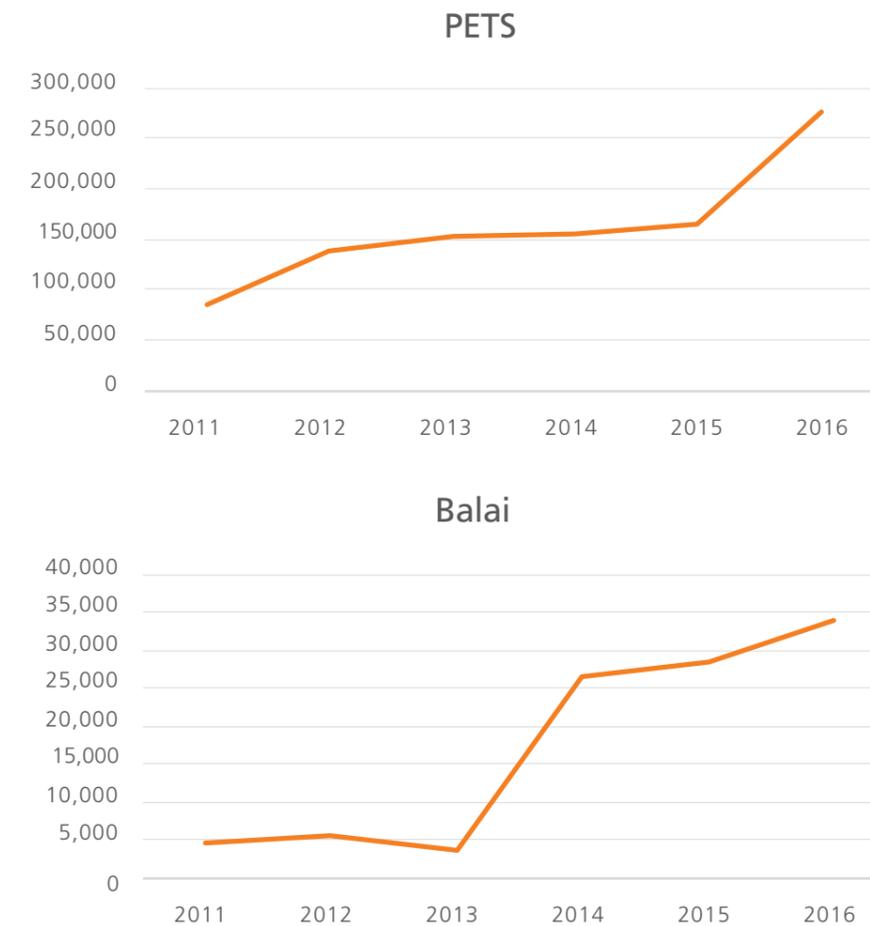
“Great Britain remains a target for dealers of these puppies because of the huge prices people are willing to pay for particular breeds”

Prices paid for puppies across the EU

Country	French Bulldog	Dachshund	Pug
Sweden	£1,870	£1,450	£1,900
UK	£1,570	£1,000	£880
France	£1,300	£1,500	£1,500
Germany	£1,300	£900	£1,800
Poland	£685	£598	£560
Lithuania	£610	£375	£700
Hungary	£520	£520	£520
Romania	£460	£100	£280
Czech Republic	£450	£380	£470

Source: EU Dog & Cat Alliance Members

The total number of dogs imported to Great Britain under the Pet Travel Scheme and Balai between 2011 and 2016



Unfortunately, there has been a change in the way official data on the number of dogs travelling to Great Britain is collected, which also presents a rather confusing picture of things. Defra total figures for 2016 highlight some 275,876 dogs coming to Great Britain on the Pet Travel Scheme. However, data provided in response to a Parliamentary Question asking for the breakdown of this data by individual country suggested a total figure of just 83,674. The explanation given for the difference in this figure is a change in the way data has been collected. This does create difficulties for the monitoring of trends in the importation of dogs.¹



¹ <http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2017-04-13/70622>
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2017-03-06/66537/>
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2017-02-07/63358/>
<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2017-01-30/62238/>

SUMMARY OF CHANGES TO THE PET TRAVEL SCHEME

- 🐾 The UK's PETS rules were relaxed in 2012 to harmonise pet travel across Europe – the new rules made it possible for people to travel to Great Britain with puppies as young as 15 weeks old where previously the minimum age of entry was 10 months
- 🐾 Government figures show that the number of dogs entering Great Britain via PETS increased by 61% in the first year of controls being relaxed
- 🐾 The number of dogs entering Great Britain under PETS in 2011 was 85,299 and this figure continues to increase year on year with 152,075 entering in 2013, 164,836 entering in 2015 and 275,876 entering in 2016*
- 🐾 Between 2011 and 2013 the number of dogs coming to Great Britain from Central and Eastern Europe in particular rocketed, with a 780% increase from Lithuania and a 663% increase from Hungary
- 🐾 In December 2014 new EU legislation introduced further changes to attempt to stem the flow of puppies. This included a new minimum age of 12 weeks before a pet can have the rabies vaccine, new pet passports with laminated strips and a requirement for more contact details for vets, and the requirement for owners to travel within five days of their pet's movement (or authorise a named person to do so)
- 🐾 The changes had little effect, and a breeder's ability to authorise a named person to travel with the pet actually made it *easier* for pets to be transported by unethical dealers. Unscrupulous vets have not been deterred and continue to vaccinate puppies under 12 weeks, if at all, and issue fraudulent documentation

* See page 6

ESTIMATED TURNOVER OF A BREEDER WITH 20 FRENCH BULLDOGS IN POLAND



BREEDING BITCHES



PRODUCING ONE LITTER A YEAR WITH 4 PUPS IN EACH

THIS WOULD RESULT IN 80 FRENCH BULLDOG PUPPIES BEING TRANSPORTED TO GREAT BRITAIN EACH YEAR

80



EACH PUP CAN BE SOLD FOR £1,500

THE BREEDER COULD BE TURNING OVER £120,000 A YEAR

CURRENTLY THE PENALTY IF CAUGHT IS A FINE WHICH DOES NOT DETER CRIMINALS. WE ARE CALLING FOR PRISON SENTENCES TO REFLECT THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE CRIMES COMMITTED.

DISEASE RISK

Dogs Trust has no desire to make a scaremongering cry about the risk of rabies to Great Britain but we do have grave concerns about the impact on Great Britain's disease status following the changes to the Pet Travel Scheme.

Whilst rabies is a headline-grabbing disease, we argue that there should in fact be equal, if not greater, concern for several other diseases that potentially pose a threat to both canine and human health.

We are highly concerned about the risk of the tape worm *Echinococcus multilocularis* being introduced to Great Britain. Although covered by the current legislation, our experience is that where owners/traders have not vaccinated dogs against rabies (as found in the course of our investigations) they are also unlikely to have treated them against tapeworm. *Echinococcus multilocularis* is endemic in most of mainland Europe but is not currently found in Great Britain. This parasite can cause alveolar echinococcosis in humans, which significantly impacts the liver, and therefore affects both quality of life and lifespan. The disease is often expensive and complicated to treat, and if left untreated, has potentially fatal consequences. In Switzerland, a study in 2008 estimated that there was a cost of approximately €108,762 per patient treated for alveolar echinococcosis. Assuming an annual 5% increase in medical costs, this would equate to approximately €138,811 today.

Furthermore, the current legislation does not protect against other diseases which are at risk of being introduced into Great Britain as a result of pet travel, such as leishmaniasis (which is potentially zoonotic), ehrlichiosis and babesiosis.

A recent surveillance study of ticks infesting domestic dogs across the UK highlights the importance of appropriate treatment against ticks for dogs travelling outside of the UK. It found that 77% of dogs which had travelled were carrying attached ticks. The importance of tick treatment is also highlighted by the cluster of cases of canine babesiosis which were reported in Essex in March 2016.

ECHINOCOCCUS MULTILOCULARIS

Not currently found in Great Britain, this tapeworm can easily infect dogs. Although it produces no clinical signs in dogs it can cause potentially fatal conditions in humans. EU law states that dogs must receive treatment with wormer between one and five days prior to their return to Great Britain.

BABESIOSIS

Transmitted through ticks, this disease is found in Southern and Central Europe. It acts by damaging and destroying the red blood cells, causing anaemia, lethargy, enlarged spleen and jaundice. This disease can be fatal to dogs.

EHRlichiosis

Transmitted by ticks, this disease is reasonably common in Southern Europe. It acts by damaging the white blood cells and platelets. Signs include enlarged spleen, and nose bleeds and pinpoint skin bleeds are a result of low platelets.

LEISHMANIASIS

This infectious disease is transmitted by sandflies and can be picked up in coastal areas on the Mediterranean. The sandfly that transmits this disease is not present in the UK. A significant number of infected dogs will develop skin lesions and suffer hair loss. If left untreated the disease is fatal, with renal failure the most common cause of death, however symptoms can take years to develop. Leishmaniasis is also zoonotic, meaning it is also a potential health risk to humans.

“Current legislation does not protect against other diseases which are at risk of being introduced into Great Britain as a result of pet travel”

WHAT IS DOGS TRUST DOING?

THE PUPPY PILOT

In December 2015 Dogs Trust made a landmark decision to pledge to provide care and support for illegally imported puppies during their time in quarantine.

One of the issues that continues to arise in the charity's investigations is the lack of resources available to the agencies on the ground at the ports. The charity feared, and still fears, that many puppies are entering the country purely because there isn't sufficient resource available to cover adequate staffing at the ports or the costs of quarantine.

Dogs Trust set up the Puppy Pilot to take unwanted puppies that are seized at the ports through their time in quarantine and onto its rehoming centres where puppies are socialised and rehomed responsibly. By funding the care of the puppies, it empowers the relevant agencies to seize illegally imported puppies, knowing their fate is secure with Dogs Trust. Dogs Trust works hard with the enforcement teams at the port and couldn't have achieved so much with the Puppy Pilot without their support.

The majority of illegally imported puppies come from Hungary, Lithuania, Latvia, and Poland. They are imported via Eurotunnel (arriving in Folkestone) and ferry carriers (arriving in Dover) often underage and with fraudulent paperwork.

Since the Puppy Pilot began in December 2015 to the 17th May 2017, Dogs Trust has taken in and then rehomed 469 underage puppies, the majority of which were 'designer breeds' such as Dachshunds, French Bulldogs, Pugs and Chow Chows. We believe this to be the tip of the iceberg. Tragically 5.2% of the puppies that entered quarantine on the Puppy Pilot have died due to poor health, malnutrition and dehydration, a result of horrendous breeding and transport conditions.

Until Dogs Trust stepped in, seized puppies were at risk of being euthanised or turned away at the borders, which meant prolonging their journey, as many try to re-enter the country at a later time.

The Puppy Pilot has been an overwhelming success, with staff across many agencies reporting the benefits of the scheme and, how it freed them up to do their jobs without the expense of funding the quarantine procedure.



PAYING THE PRICE

The impact of the trade goes beyond the huge welfare implications for the dogs; it affects unsuspecting members of the public too. In the first year of the Puppy Pilot, the average cost to Dogs Trust of a puppy going through quarantine, providing necessary medical treatment and on to be rehomed was £849. Similar costs are being incurred by members of the public who have unwittingly bought an illegally imported puppy. But whatever the cost of quarantine and vet treatments, there is no price that can be put on the emotional cost of introducing a puppy to your family only for it to die within a few weeks.



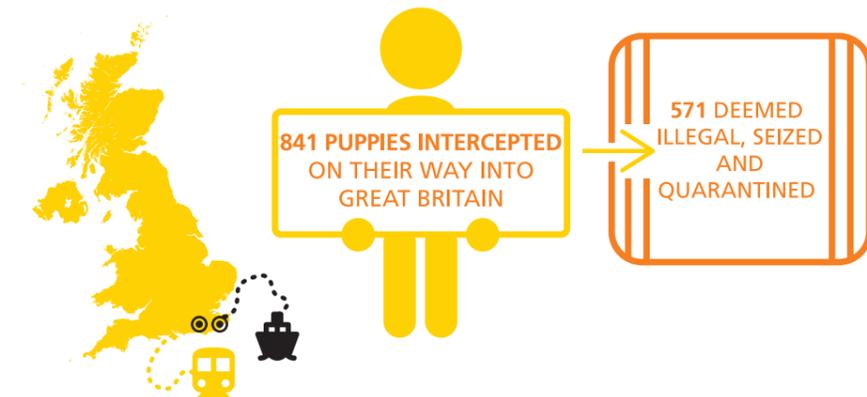
ENGLISH BULLDOG CASE STUDY

In March 2017 a litter of five English Bulldogs was seized at Dover on suspicion of being underage. A veterinary examination confirmed that they were probably just four weeks of age – eleven weeks younger than they should have been to travel to Great Britain. Shockingly a number of the puppies still had their umbilical cords attached. Their microchips had been taped to their carriers and the transporters had brought implantation equipment with them so they could insert the chips if needed. Fortunately these puppies ended up on the Puppy Pilot scheme. They received urgent medical attention and throughout their time in quarantine had an extensive socialisation programme to acclimatise them to life in the real world. Many puppies are not so lucky and it is likely that without the care and attention they received on the Puppy Pilot, some of these puppies would have died and the others may have had severe behavioural problems due to their poor start in life.

PUG CASE STUDY

A litter of four Pugs was seized at Dover in May 2017, on suspicion of being underage. The puppies, aged around four to five weeks old, were transported over a thousand miles from the Czech Republic to Great Britain in a small wicker basket. The basket had a layer of cling film wrapped across it, with just one small breathing hole made in the top. Upon their arrival into Great Britain, the puppies were taken to quarantine as part of the Puppy Pilot to receive urgent veterinary care. None of the puppies had been weaned, indicating that they had been taken from their mother far too young. Staff worked round-the-clock to feed and care for them, and whilst three of the puppies began to improve, one of the puppies showed worrying neurological and physical issues. Staff treated the puppy but his health deteriorated and he died.

THE PUPPY PILOT STATISTICS



96% OF PUPPIES SEIZED WERE DEEMED TO BE TOO YOUNG TO HAVE HAD THE RABIES VACCINATION

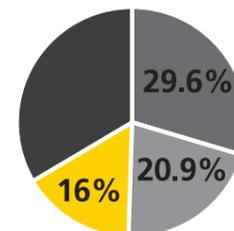
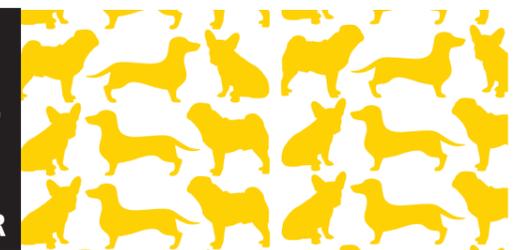
DOGS TRUST PAID FOR THE QUARANTINE AND MEDICAL COSTS OF 469 OF THESE PUPPIES AT AN AVERAGE COST OF £849 PER PUPPY AND SUCCESSFULLY REHOMED THEM



26 PUPPIES DIED BEFORE REHOMING DUE TO POOR BREEDING, ILLNESS AND CONDITIONS OF TRAVEL



FRENCH BULLDOGS, DACHSHUNDS AND PUGS MAKE UP 55.7% OF ALL PUPPIES INTERCEPTED AT THE GREAT BRITAIN BORDER



66.5% OF INTERCEPTED PUPPIES COME FROM... HUNGARY POLAND LITHUANIA

(STATISTICS FOR DECEMBER 2015 TO 17TH MAY 2017)

THE BREXIT LANDSCAPE

Currently, EU legislation regulates various areas of relevance to dog health and welfare. This includes pet travel, commercial pet movements and the welfare of animals during transport.

In June 2016, the UK voted to leave the European Union. As EU legislation is the basis for the UK's pet travel rules, exiting the EU presents a crucial opportunity to review and amend legal requirements which could not previously be changed by the UK alone.

In October 2016, the Prime Minister announced plans to introduce a "Great Repeal Bill", which will repeal the European Communities Act 1972 and transpose EU law into domestic law. The Government has indicated that these legal changes would take effect on the day the UK officially leaves the EU. Once the UK has left the EU, the next legislative stage would be for the Government and Parliament to decide whether to keep any EU-derived law in UK domestic law. This creates a unique opportunity to introduce effective legislation to stop the illegal importation of underage puppies in its tracks.

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) will be responsible for reviewing the EU-derived law relating to pet travel, commercial pet movements and the welfare of animals in transport. We are urging Defra to treat this as a priority.

Regulation (EU) No 576/2013 on the non-commercial movement of pet animals

Regulation (EU) No 576/2013 sets out the requirements for dogs, cats and ferrets being moved for non-commercial purposes between EU Member States or into the EU. This is known as the Pet Travel Scheme (PETS) and requires all dogs, cats and ferrets to be microchipped, vaccinated against rabies and to have a valid pet passport when being moved between or into Member States. Implementing and Delegated Acts under this Regulation set out a template for the pet passport, as well as a requirement for dogs to be treated against the tapeworm, *Echinococcus multilocularis* before being moved into four Member States (including the UK). This regulation does not cover animals being moved for rehoming purposes, even charities.

ONCE THE UK EXITS THE EU, WE WOULD LIKE NEW LEGISLATION TO BE INTRODUCED TO IMPROVE THE RULES FOR PET TRAVEL, AS WELL AS THE ENFORCEMENT OF THIS LEGISLATION.

Council Directive 92/65/EEC of 13 July 1992 laying down animal health requirements governing trade in and imports into the Community of animals, semen, ova and embryos

Directive 92/65/EEC sets out the requirements for animals being moved between, or into, Member States for commercial purposes. It is also referred to as the Balai Directive. When more than five dogs, cats and ferrets are being moved, this Directive also applies regardless of whether the movement is for a commercial purpose (unless the animals are being moved to participate in competitions, exhibitions or sporting events). This Directive also applies to the movement of animals for rehoming purposes.

In addition to the requirements set out in Regulation No 576/2013, this Directive requires that animals must come from a holding or business registered in the EU country of origin. Importers must also obtain a health certificate for each movement of animals. An authorised vet must carry out an examination of each animal, ensuring they are fit to travel, within 48 hours before travel.

We are concerned that there is clear potential for cases of illegal importations to be missed as checks for compliance with the Balai Directive take place at the arrival destination rather than at the ports. Furthermore, less than 10% of consignments are checked at the place of destination.

ONCE THE UK EXITS THE EU, WE WOULD LIKE NEW LEGISLATION TO BE INTRODUCED TO IMPROVE THE RULES FOR COMMERCIAL PET MOVEMENTS, FOR THE CHECKS THAT TAKE PLACE.

Council Regulation (EC) No 1/2005 on the protection of animals during transport and related operations

The transport of dogs and cats in the EU in connection with an economic activity is governed by Regulation (EC) No 1/2005 on the protection of animals during transport. This requires that animals are fit to travel. Dogs and cats of less than eight weeks cannot be transported unless they are accompanied by their mother - and must not be transported in a way likely to cause them injury or undue suffering. Dogs and cats transported less than 50 km are not covered by these rules. The European Commission had committed to adopting detailed rules for the transport of dogs and cats after the adoption of an opinion on this topic by the European Food Safety Authority. Despite this opinion being published in May 2004, the European Commission has introduced very few specific rules to cover dogs and cats.

ONCE THE UK EXITS THE EU, WE WOULD LIKE TO SEE LEGISLATION INTRODUCED WITH SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS TO ENSURE THE WELFARE OF DOGS AND CATS DURING TRANSPORT.



“Exiting the EU presents a crucial opportunity to review and amend legal requirements which could not previously be changed by the UK alone”

KEY CASE STUDIES

POLAND

In order to provide evidence that puppies from Poland were being exported to Great Britain under the age of the permitted 15 weeks, we set up a fake dealership and website www.puppies4you.co.uk to engage with potential dealers, vets and transporters.

We posed as buyers of puppies looking to make contacts with breeders that could supply us with puppies on a regular basis. We did not specifically ask for underage puppies but asked when we could get the puppies to Great Britain. Not all of the dealers were familiar with the system and we did not encourage them to do anything that they would not normally do.

During the investigation, we identified seven breeders/dealers that were familiar with the Pet Travel Scheme and who openly told us they could obtain passports for puppies that were younger than the legal requirement and that the dates of birth could be changed by their vet.

Once we knew that they would be doing something they were familiar with we asked to purchase a puppy and would pay for the passport as a deposit.

We were issued with five passports from four different vets. For each passport the actual dates of birth had been changed to make the puppies appear older than they were. In some cases nine week old puppies were made to appear 16 weeks. Shockingly in addition to changing the dates on the passports, all the passports contained false information about the rabies vaccination. Dates for these injections were backdated by at least three weeks, meaning if any rabies vaccination was actually administered it would be invalid. There is a legal requirement to wait 21 days after the rabies vaccination has been given before travelling.

Some of the dealers we met during the investigation said that it may be possible to alter the dates of vaccinations by a few weeks to get around the wait period of three weeks before travel required by law, but were not doing this on a regular basis. Others, however, were prepared to completely disregard the requirements, were more than happy to break the law and were 'professional' in their business.

We directly approached seven veterinary clinics which we were aware had issued passports in the past. We simply asked vets if they could help with issuing passports for five ten-week-old puppies that we wanted to take to Great Britain in the next week. Two of the vets said they could help and told us to return with the puppies.

When speaking with dealers/breeders the subject of rabies vaccinations was discussed at length and most agreed that the vaccination should not be given to underage puppies. Instead their vets would be happy to issue passports for the puppies under three months old stating that they had been vaccinated even if they had not. Most of the breeders we met did not want to introduce us to their vet as they said they may have been concerned about carrying out illegal activities in front of a stranger.

All the passports we obtained state that the vaccine had been administered and a 21 day waiting period adhered to, but these statements were clearly false.

From what we have seen the main dealers/breeders have a relationship with their preferred veterinary clinic and have a close working relationship with the vet.

CASE STUDY

We met a breeder at a market in Slomczyn who was selling French Bulldog and Yorkshire Terrier puppies but was also able to supply other breeds. They informed us that they had sold puppies abroad before and although it was more difficult to sell puppies in Great Britain than previously because of tighter controls, they told us to contact them again the following day.

We met the breeder at a veterinary clinic on 8th May 2017. The breeder had three puppies health checked by the vet and we discussed the laws regarding transporting puppies to Great Britain. The breeder suggested that we go to a different vet to issue the relevant passports. We believe the breeder wanted to check that we were legitimate before going to the other vet for the passports.

Whilst at the first vet another breeder (who was related to the original breeder) arrived with four Jack Russell puppies which we were told were six weeks old. This breeder, who claimed to have 25 years experience in selling puppies, went with us to the second vet. They talked about selling puppies to Russia and other countries.

The second vet issued us with two passports for the French Bulldogs. The dates of birth had been changed from 2nd February 2017 to 10th January 2017. The puppies had been microchipped and vaccinated against rabies. We paid 400zloty (around £80) for the two passports and said we would take the puppies to Great Britain on the 14th May 2017. We did not pay for the puppies and left them with the breeder.

Whilst talking with the vet we asked if they could issue passports for the six week old Jack Russell puppies. At first the vet said that these puppies were too young for rabies vaccination but after writing out the passports for the French Bulldogs they agreed to issue the passports that same day. The vet stated that the puppies were too young for rabies vaccinations and that we should therefore have these done in Great Britain once the puppies were old enough.

It transpired that the vet's mother was an old friend of the breeder.



LITHUANIA

As a direct result of our two previous investigations and intensive lobbying of the authorities by Lithuanian NGO, Animal Rights Protection Organization Lithuania (ARPOL), the State Veterinary Service implemented new protocols in July 2015 aimed at tightening procedures to obtain pet passports in order to reduce fraudulent activity by breeders and vets. The new protocols mean that pet passports can now only be issued by a vet from the State Veterinary Service who registers the owner of the puppy along with the puppy's details on a national database. Only then can the passport be taken to a private vet for the vaccine information to be entered. These protocols have introduced a degree of traceability into the system and resulted in a decline in the number of passports issued in Lithuania from 20,380 in 2015 to 13,942 in 2016.

Our two previous investigations gained widespread publicity in Lithuania and, as a result, we were unable to repeat the same investigation methodology of operating as a fake British dealer as we had done before and as we did in Poland. Instead we told vets that we wanted to take our ten week old puppy to Great Britain as soon as possible and asked whether they would issue a passport for it. One breeder stated that we would have to wait until the puppy was three months old before travelling, unless we wanted to hide him while crossing through the border into Great Britain as they said many people are doing since the change in the legislation made it harder to fake documentation.

Our latest investigation found that the situation regarding the fraudulent issuing of passports for underage puppies has improved over the last three years due to the new regulations, but nevertheless still takes place. Whilst 80% of vets in 2014 would alter dates of birth on passports, only 33% of the 12 vets we contacted this time around would do so. Even where vets were willing to make changes, dates would only be changed by a maximum of five days as there is a small leeway before information needs to be registered on the national database. However, a quarter of vets were still willing to alter dates or give out rabies vaccines to be administered by the breeder or owner.

A worrying new trend also appears to be emerging, however, with 25% of vets suggesting that since the regulation changes made falsifying paperwork difficult, people could instead smuggle pets into the UK i.e. undeclared without obtaining a pet passport at all. One went so far as to sell medication to ensure that the puppy was sedated at the port.

CASE STUDY

We met a breeder selling Chihuahua, Yorkshire Terrier, French Bulldog and Spitz puppies with pedigree certificates. We enquired about a Chihuahua puppy which the breeder explained already had its passport and documentation ready to be transported to Great Britain so dates could not be amended. The breeder stated that we would have to wait until the puppy was three months old, unless we wanted to take him hidden as they said many people are doing nowadays. The breeder arranged for us to visit a vet in order to obtain sedatives for the puppy to be taken hidden through border control. The vet advised that the puppy must not eat 12 hours before the medication was given and said that the medication would take 10 minutes to half an hour to work. The vet initially offered to provide a 'wake up' medication but later decided this would not be necessary. They explained and showed on a dog model how and where to administer the medication by injection and said that people are using this method to get dogs through the border but that it is risky. They explained that puppies travelling to Sweden in this manner had been caught at customs and that the puppies had been put to sleep.



UK INTERNET SELLERS

The internet is awash with puppies for sale and a quick glance at the large classified websites will reveal hundreds of adverts for fashionable breed puppies. We wanted to establish if puppies that had travelled from Central and Eastern Europe on the Pet Travel Scheme were still commonly available for sale through the internet in Great Britain.

We visited a number of sellers from Lithuania, Hungary and Poland that were selling puppies that had recently come over to be sold in Great Britain.

Internet adverts from sellers bringing puppies over from Central and Eastern Europe tend to follow a standard pattern; they advertise puppies from three to four months of age and say that the puppy is fully vet checked, microchipped and has papers. Not one of the adverts we looked at mentioned that you could view the mother and interestingly no adverts mentioned that the puppy had come from abroad or that it was in possession of a pet passport. Even when the seller was contacted by phone, only a small number of people mentioned that the puppy had been imported and it was only during the actual visit, when pressed for the paperwork, that the full story was revealed. By this time, most people will have fallen in love with the puppy and will pay up.

CASE STUDY 1

We visited one Hungarian dealer who was selling French Bulldog puppies. Six weeks later we spotted an advert in the same location with a similar but different phone number advertising Pug puppies. When viewing the photographs of the Pug puppies it was very clear that this was the same house where we had viewed the French Bulldog puppies. This dealer had clearly used different names and different phone numbers in an attempt to appear to be a private seller.

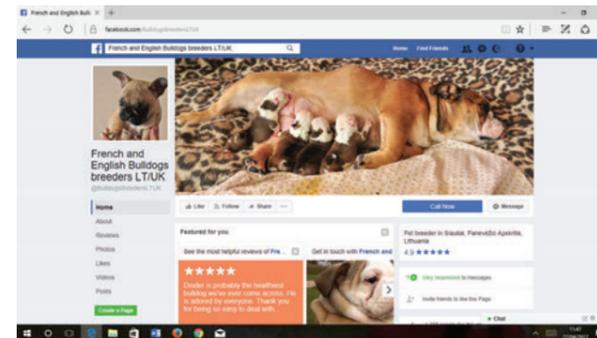
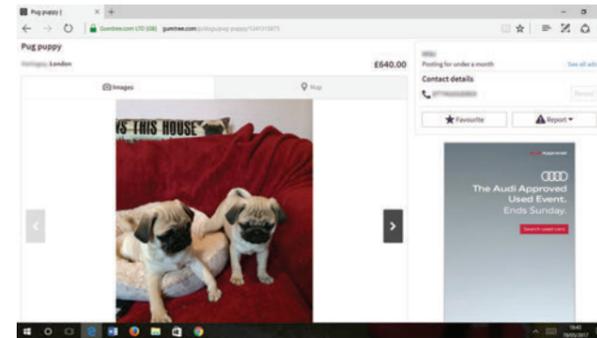
CASE STUDY 2

We made an appointment to view six four month old English Bulldog puppies that we had spotted on a professional looking advert with good quality, well-labelled photographs. At the time of our call the seller said that the mother could not be seen but that the puppies had all had their vaccinations. They also admitted that the puppies were from abroad and had pet passports, the seller saying that their brother was a breeder in Poland. On our visit we met the seller's daughter who confirmed that she had travelled to Poland with her father to pick up the puppies from her uncle. She showed us Polish Kennel Club pedigree papers and the pet passports. The visit demonstrates that breeders are openly using the Pet Travel Scheme for commercial purposes. Based on the price being charged, these sellers were looking to make £6,900 from the sale of this litter alone. In addition, the puppies' breeder had used a vet that stated in this year's investigation that they could change the dates in a puppy's passport.

CASE STUDY 3

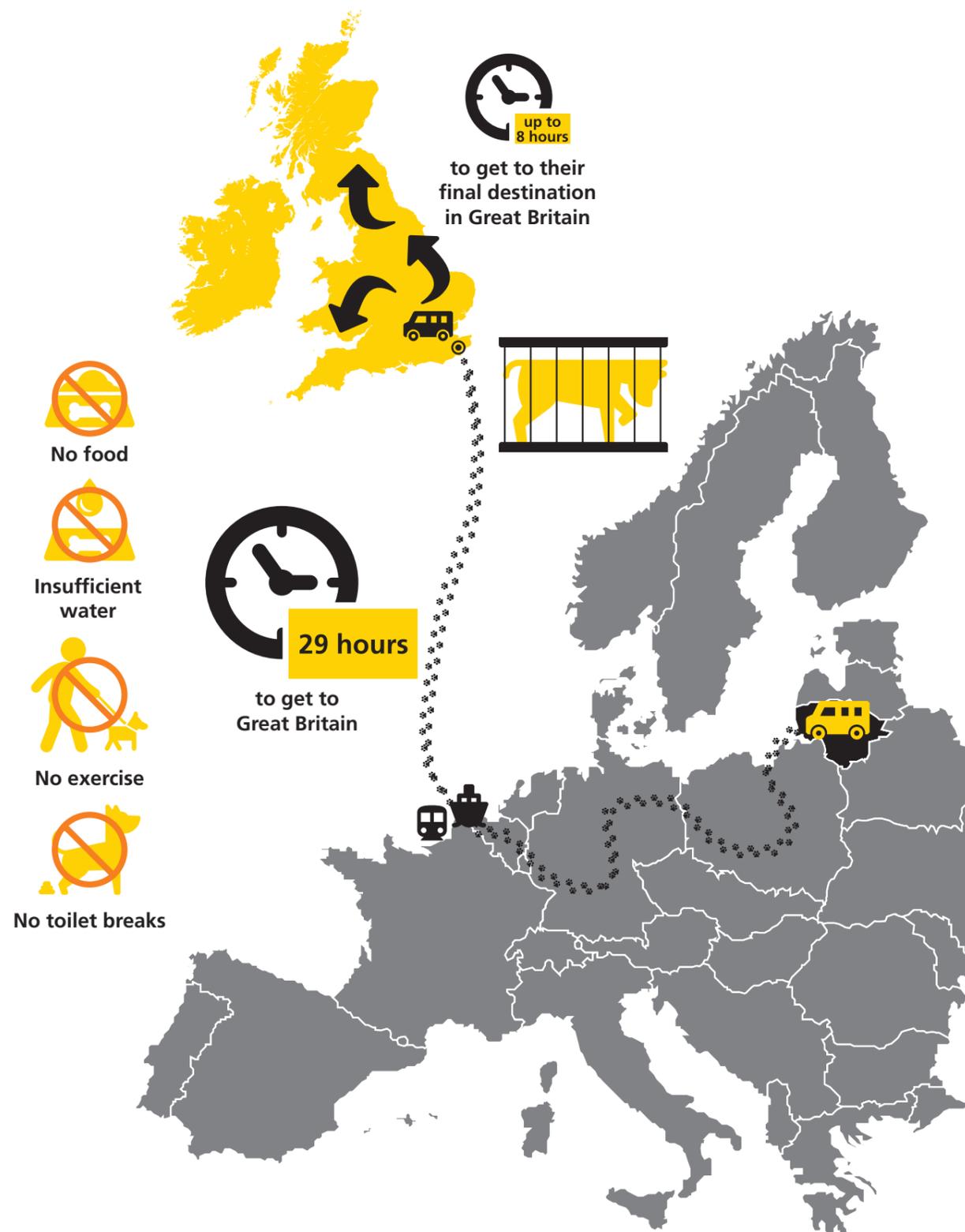
Lithuanian breeders are also openly selling puppies bred in Lithuania to be sold commercially in Great Britain. Since official figures show that no dogs have travelled from Lithuania under the commercial Balai Directive in 2016, and just two in 2015, these puppies must be travelling under PETS or are smuggled into the country.

We identified a breeder on Facebook, Bulldog Breeders LTUK, that has been advertising French and English Bulldog puppies for sale since April 2013. The Facebook posts suggest that they have advertised over 40 puppies for sale. On a post on 25th April 2017 they advertised two two month old English Bulldogs for sale. The cost was £800 with delivery to the UK. Previous posters for other puppies had asked where the puppies had come from. The seller had responded that they were based in Lithuania and the puppies would come with EU passports.



“The internet is awash with puppies for sale and a quick glance at the classified websites will reveal hundreds of adverts for fashionable breed puppies”

THE 1,000 MILE JOURNEY OF A PUPPY FROM A BREEDER IN LITHUANIA



PUPPY JOURNEY FROM SOURCE TO HOME

It is our belief that while most members of the British public would prefer to buy a British-bred puppy, the relative lack of certain breeds in this country, and the huge demand for them, means that breeders in other countries see this as an 'opportunity' and exploit it by filling the gap. We wonder if purchasers would be so willing to do so if they were aware of the huge distances puppies travel from places such as Lithuania and Poland, and the appalling conditions of their journey?

As part of our Puppy Pilot work we have seen first-hand the conditions that some puppies travel in. We have seen large breed dogs crammed into cat carriers, unable to stand up or turn around, and litters of puppies confined to carriers, covered in urine and faeces. We have even seen puppies arriving in Great Britain with bloodstained DIY microchip kits. Many of the puppies that we see on the Puppy Pilot arrive severely dehydrated and with gastrointestinal problems.

For this investigation Dogs Trust obtained footage of one such journey of over 1,000 miles, taking upwards of 29 hours. Our investigator booked on to a Postbus from Lithuania to Great Britain, just one of hundreds of such vehicles that make the journey each year carrying people, parcels and pets. Our investigator had been advised by the transporter that almost every post bus carries puppies to Great Britain and so it was no surprise to find four puppies (two Yorkshire Terriers, one Maltese and one Dachshund) travelling alongside all the other goods. No owner was present. This is very common in situations where puppies are travelling for the purposes of sale rather than as cherished pets.

What our investigator experienced over the journey was appalling by any standards. Four puppies confined to pet carriers stacked amongst other packages in the back of the van with no air conditioning, whilst outside temperatures reached 25 degrees centigrade. The puppies were watered just twice on a journey exceeding 29 hours and not fed at all. A period of some 15 hours elapsed between the occasions when the puppies were given water. The puppies left the carrier very briefly on two occasions for the carriers to be cleaned, but for the rest of the time were confined. One of the puppies was observed vomiting and another eating its own faeces. For appearances' sake, the puppies were moved to the front of the van to go through the border.

Even once they reach Great Britain, puppies are usually subject to yet further travel.

We hope that this footage, available to view at www.puppysmuggling.org.uk, will be a reality check for anyone looking to buy a puppy and a cue to walk away if they suspect that a puppy may be an illegal import no matter how much they want to 'rescue' the puppy. Rescuing one puppy just provides the incentive for breeders to produce many more.



FAKE DOG SMUGGLED WITH EASE



In our 2014 investigation, we highlighted the ineffective controls at the British border which were aiding the illegal importation of puppies into Great Britain for sale. In 2015, our second investigation demonstrated the inadequacy of the document checks being done as we successfully smuggled a fake dog without a visual check at British borders in three out of four attempts.

Both of our reports recommended that document and identity checks were insufficient and that visual checks on all animals should be mandatory. Our recommendation was ignored.

And so this year we yet again demonstrated the porous nature of our borders by taking another of our fake dogs, 'Charly', on a journey to mainland Europe before successfully smuggling him back into Great Britain on two out of two occasions – once through Eurotunnel and once on a ferry through Dover – without being identified as a fake.

On one occasion, Charly travelled on an animal transport vehicle along with other real dogs. On his second journey Charly travelled in his carrier on the back seat of a car.

Charly's microchip was sellotaped to the top of his carrycase (a ploy often used by illegal puppy importers so that they can use microchips and passports numerous times) and staff did not check inside. The microchip is scanned by the pet's owner or transporter and no visual check is made.

We emphasise once more that visual checks are crucial to maintaining the security of our borders.

In December 2014 Defra introduced new rules requiring the inclusion of more contact details of the vets issuing the passport and those carrying out the vaccinations. This was supposed to strengthen our borders following the initial changes to PETS in 2012. However, we have clearly shown that things have not improved.

We continue to call for microchips to be registered on an approved national or regional database which would be linked to an EU database thus enabling the traceability of animals.



CONCLUSIONS

Our third investigation sets out very clearly that the abuses of the Pet Travel Scheme (PETS) are still rife. In the two years since our last investigation almost no significant steps have been taken by Defra, the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) or the carriers to tighten up the checks at our borders. If we are still able to bring a fake dog into the country with no one spotting it, importing an underage puppy is a piece of cake.

Although the moves by Lithuanian authorities seem on the surface to have stemmed the flow of puppies being imported illegally, our investigation raises very real concerns about the development of the trade. Unable to persuade state vets to falsify paperwork, dealers are instead asking them to supply sedatives to allow puppies to be smuggled into Great Britain without any need for documentation, or indeed vaccinations.

Defra figures and our own Puppy Pilot statistics show that the trade continues to be strong from Hungary, and these statistics and our latest investigation show that breeders and dealers in Poland are now also a rising force in the illegal trade in puppies.

We are continuing to see puppies that have been transported under PETS from Central and Eastern Europe appearing for sale on UK classified websites. Most are now well disguised and there is often little to give away to the unsuspecting buyer that they have been imported.

Despite two previous investigations and ongoing public awareness and public affairs work, our recommendations have largely been ignored. The tragedy of the illegal importation of puppies continues and we urge Defra, APHA, the carriers and the European Commission to take urgent action.

NEXT STEPS FOR DOGS TRUST

Dogs Trust will continue to operate the Puppy Pilot scheme, enabling APHA and Trading Standards to focus on stopping and seizing illegally imported puppies.

Dogs Trust will continue to lobby the Government to make the changes necessary to make our borders secure once more. The decision to exit the EU presents an opportunity to strengthen the legislation on pet movement and we are committed to pushing for these critical changes to be made.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The decision to exit the EU creates a crucial opportunity to amend and improve the pet travel rules which are currently governed by EU legislation. We have therefore included post-Brexit recommendations for the first time in this report. However, as the UK will not exit the EU until 2019, there are also actions which can, and should, be taken before then.

In our 2014 and 2015 reports we made a number of recommendations to Defra, APHA, Trading Standards and the European Commission. Sadly many of these recommendations were ignored. We make no apology for repeating these and adding to them with further recommendations based on the findings from this latest investigation.

IMMEDIATE ACTION BY UK GOVERNMENT:

The focus on enforcement of PETS must be shifted from carriers to Government agencies. This should include a requirement for there to be sufficient out-of-hours and weekend cover at ports by Government agencies.

The creation of a centrally accessible database logging pets' microchip numbers and date of entry into the UK.

Crackdown on vets who supply fake pet passports through work with the veterinary regulatory authorities in the countries that import puppies into the UK.

Introduce prison sentences to reflect the seriousness of the crimes committed and deter those involved in illegally importing dogs.

Intelligence-led enforcement is needed to identify dealers and traders that are regularly importing multiple puppies (up to five) at a time.

Improve the checks that take place for commercial pet movements.

Trading Standards must ensure that they operate an out-of-hours service.

POST-BREXIT ACTION:

When the UK leaves the EU, revised legislation must be introduced by Defra as a priority to effectively regulate pet travel and commercial pet movements.

Reintroduce a requirement for a rabies blood (titre) test before entry into the UK, together with a wait period which is in line with the incubation period of rabies.

Reintroduce the requirement for dogs and cats to be treated against ticks before entering the UK.

Shorten the tapeworm treatment window for dogs before entry into the UK from 120 hours to 48 hours as previously required. Introduce a requirement for cats to be treated against tapeworm.

Reduce the number of dogs allowed under non-commercial movement rules.

Visual checks of all dogs entering British ports under PETS need to be undertaken to ensure that puppies entering this country are healthy, not underage, and matching the information given in their pet passports. Intelligence-led physical checks should also be a requirement where necessary.

Introduce specific requirements to ensure the welfare of dogs and cats during transport.

EU ACTION:

EU legislation to be adopted requiring the compulsory permanent identification of all dogs and registration on a national database which is linked to an EU database. The new EU Regulation on transmissible animal diseases will provide framework legislation under which this could be introduced. Once the UK leaves the EU, it should be a requirement for UK databases to be linked to an EU database.

The EU should draw up an action plan to tackle the illegal movement of companion animals across Europe, which should involve the European Commission, European Parliament and Member States, including agencies and border and veterinary authorities.

THE ROLE OF THE CARRIERS

From our very first investigation in 2014 Dogs Trust has been adamant that a shift in focus on enforcement away from the ferry companies and Eurotunnel to Government agencies is crucial. We recognise the challenges that are currently placed on the carriers to undertake checks on pets that are travelling, such as identifying whether pet passports are fraudulent and whether puppies are over 15 weeks of age. We therefore suggest it would be appropriate for checks to instead be undertaken by an appropriately qualified animal professional from a Government agency.

WHAT DO WE WANT?

- 🐾 Government agencies, not carriers, to be responsible for Pet Travel Scheme checks
- 🐾 Visual checks to be carried out on all animals travelling under the Pet Travel Scheme, not just a document check-in
- 🐾 Vets available at check-in in order to identify underage puppies

Carriers typically charge between £15 and £20 per dog to travel. Dogs Trust proposes that this money is used to fund a system similar to that already in place at the Port of Dover for coach checks.

Currently the Port of Dover charges the ferry operators a fee for coach checks across all carriers. Upon arrival at the Port, coaches are directed to a separate hangar for exit checks on the passengers by UK Border Force before being able to board the relevant ferry. If a similar system could be introduced for pet travel checks, i.e. a fee being applied across all carriers to enable checks to be carried out by a Government agency, the ferry operators indicated that they would be very supportive of this.



FINDINGS FROM DOGS TRUST INVESTIGATION INTO CARRIER CHECKS AT THE GREAT BRITAIN BORDER

CASE STUDY 1: 22/4/2017

ROUTE: Coquelles to Folkestone
CARRIER: Eurotunnel

We undertook this part of the project with the aid of an animal transport company who were delivering a number of animals from mainland EU to Great Britain. In total there were three cats which travelled under the PETS scheme, two dogs which travelled under the PETS scheme and two rescue dogs which were classified as Balai animals. In addition we had, of course, 'Charly' our fake dog.

CHANGES SINCE 2015 INVESTIGATION

A new Pet Reception Centre has been built at Coquelles. It operates in much the same way as before in that individual owners take their pet from the car park to the centre. They then scan their animals. However there is a new drive-through facility that allows a van carrying a number of animals to enter it. Again microchip scanners are handed to the driver to scan their own animals.

Eurotunnel now charge people for taking commercial animals (travelling under Balai) on its service. The cost is £18, the same as animals that travel through under PETS. Whilst previously Eurotunnel had no interest in counting the number of Balai animals, they now (in theory) count the number of animals on board and enter the number of Balai animals on their own database.

THE INSPECTION REGIME AND KEY FAILINGS

- 1) At the Pet Reception Centre – there was no check to see if we were indeed the owners of the pet. We would have assumed that our passport details would have been checked to see if they corresponded with that given on the pet passport.
- 2) The scanner was handed to scan our own 'pet' which was in a pet carrier in the van - this is normal procedure.
- 3) No visual inspection is undertaken of the individual dogs.
- 4) The only purpose of the reception centre is to check that the microchip numbers correspond with that of the pet passport and also that there is an up-to-date rabies vaccination and *Echinococcus multilocularis* tapeworm treatment.
- 5) The tapeworm treatment and rabies vaccination stickers were sealed by a laminate which is issued with the passports. These can easily be peeled off.
- 6) The check-in officers at the reception entered the wrong data on the database – mixing up cats and dogs as well as microchip numbers for the pets.
- 7) We drove without any checks on the animals at the French and UK customs.

CASE STUDY 2: 23/4/2017

ROUTE: Calais to Dover
CARRIER: DFDS

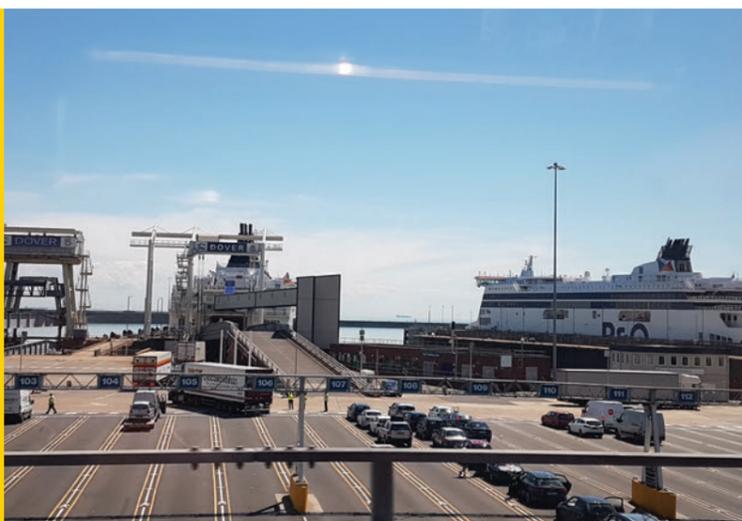
THE INSPECTION REGIME AND KEY FAILINGS

- 1) The person at the booth asked us if we would scan the microchip on the dog – and passed us the microchip reader - this is normal procedure.
- 2) We scanned the fake dog – there was no visual inspection of the dog undertaken at Pet Passport Control/Check-in booth.
- 3) The only purpose of the check is to see that the microchip number corresponds with the pet passport and also that there are up-to-date rabies vaccinations and *Echinococcus multilocularis* treatment.
- 4) The tapeworm treatment and rabies vaccination stickers were sealed by a laminate which is issued with the passports. These can be easily peeled off.

OTHER NOTES ON THE ATTEMPT

- 1) At Calais we had Charly, our fake dog, placed inside a pet carrier which was on the back seat of the car. Inside the carrier we had a microchip which corresponded with that on the pet passport.
- 2) Firstly we went through the French border control and customs. They asked us to open the boot of the car as they were looking for illegal immigrants.
- 3) Then we were checked by UK border control – who checked our passports.
- 4) We then drove to DFDS check-in where we were checked into the Ferry. We were given a scanner to scan our own dog which we did.
- 5) The attendant checked the microchip reading with the number on the passport. They also flicked through the pet passport to ensure that the relevant treatments had been given.
- 6) We were then given a sticker to put on the windscreen to indicate that we had a pet on board.
- 7) At Dover we drove off the ferry and were waived through without having to have any further checks at Dover Customs.

APPENDICES



FINDINGS FROM DOGS TRUST'S INVESTIGATION INTO THE TRANSPORTATION OF PUPPIES FROM LITHUANIA TO THE UK VIA POSTBUS

TRIP OVERVIEW:

TOTAL DISTANCE: 1227.3 Miles (to London)
TOTAL TIME: 30 hours and 40 mins (to London)

NUMBER OF PUPPIES TRANSPORTED: Four

WATER/FOOD/WALK STOPS:

- No food was provided for the puppies during the entire journey.
- The puppies were given water on two occasions. The first time 5 hours 40 mins into the journey. On this occasion one puppy was allowed to leave the travelling basket for a short walk.
- The puppies then travelled for a further 15 hours before they were given water again. At this stop all the puppies were taken out for a short walk while their cages were cleaned.
- The puppies then travelled for at least a further 10 hours without being given water.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

- The two Yorkshire Terrier puppies appeared to be the right age to travel, but the Maltese and Dachshund puppies seemed very small and potentially under 15 weeks old.
- A cursory inspection of the puppies was undertaken a few times inside of the van.
- No ventilation or other air filtration devices were seen in the back of the van where the puppies were located for the majority of the journey.
- A few of the passengers in the van chatted between themselves and several times raised concerns about how puppies were coping on the journey without food.
- The transporter is registered as a cat and dog transporter.

FINDINGS FROM DOGS TRUST INVESTIGATION INTO THE ILLEGAL IMPORTATION OF PUPPIES FROM LITHUANIA

LITHUANIAN BREEDER/DEALER 1

DATE OF CONTACT: 18th to the 24th April 2017

KEY FINDINGS FROM THE MEETING:

Breeder/Dealer 1 sold Chihuahua, Yorkshire Terrier, French Bulldog and Spitz puppies with pedigree certificates. We enquired about a Chihuahua puppy. Breeder/Dealer 1 explained that this puppy already had a passport and documentation prepared, ready for it to be transported to Great Britain. The dates could not therefore be changed. Breeder/Dealer 1 said that we would need to wait until the puppy was three months old before travelling, unless we were prepared to hide him while going through the border. They said many people have done this since the changes in passport protocol. Breeder/Dealer 1 arranged for us to meet with a vet (Vet 1) who they said would supply us with medication to sedate the puppy at the port.

LITHUANIAN BREEDER/DEALER 2

DATE OF CONTACT: 23rd to 24th April 2017

KEY FINDINGS FROM THE MEETING:

Breeder/Dealer 2 said that they could arrange a passport for a puppy that was born on the 20th February (making it just nine weeks of age), but that we would still need to wait the required 21 days after the rabies vaccination before travelling.

LITHUANIAN BREEDER/DEALER 3

DATE OF CONTACT: 23rd to 24th April 2017

KEY FINDINGS FROM THE MEETING:

Breeder/Dealer 3 advertised puppies with pedigree documents and said that they could help with papers for a puppy to be taken abroad. They had been operating for around 15 years and sold puppies to Sweden and Great Britain. Breeder/Dealer 3 said a lot of puppies are going to Sweden now because there is no border control. Breeder/Dealer 3 said that they could change a puppy's birth date and that their vet would alter the microchip and vaccination dates five days back. Breeder/Dealer 3 has rabies vaccines and does the vaccinations themselves, the vet stamps the passports later.

LITHUANIAN BREEDER/DEALER 4

DATE OF CONTACT: 23rd to 26th April 2017

KEY FINDINGS FROM THE MEETING:

We visited Breeder/Dealer 4 to speak about two French Bulldog breeding bitches and to speak about puppies which would be available at the end of June. Breeder/Dealer 4 stated that they preferred to sell to dealers who organised the passports themselves but when pushed said that they could falsify the puppies' birth dates to say that they were older than they were, although the 21 day period after vaccination would still apply. Breeder/Dealer 4 didn't want any microchip numbers in their name as they were trying to avoid being tracked as a breeder by the state vet authority. They did not want to have to follow breeding regulations or pay tax.

LITHUANIAN BREEDER/DEALERS 5 TO 12

DATE OF CONTACT: 23rd to 24th April 2017

KEY FINDINGS:

Breeder/Dealers 5 to 12 were not willing to arrange for passport dates to be changed.

LITHUANIAN VET 1

DATE OF CONTACT: 29th April 2017

KEY FINDINGS FROM THE MEETING:

Breeder/Dealer 1 arranged for us to visit Vet 1 in order to obtain medication (a sedative) for the puppy to be taken hidden through border control. Vet 1 said the puppy must not eat 12 hours before the medication was given and advised us that the medication would take 10 minutes to half an hour to work. Vet 1 offered the possibility of also providing a 'wake up' medication but later decided that that would not be necessary. Vet 1 explained and showed us on a dog model how and where to administer the medication. Vet 1 explained that people have been using this method to get dogs through the border but warned that it was risky. Vet 1 explained that puppies travelling to Sweden in this manner had been caught at customs and the puppies euthanized.

LITHUANIAN VET 2

DATE OF CONTACT: 3rd May 2017
KEY FINDINGS FROM THE MEETING:

Vet 2 discussed the possibility of changing the puppy's birth date with us, saying that there was an opportunity to microchip and then backdate by five days on the national database. Vet 2 asked us to bring the puppy in so that they could check that it looked ok size-wise.

LITHUANIAN VET 3

DATE OF CONTACT: 3rd May 2017
KEY FINDINGS FROM THE MEETING:

Vet 3 explained the regulations to us and asked for the puppy's age. We stated that it was two and a half months old. Vet 3 stated that they could work on the puppy's birth date but, even if they microchipped and vaccinated the puppy that day, we would still need to wait 21 days before travelling.

LITHUANIAN VET 4

DATE OF CONTACT: 3rd May 2017
KEY FINDINGS FROM THE MEETING:

Vet 4 explained the regulations to us and said they could push some dates back as there was some allowance to register the puppy on the national database. Vet 4 suggested we bring the puppy in if we wanted to go ahead.

LITHUANIAN VET 5

DATE OF CONTACT: 3rd May 2017
KEY FINDINGS FROM THE MEETING:

Vet 5 explained the regulations to us and said that they could not change the dates. However Vet 5 mentioned that another way to do it was to take a risk and hide the puppy while travelling through the border. Vet 5 also said that if we told him the puppy was three months old, he would be happy to believe this, but that we would still have to wait the 21 days after vaccination before travelling.

LITHUANIAN VETS 6 TO 13

DATE OF CONTACT: 27th April to 5th May 2017
KEY FINDINGS FROM THE MEETINGS:

Lithuanian Vets 6 to 13 were not willing to falsify passports or give vaccinations at an inappropriate age.

FINDINGS FROM DOGS TRUST INVESTIGATION INTO THE ILLEGAL IMPORTATION OF PUPPIES FROM POLAND

POLAND BREEDER/DEALER 1

DATE OF CONTACT: Sunday 7th May 2017
KEY FINDINGS FROM THE MEETING:

We met Breeder/dealer 1 at Slomczyn Market where they were selling French Bulldog and Yorkshire Terrier puppies. They were also able to supply other breeds and informed us that they had sold puppies abroad before. They stated that selling puppies to Great Britain was more difficult than previously as the controls were tighter. We were told to contact them again the next day.

Breeder/Dealer 1 told us to meet them at a veterinary clinic on 8th May 2017 and would not provide us with their own address. Breeder/dealer 1 had three puppies health checked by the vet and we discussed the law regarding transporting puppies to Great Britain. Breeder/dealer 1 suggested we go to a different vet to issue the relevant passports. We believe Breeder/dealer 1 wanted to check we were legitimate before going to the other vet for the passports.

Whilst at the first vet another breeder (who was related to Breeder/Dealer 1) arrived with four Jack Russell puppies which we were told were six weeks old. This breeder, who claimed to have 25 years experience in selling puppies, came with us to the second vet. They talked about selling puppies to Russia and other countries.

POLAND BREEDER/DEALER 2

DATE OF CONTACT: Sunday 7th May 2017
KEY FINDINGS FROM THE MEETING:

Using the website www.olx.pl to find adverts of puppies for sale, we contacted a breeder with Yorkshire Terrier and Maltese puppies for sale. The breeder had 11 breeding bitches in total which had one litter each a year. We were able to see four of the breeding bitches along with many puppies. The puppies ranged in age from four weeks to 12 weeks and the breeder said that the ages of the puppies could be changed for the passport providing the puppies looked to be old enough.

Breeder/Dealer 2 said that her vet had vaccinated some of the puppies and providing he had not sent the details to the database, the dates could be changed. It is later confirmed that the vet had not sent off the records and it was therefore possible for the dates of birth of the puppies to be amended. Breeder/dealer 2 indicated that we could take the puppies to Great Britain on the 9th May 2017. This would make the puppies 13 weeks old. The puppies would be vaccinated for rabies the next day and would therefore not have waited the required three weeks before travel.

The cost of transporting the puppies to Great Britain was 1,000zloty (£210) per puppy but the price would be less the more puppies we bought.

POLAND BREEDER/DEALER 3

DATE OF CONTACT: 9th May 2017
KEY FINDINGS FROM THE MEETING:

We found Breeder/Dealer 3 on www.olx.pl selling Chihuahuas, Fox Terriers and French Bulldogs amongst other breeds. We went to buy a puppy that was supposedly 11 weeks and 5 days old. We paid 200zloty (£40) for a passport and agreed to meet up later the same day to pick this up. Breeder/Dealer 3 advised that it was best if we did not go to the vet as they might not issue a fake passport in front of strangers. When we picked up the passport later it stated that the puppy was 19 weeks of age. The puppy had not been vaccinated for rabies although the passport stated that this was done on 17th March 2017.

Breeder/Dealer 3 indicated that he had sold puppies to Great Britain in the past and would be able to drive puppies there if required.

POLAND BREEDER/DEALER 4

DATE OF CONTACT: 9th May 2017
KEY FINDINGS FROM THE MEETING:

Breeder/Dealer 4 was what can best be described as a puppy farm with around 70 breeding bitches. Dogs were kept in large dirty kennels without bedding or stimulation. It was a family run business and had been operating for 35 years.

Breeder/Dealer 4 said they have supplied puppies to Great Britain in the past and could easily falsify passports to get young puppies across. As long as they look old enough Breeder/Dealer 4 said they could sell us 8 week old puppies.

Breeder/Dealer 4 was proud of the genetics of their dogs and the prices of some of the puppies were high. We were quoted 7,000zloty (£1,400) for a blue French Bulldog.

We were told that they supply to the Russian market as well as to the rest of Europe. They said that they could supply us with 100 puppies a year.

Breeder/Dealer 4 claimed to be a vet without the qualifications and did all his own vaccinations. The vet simply wrote the passports.

POLAND BREEDER/DEALER 5

DATE OF CONTACT: Wednesday 10th May

KEY FINDINGS FROM THE MEETING:

Breeder/Dealer 5 was also found on www.olx.pl and had French Bulldogs for sale. They agreed to meet in a secluded location away from the business premises. We were not allowed to visit the kennels because of the risk of disease. Breeder/Dealer 5 brought one French Bulldog with them which we were not allowed to touch.

Breeder/Dealer 5 did sell puppies to Great Britain and used a UK-based transport company travelling via Eurotunnel. We were told there was no problem getting puppies into Great Britain and passports could be arranged in around half an hour at a cost of 200zloty (£40).

Breeder/Dealer 5 stated that puppies could be sent from seven weeks of age with the rabies vaccination to be done in Great Britain at the appropriate age.

POLAND BREEDER/DEALER 6

DATE OF CONTACT: Wednesday 10th May

KEY FINDINGS FROM THE MEETING:

Breeder/Dealer 6 was a small time breeder who claimed on the phone to be able to get passports from a vet. However, it turned out that Breeder/Dealer 6 did not know about the relevant laws regarding sending puppies to Great Britain and claimed to have taken puppies without any papers at all. When we explained a passport was needed and the dates would need to be falsified Breeder/Dealer 6 backtracked quickly. We do not believe Breeder/Dealer 6 has arranged false passports before.

POLAND BREEDER/DEALER 7

DATE OF CONTACT: Thursday 11th May

KEY FINDINGS FROM THE MEETING:

Breeder/Dealer 7 bred and sold Jack Russells, Yorkshire Terriers and French Bulldogs. Breeder/Dealer 7 had contacts in Lincolnshire and knew how the system works. Earlier this year Breeder/Dealer 7 lost five puppies at the border because the transport company had not cleaned the cages. They were inspected as a result of this and the puppies were found to be too young and then confiscated. Breeder/Dealer 7 recommended using a more expensive professional transport company.

Breeder/Dealer 7 outlined various techniques to get puppies into the UK including getting a vet to administer a small amount of rabies vaccine so if customs did a blood test it would test positive for the vaccine. Breeder/Dealer 7 also suggested having a UK citizen pick the puppies up in France as they were less likely to be scrutinised at the border and also to obtain UK microchips to send to him to use.

Breeder/Dealer 7 could send puppies from 7 to 8 weeks of age but preferred them to be a little older. We were told that the important factor is the teeth.

We pay 200zloty (£40) for a falsified passport which we collected two hours later at Vet 2.

POLAND BREEDER/DEALER 8

DATE OF CONTACT: Friday 12th May

KEY FINDINGS FROM THE MEETING:

Breeder/Dealer 8 bred Yorkshire Terriers and had four or five breeding bitches. Puppies and breeding bitches looked clean and well looked after. Puppies had been sold to Great Britain in the past but not on a regular basis. We were told the vet could alter dates on passports but only by a few weeks. We got the feeling Breeder/Dealer 8 did not normally do this so we did not pursue the matter.

POLAND BREEDER/DEALER 9

DATE OF CONTACT: Friday 12th May

KEY FINDINGS FROM THE MEETING:

Breeder/Dealer 9 had Pomeranians, Yorkshire Terriers, West Highland White Terriers and Spitz for sale. They had 23 breeding bitches and a few stud dogs. They were members of the world kennel union based in Ukraine and showed us pedigree certificates for some of the puppies. They claimed to be legitimate breeders and were doing everything by the book.

Breeder/ Dealer 9 regularly sells puppies to Great Britain through a Polish friend living in London. They said they could get passports for puppies that were 8 to 10 weeks of age. The passports were 250zloty (£50) each.

We agreed to buy a passport for a puppy that was 9 weeks old. They did not trust us and would not get the clinical examination done until we came to take the puppy. We paid 200zloty (£40) for the passport and were told we must pay the rest when we collected the puppy. We returned the next day to collect the passport. It stated that the nine week old puppy was 15 weeks and 3 days old and had the rabies vaccination on 25th April 2017.

Breeder/Dealer 9 used two different companies to transport puppies. One cost 1,200zloty (£240) per puppy, the other 750zloty (£150).

POLAND VET 1

DATE OF CONTACT: Monday 8th May 2017

KEY FINDINGS FROM THE MEETING:

Vet 1 was the vet that Breeder/Dealer 1 took us to. We went to Vet 1s home rather than the clinic. Vet 1 issued us with two passports for the French Bulldogs. The dates of birth had been changed from 2nd February 2017 to 10th January 2017. The puppies had been microchipped and vaccinated for rabies. We paid 400zloty (£80) for the two passports and said we would take the puppies to Great Britain on the 14th May 2017. We did not pay for the puppies but left them with the breeder.

Whilst talking with Vet 1 we asked if they could issue passports for the six week old Jack Russell puppies. Initially Vet 1 said these puppies were too young but after writing out the passports for the French Bulldogs they agreed to issue the passports that day. Vet 1 stated that the puppies were too young for the rabies vaccinations and that we should therefore have these done in Great Britain once the puppies were old enough.

It transpired that the mother of Vet 1 was an old friend of Breeder/Dealer 1.

POLAND VET 2

DATE OF CONTACT: Thursday 11th May

KEY FINDINGS FROM THE MEETING:

Vet 2 was the vet used by Breeder/Dealer 7. We met the wife of Breeder/Dealer 7 at Vet 2s clinic and we were given the passport for an 11 week old puppy. The passport stated that the puppy was 16 weeks old and had a rabies vaccination dated 22nd April 2017.

POLAND VET 3

DATE OF CONTACT: Thursday 11th May

KEY FINDINGS FROM THE MEETING:

Vet 3 said that it was not possible for the practising vets to help us with falsifying passports for puppies. They advised that we should try another clinic nearby to see if they could help.

POLAND VET 4

DATE OF CONTACT: Thursday 11th May

KEY FINDINGS FROM THE MEETING:

Vet 4 could help us with documents for a 10 week old puppy. Vet 4 said that changes could be made to the puppy's passport.

POLAND VET 5

DATE OF CONTACT: Thursday 11th May

KEY FINDINGS FROM THE MEETING:

Vet 5 was unable to help with passports because they were already having some problems regarding the issuing of passports.

POLAND VET 6

DATE OF CONTACT: Friday 12th May

KEY FINDINGS FROM THE MEETING:

We asked Vet 6 to help with passports for 10 week old puppies. Vet 6 claimed to have a lot of experience with issuing passports for puppies and asked us to call later when it was less busy. Vet 6 said we must be careful when taking puppies of this age but did not say they could not help.

When we called later, Vet 6 said we would need to go to the practice to talk things through further as they did not want to talk about this on the phone. By this stage we were too far away to return.

POLAND VET 7

DATE OF CONTACT: Saturday 13th May

KEY FINDINGS FROM THE MEETING:

Vet 7 said that they could help with issuing passports for 10 week old puppies the following week. Vet 7 said the three week wait period after the rabies vaccination could be skipped by a couple of weeks.

TRANSPORT COMPANIES

During the investigation we approached four transport companies to make enquiries about puppy transportation and conditions. The following three companies were chosen at random from adverts on animal transportation to UK on the internet in Lithuania. The fourth company was the one with which our investigator travelled.

TRANSPORT COMPANY 1

They have been taking puppies to UK for many years. The price to transport a puppy is £120 and the trip to London takes around 36 hours. They have had puppies confiscated in the past at the UK border because of irregular documents. They agreed to take two puppies at our own risk even after we told them that the puppies were not the right age to travel, but the documents were correct. They travel to the UK on Saturdays.

TRANSPORT COMPANY 2

They have been taking puppies to the UK for many years. The price to transport a puppy is £100-120. They explained the regulations for taking animals to the UK, but warned that there are very strict checks at the border. They agreed to take two puppies at our own risk even after we told them that the puppies were not the right age to travel, but the documents were correct. They travel to the UK on any day and the trip to London takes about 36 hours.

TRANSPORT COMPANY 3

They have been taking puppies to the UK for many years. They explained the regulations and told us that there are strict checks at the UK border. They do not take more than two puppies on the van at a time because they do not want to look like commercial traders. They explained that they ask passengers to put their names on the pet passport to show that puppies are travelling with an owner. They give passengers a discount for travelling if they agree to do this. The average price for a puppy is £100. They agreed to take two puppies at our own risk even after we told that they were not the right age to travel, but the documents were correct. They leave for the UK on Thursdays, sometimes Saturdays. The trip to London takes about 36 hours.

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Dogs Trust is the UK's largest dog welfare charity caring for around 15,000 dogs at its network of 20 rehoming centres throughout the UK and one in Ireland. We will never put a healthy dog to sleep. Our mission is to bring about the day when all dogs can enjoy a happy life, free from the threat of unnecessary destruction. Dogs Trust is a registered charity in England [227523], Scotland [SCO37843] and Ireland [CHY16218].

Tracks Investigations is an ethical investigation agency supporting the work of conservation and animal protection NGO's and charities worldwide.

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