

Animal Welfare (Import of Dogs, Cats and Ferrets) Act 2025

CHAPTER 30

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CHAPTER 30

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Animal Welfare (Import of Dogs, Cats and Ferrets) Act 2025

2025 CHAPTER 30

An Act to make provision for and in connection with restricting the importation and non-commercial movement of dogs, cats and ferrets.

[2nd December 2025]

BE IT ENACTED by the King's most Excellent Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons, in this present Parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:—

Regulations about bringing dogs, cats and ferrets into the United Kingdom

1 Regulations about bringing dogs, cats and ferrets into the United Kingdom

Regulations for the purpose of animal welfare

(1) An appropriate national authority may, for the purpose of promoting the welfare of dogs, cats or ferrets, make regulations about the bringing of any of those animals into the United Kingdom.

(2) Regulations under subsection (1) may (in particular)—

(a) prohibit or restrict, by reference to specified criteria, the bringing into the United Kingdom of dogs, cats or ferrets;

(b) provide that a prohibition or restriction (including a prohibition imposed by virtue of subsection (3) or (4)) is subject to specified exemptions, including in cases where a permit issued under the regulations is in force;

(c) make provision for and in connection with applications for permits and the determination of such applications;

(d) require a specified fee to be paid on the making of such an application;

(e) make provision about enforcement.

(3) The first of any regulations about dogs that are made under subsection (1) in relation to each of England, Scotland and Wales must prohibit the bringing into that part of the United Kingdom of each of the following—

(a) dogs that are below the age of 6 months;

(b) dogs that are more than 42 days pregnant;

(c) dogs that have been mutilated.

(4) The first of any regulations about cats that are made under subsection (1) in relation to each of England, Scotland and Wales must prohibit the bringing into that part of the United Kingdom of each of the following—

(a) cats that are below the age of 6 months;

(b) cats that are more than 42 days pregnant;

(c) cats that have been mutilated.

(5) The Secretary of State, the Scottish Ministers and the Welsh Ministers may not make subsequent regulations lifting a prohibition mentioned in subsection (3) or (4) unless they have consulted such persons as they consider appropriate about the proposed change.

Regulations about seized or detained animals

(6) An appropriate national authority may by regulations make provision about dogs, cats or ferrets that are seized or detained because of a contravention (or suspected contravention) of any legislation (including regulations under subsection (1)) that—

(a) relates to animal welfare or animal health, and

(b) is concerned with the bringing of dogs, cats or ferrets into the United Kingdom.

(7) Regulations under subsection (6) may (in particular)—

(a) require a specified person to meet the costs of detaining a dog, cat or ferret (whether directly or by reimbursing any person);

(b) enable ownership of a dog, cat or ferret to be transferred in specified circumstances.

Regulations about monetary penalties

(8) An appropriate national authority may by regulations make provision enabling monetary penalties to be imposed in cases involving the contravention of any legislation (including regulations under subsection (1)) that—

(a) relates to animal welfare or animal health, and

(b) is concerned with the bringing of dogs, cats or ferrets into the United Kingdom.

Interpretation

(9) For the purposes of subsections (3) and (4), a dog or cat has been "mutilated" if it has undergone a procedure which involves interference with its sensitive tissues or bone structure otherwise than for the purpose of its medical treatment.

(10) In this section, "specified", in relation to the making of regulations, means specified in the regulations.

2 Regulations under section 1: supplementary

(1) Regulations under section 1 may (in particular)—

(a) confer a function (including a function involving the exercise of a discretion) on a person specified in the regulations;

(b) make provision about the keeping of records or the provision of information;

(c) confer a power of entry, whether or not on the authority of a warrant;

(d) confer a power of inspection, search, seizure or detention, whether or not on the authority of a warrant;

(e) authorise, or make provision for the authorisation of, the use of reasonable force in connection with the exercise of a power mentioned in paragraph (c) or (d);

(f) make provision for the revocation of a person's licence, authorisation or other approval required under any legislation for the bringing of dogs, cats or ferrets into the United Kingdom, where the person—

(i) contravenes the regulations, or

(ii) obstructs, or fails to assist in, the exercise of a function conferred by the regulations;

(g) create a criminal offence (but see subsection (3));

(h) modify, repeal or revoke any provision made by—

(i) an Act of Parliament (including sections 5 to 7 of this Act);

(ii) an Act of the Scottish Parliament;

(iii) an Act or Measure of Senedd Cymru;

(iv) Northern Ireland legislation.

(2) Regulations under section 1 that confer a power to enter a private dwelling may not allow for the power to be exercised without the occupier's consent, or with the use of reasonable force, except—

(a) in England and Wales, on the authority of a warrant issued by a justice of the peace;

(b) in Scotland, on the authority of a warrant issued by a sheriff or summary sheriff;

(c) in Northern Ireland, on the authority of a warrant issued by a lay magistrate.

(3) Regulations under section 1 may create a criminal offence only in relation to (or in relation to the causing or permitting of)—

(a) a contravention of a prohibition or restriction imposed by virtue of section 1(2)(a);

(b) where by virtue of section 1(2)(b) such a prohibition or restriction is subject to an exemption, a contravention of a condition attached to the exemption;

(c) a contravention of a requirement imposed by any relevant legislation to carry out checks in relation to the bringing of animals into the United Kingdom;

(d) a contravention of a requirement imposed by any relevant legislation to provide information or documents, or the provision of false or misleading information or documents in purported compliance with such a requirement;

(e) the obstruction of, or a failure to assist, a person acting in the execution of powers conferred by any relevant legislation.

(4) In subsection (3), "relevant legislation" means legislation (including regulations under section 1) that relates to animal welfare or animal health.

(5) Where regulations under section 1 create a criminal offence, they must provide that—

(a) the offence is—

(i) triable summarily only, or

(ii) triable summarily or on indictment;

(b) the offence is punishable—

(i) with a fine, or

(ii) with a term of imprisonment or a fine (or both);

(c) any term of imprisonment with which the offence is punishable on summary conviction does not exceed—

(i) in England and Wales, the relevant maximum term;

(ii) in Scotland, 12 months;

(iii) in Northern Ireland, 6 months;

(d) any term of imprisonment with which the offence is punishable on conviction on indictment does not exceed 5 years.

(6) In subsection (5)(c)(i), "the relevant maximum term" means—

(a) in relation to an offence that is triable only summarily—

(i) if the offence is committed before the time when section 281 of the Criminal Justice Act 2003 comes into force, 6 months;

(ii) if the offence is committed after that time, 51 weeks;

(b) in relation to an offence that is triable summarily or on indictment, the general limit in a magistrates' court.

(7) Regulations under section 1 may make—

(a) different provision for different purposes or areas;

(b) consequential, incidental, supplementary, transitional or saving provision.

3 Meaning of "appropriate national authority" and related provision

(1) In section 1, "appropriate national authority", in relation to the making of regulations, means—

(a) the Secretary of State;

(b) the Scottish Ministers, so far as provision made by the regulations would be within the legislative competence of the Scottish Parliament if contained in an Act of that Parliament;

(c) the Welsh Ministers, so far as provision made by the regulations would be within the legislative competence of Senedd Cymru if contained in an Act of Senedd Cymru;

(d) the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs in Northern Ireland ("DAERA"), so far as provision made by the regulations would be within the legislative competence of the Northern Ireland Assembly if contained in an Act of that Assembly.

(2) DAERA must obtain the consent of the Secretary of State before making any provision in regulations under section 1 that, if contained in a Bill in the Northern Ireland Assembly, would result in the Bill's requiring the consent of the Secretary of State under section 8 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

(3) The Secretary of State must obtain the consent of—

(a) the Scottish Ministers,

(b) the Welsh Ministers, or

(c) DAERA,

before making any provision in regulations under section 1 that could be made in regulations under that section by (respectively) the Scottish Ministers, the Welsh Ministers, or DAERA.

(4) But DAERA's consent is not needed under subsection (3) for provision that would need the Secretary of State's consent under subsection (2) before it could be made in regulations made by DAERA.

(5) Schedule 7B to the Government of Wales Act 2006 (general restrictions on legislative competence of Senedd Cymru) is amended as set out in subsections (6) and (7).

(6) In paragraph 9(8)(b) (exceptions to restrictions relating to reserved authorities)—

(a) each of the sub-paragraphs numbered (i) and so on (including any sub-paragraph not yet in force) becomes an unnumbered sub-paragraph;

(b) omit the "or" after the penultimate of those sub-paragraphs;

(c) at the end insert—

"the Animal Welfare (Import of Dogs, Cats and Ferrets) Act 2025."

(7) In paragraph 11(6)(b) (exceptions to restrictions relating to Ministers of the Crown)—

(a) each of the sub-paragraphs numbered (i) and so on (including any sub-paragraph not yet in force) becomes an unnumbered sub-paragraph;

(b) omit the "or" after the penultimate of those sub-paragraphs;

(c) at the end insert—

"the Animal Welfare (Import of Dogs, Cats and Ferrets) Act 2025."

(8) Where any enactment passed or made on or after the day on which this Act is passed inserts a numbered sub-paragraph in paragraph 9(8)(b) or 11(6)(b) of Schedule 7B to the Government of Wales Act 2006, the enactment has effect as if—

(a) it instead inserted an unnumbered sub-paragraph at the same place, and

(b) where relevant, it did not insert "or" before that sub-paragraph or omit "or" before the preceding sub-paragraph.

4 Procedure for regulations under section 1

(1) A power of the Secretary of State or the Welsh Ministers to make regulations under section 1 is exercisable by statutory instrument.

(2) A power of the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs in Northern Ireland ("DAERA") to make regulations under section 1 is exercisable by statutory rule for the purposes of the Statutory Rules (Northern Ireland) Order 1979 (S.I. 1979/1573 (N.I. 12)).

(3) Regulations under section 1 are subject to the affirmative procedure, subject to subsection (4).

(4) Regulations that contain provision made by virtue of section 1(2)(d) (power to specify fee in relation to permit application) and do not contain any other provision under section 1 are subject to the negative procedure.

(5) Where the Secretary of State, the Welsh Ministers or DAERA propose that the same regulations should contain both—

(a) provision under section 1, and

(b) provision under other legislation that may be made by regulations subject to the negative procedure,

the provision mentioned in paragraph (b) may instead be made by regulations subject to the affirmative procedure.

(6) In this section—

"subject to the affirmative procedure", in relation to regulations made by the Secretary of State, the Welsh Ministers or DAERA, means—

(a) in the case of regulations made by the Secretary of State, that a statutory instrument containing the regulations may not be made unless a draft of the instrument has been laid before and approved by a resolution of each House of Parliament;

(b) in the case of regulations made by the Welsh Ministers, that a statutory instrument containing the regulations may not be made unless a draft of the instrument has been laid before and approved by a resolution of Senedd Cymru;

(c) in the case of regulations made by DAERA, that the regulations may not be made unless a draft of the regulations has been

laid before and approved by a resolution of the Northern Ireland Assembly;

"subject to the negative procedure", in relation to regulations made by the Secretary of State, the Welsh Ministers or DAERA, means—

(a) in the case of regulations made by the Secretary of State, that a statutory instrument containing the regulations is subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of either House of Parliament;

(b) in the case of regulations made by the Welsh Ministers, that a statutory instrument containing the regulations is subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of Senedd Cymru;

(c) in the case of regulations made by DAERA, that the regulations are subject to negative resolution within the meaning given by section 41(6) of the Interpretation Act (Northern Ireland) 1954 (c. 33 (N.I.)).

(7) In relation to regulations under section 1 made by the Scottish Ministers, see—

(a) section 27 of the Interpretation and Legislative Reform (Scotland) Act 2010 (asp 10) (Scottish statutory instruments) for provision corresponding to subsections (1) and (2);

(b) section 33 of that Act (combination of certain powers) for provision corresponding to subsection (5);

(c) sections 28 and 29 of that Act for the meaning of "subject to the negative procedure" and "subject to the affirmative procedure".

Certain movements of dogs, cats and ferrets treated as commercial

5 Disapplication of non-commercial rules in certain cases

(1) Regulation (EU) No 576/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 June 2013 on the non-commercial movement of pet animals and repealing Regulation (EC) No 998/2003 is amended as follows.

(2) In Article 3 (definitions)—

(a) in point (a), at the end insert "(but see Articles 5 and 5A in relation to dogs, cats and ferrets)";

(b) in point (b), after "non-commercial movement" (in the first place it occurs) insert "(including movement that would be non-commercial movement but for Article 5 or 5A)".

(3) Omit Article 4.

(4) In Article 5 (maximum number of pet animals)—

(a) for paragraph 1 substitute—

"1. For the purposes of this Regulation, a movement of pet animals of the species listed in Part A of Annex I (dogs, cats and ferrets) is not a non-commercial movement if the relevant maximum is exceeded at any time during the movement.

1A. For the purposes of this Article, the relevant maximum is exceeded:

(a) in a case where the animals are being moved in a motor vehicle (including a vehicle on board a train or ferry), if there are more than five animals of the species listed in Part A of Annex I in the vehicle;

(b) in any other case, if there are more than three animals of the species listed in Part A of Annex 1 accompanying the owner or an authorised person.";

(b) in paragraph 2—

(i) for the words before point (a), substitute "Paragraph 1 does not apply to a movement of pet animals if the following conditions are fulfilled:";

(ii) in point (a), omit "non-commercial";

(iii) in point (b), for "the authorised person" substitute "an authorised person";

(c) after paragraph 3 insert—

"3A Paragraph 1 does not apply to a movement of pet animals if—

(a) the appropriate authority determines that there are exceptional or compelling circumstances that justify the movement's being treated as a non-commercial movement even if the relevant maximum is exceeded; and

(b) the movement meets any conditions attached to the determination.";

(d) in paragraph 4, for the words from the beginning to "those pet animals" substitute "Where paragraph 1 applies and the relevant maximum is exceeded, the pet animals in question";

(e) at the end insert—

"5A. In paragraph 1A, "motor vehicle" means a mechanically propelled vehicle intended or adapted for use on roads."

(5) After Article 5 insert—

"Article 5A

Movement of dogs, cats and ferrets to be within five days of owner

1 For the purposes of this Regulation, a movement of a pet animal of a species listed in Part A of Annex 1 (dogs, cats and ferrets) is not a non-commercial movement if the animal is not accompanied by the owner during the movement, unless—

(a) the owner—

(i) entered Great Britain earlier on the day on which the animal does so or at any time during the five days preceding that day; or

(ii) is expected to enter Great Britain later on that day or at any time during the five days following that day; and

(b) the authorised person who accompanies the animal during the movement provides evidence, to the appropriate authority's satisfaction, as to when the owner entered or is expected to enter Great Britain.

2 Paragraph 1 does not apply to a movement of a pet animal if—

(a) the appropriate authority determines that there are exceptional or compelling circumstances that justify the movement's being treated as a non-commercial movement even if—

(i) the animal is not accompanied by the owner; and

(ii) one or both of the conditions in paragraph 1(a) and (b) are not met; and

(b) the movement meets any conditions attached to the determination."

(6) In Article 25 (format and content of identification document), in paragraph 3, omit "or the authorised person".

6 Corresponding application of commercial rules

(1) In regulation 3 of the Trade in Animals and Related Products Regulations 2011 (S.I. 2011/1197)—

(a) for paragraph (1) substitute—

"(1) These Regulations do not apply in relation to pet animals where the movement of the animals is a non-commercial movement for the purposes of the Pets Regulation (see Articles 3, 5 and 5A of the Pets Regulation).";

(b) in paragraph (2), omit the definitions of "authorised person", "non-commercial movement", "owner", and "accompanying".

(2) In regulation 3 of the Trade in Animals and Related Products (Scotland) Regulations 2012 (S.S.I. 2012/177)—

(a) for paragraph (1) substitute—

"(1) These Regulations do not apply in relation to pet animals where the movement of the animals is a non-commercial movement for the purposes of the Pets Regulation (see Articles 3, 5 and 5A of the Pets Regulation).";

(b) in paragraph (2), omit the definitions of "authorised person", "non-commercial movement", "owner", and "accompanying".

(3) In regulation 3 of the Trade in Animals and Related Products (Wales) Regulations 2011 (S.I. 2011/2379 (W. 252))—

(a) in the English language text—

(i) for paragraph (1) substitute—

"(1) These Regulations do not apply in relation to pet animals where the movement of the animals is a non-commercial movement for the purposes of the Pets Regulation (see Articles 3, 5 and 5A of the Pets Regulation).";

(ii) in paragraph (2), omit the definitions of "accompanying", "authorised person", "non-commercial movement", and "owner";

(b) in the Welsh language text—

(i) for paragraph (1) substitute—

"(1) Nid yw'r Rheoliadau hyn yn gymwys mewn perthynas ag anifeiliaid anwes pan fo symud yr anifeiliaid yn symud anfasnachol at ddibenion y Rheoliad Anifeiliaid Anwes (gweler Erthyglau 3, 5 a 5A o'r Rheoliad Anifeiliaid Anwes).";

(ii) in paragraph (2), omit the definitions of "mynd gyda", "person awdurdodedig", "symud anfasnachol" and "perchennog".

7 Consequential provision

(1) In Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 577/2013 of 28 June 2013 on the model identification documents for the non-commercial movement of dogs, cats and ferrets, the establishment of lists of territories and third countries and the format, layout and language requirements of the declarations attesting compliance with certain conditions provided for in Regulation (EU) No 576/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council, in Section A of Part 3 of Annex IV (model of declaration)—

(a) omit "or the natural person who has authorisation in writing from the owner to carry out the non-commercial movement on behalf of the owner ([1])" in the first and third places those words occur (that is to say, in the paragraph after "I, the undersigned" and the paragraph after "Place and date:");

(b) for "his movement" substitute "the owner's movement".

(2) In Regulation (EU) 2017/625 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 March 2017 on official controls and other official activities performed to ensure the application of food and feed law, rules on animal health and welfare, plant health and plant protection products, in Article 53 (official controls not performed at border control posts), in paragraph 1(d)(iv), for "which meet the conditions laid down in Article 5 of" substitute "for a purpose connected with".

General

8 Extent, commencement and short title

(1) Sections 1 to 4 and this section extend to England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

(2) Sections 5 to 7 extend to England and Wales and Scotland.

(3) Sections 1 to 7 come into force on such day as the Secretary of State may by regulations appoint.

(4) This section comes into force on the day on which this Act is passed.

(5) The Secretary of State may by regulations make transitional or saving provision in connection with the coming into force of any provision of this Act.

(6) Regulations under this section may make different provision for different purposes.

(7) Regulations under this section are to be made by statutory instrument.

(8) This Act may be cited as the Animal Welfare (Import of Dogs, Cats and Ferrets) Act 2025.

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