

Second CAROdog Technical Workshop on Canine Traceability in the EU.

Teramo, 17-18 November 2011



Management, Implementation and Enforcement (2)

Compulsory versus Voluntary I&R Systems (microchipping)

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Contents of presentation

- The issues with dogs
- Government's responsibilities
- Current position in the UK
- Options, benefits and costs
- Enforcement
- Other methods

The issues

Public concern

- Stray dogs
 - In 1 year, over 126,000 strays were controlled by Local Authorities in UK.
 - Over 9,000 of these were in Wales.
- Local Authority dog warden costs £23m (per annum?)
- Reunification of strays with owners
 - Only 48%
 - Over 7,500 dogs euthanased
- Animal welfare organisations
 - Rehoming costs £18m (per annum?)
- Dogs out of control
 - Over 220,000 incidents required medical assistance
 - 6,100 hospitalisations in a year
 - 1 in 6 are children under 10 years
 - Costs of possibly up to £90m

The issues

Welfare concerns

- Stray dogs
 - Increased risk of injury/disease

- Dogs in shelters
 - Estimate of 30 days average before rehomed

- Stress
 - (*Diesel G*, Vet record.169 No 15 386-387)





The issues

Welfare concerns (continued)

- Standard of care
 - Not able to establish responsible person
- Poor standards of breeding
 - Puppies with health problems may not be traceable to premises of origin
- Disease control
 - Impounding facilities and restrictions
- “Status dogs”

Government responsibilities

- Protection of the public
 - Reducing stray dogs numbers → reduced damage, human injuries and improved environment.
- Potential better disease control options if necessary
- Promoting better dog welfare
- Promoting owner responsibility
- Broadening education

Current position in UK

- Northern Ireland
 - Microchipping will come into force 2012 (linked to Registration)
- Scotland
 - Not contemplating action as yet
- England
 - Considering compulsory microchipping
- Wales
 - Process started to introduce compulsory microchipping



Previous work in Wales

- Microchipping workshop held in March 2010
- Representations from all of the administrations and wide range of other Authorities, welfare organisations and interested parties.
- Considered promotion of identification
 - Benefits and drawbacks
 - How to proceed under new powers in Animal Welfare Act 2006

Results

- General consensus on promoting and overall compulsory favoured
- Suggest integrate with breeding controls
- Identified problem areas if Wales proceeded alone
- Identified improvements beneficial to integrated database
- Local authority and veterinary practice survey results

Barriers to implementation

- Identification means responsibility, leading to costs and/or legal sanction
- Identification means traceability for unscrupulous breeders
 - Links poor puppies to breeding premises
 - Supply chain
- Perceived costs of microchipping dogs and maintenance of records
- Health concerns
 - Migration
 - Age when implanted
- Registration databases
 - Difficulties updating
- Interference with personal liberty

Efficiency of I & R systems

Factors

- Ease of application
 - Public acceptance and knowledge
- Ease of reading the identification
 - Distance
- Ability to identify
 - Range of different systems/integrated single system
- Access to the registration and identify owner/keeper databases
- Potential for wider application

Possible Government options

1. Leave microchipping to industry and the public as voluntary process
2. Introduce compulsory microchipping - phased in approach
3. Introduce compulsory microchipping - by a set **date**

Possible Government options

1

Leave microchipping to industry and the public as voluntary process

- 55-60% already identified
 - *Rate of application has slowed, number possibly not keeping up with new puppies.*
 - *Estimated that number microchipped increased by 4.5% /year.*
 - *Antisocial behaviour and dog attacks remain significant problems.*
- Costs to Government are very small
- Benefits are very slow to develop - some will not be seen

Possible Government options

2

Introduce compulsory microchipping – phased in approach with cut-off date

- Requirements to identify on change of ownership
 - Some dogs may not be within scope
 - Some do not change ownership

- Enforcement issues

- Costs to government small - costs to public dependent on time scale
 - £6-20m/year

- Unknown cost of integrated data base

- Benefits
 - *Greater social responsibility and improved welfare*
 - *Reduced public costs of damage/injury*

Possible Government options

3

Introduce compulsory microchipping by a set date

- All dogs finally identified by 201x
 - Logistically more challenging
 - Enforcement issues

- Costs to government small but public costs larger
 - Several million dogs to be microchipped
 - Strain on infrastructure of database
 - Unknown costs of integrated database

- Benefits
 - Greater social responsibility
 - Improved welfare
 - Reduced public costs of damage/injury
 - Clearer enforcement process and understanding by public

Enforcement issues

- Patrolling for stray dogs and kennelling costs
 - Dog warden costs may stay same, but reduced kennelling costs
 - Phased introduction gives lack of clarity on compliance needs

- Compliance levels will never be 100%
 - Non-compliant are potentially most risk
 - Some extreme cases could be peripheral to society

- Setting legal sanctions at appropriate acceptable level

- Intervention must improve welfare

- Lead agency to enforce and other agencies interaction

- Movement of dogs between administrations with different requirements

Other methods of increasing I & R

Current

- Dog breeding legislation (Wales and N.Ireland)
 - Requires microchipping of puppies before 8 weeks of age and before leaving breeding premises
 - Will not address the small hobby breeders

- Non commercial movements of pet animals (PETS)
 - Microchipping carried out on over 100,000 pets so far
 - Movement between Eire and UK

- Tail docking of working dogs required dogs to be identified by microchip by 12 weeks of age

- Breeders schemes, e.g. The Kennel Club requires identification of dogs

Future potentials

- Pet Insurance
- Veterinary surgeons routine scanning
- Education and public expectations



Summary

Voluntary process may not reach very high level of identification and public concerns remain on responsibility/dogs out of control.

Education is very important

Compulsory process has enforcement issues and costs but should give improved welfare, builds in significant number already identified and fits with other legislative initiatives. It will not cover 100% of dogs.

Education is important

Acknowledgements

- Dogs Trust and other members of the Microchipping Alliance
- Laura Vallance and Siân Edwards of Dogs Trust
- Welsh Government Animal Welfare team: Huw Jones, Alun Streeter, Siân Jennifer Smith
- The 22 Local Authorities in Wales
- The Welsh review group on dog breeding controls

...and the boss for letting me attend!!

Thank you for your attention

