



August 2021

Dear Constituent,

Thank you for contacting me about the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991.

I understand the strength of feeling on all sides when discussing this legislation. The Dangerous Dogs Act provides offences in connection with fighting dogs, as well as dog attacks on people and other animals. It also prohibits four types of fighting dog for public safety reasons, and Ministers and I agree with advice from the police that the ban on the Pit Bull Terrier, Japanese Tosa, Dogo Argentino and Fila Brasileiro should remain in place.

It is important to note that not all banned dogs are destroyed. I know that if a court decides that the owner is a fit and proper person and the dog presents no danger to public safety, the dog can be kept under strict conditions, for example muzzled and on a lead in public. It is also placed on an index of exempted dogs. I believe this is an appropriate approach when determining whether a dog can be safely exempted. I am aware that there are currently around 3,700 dogs where a court has granted an exemption and allowed them to stay with their owner.

In 2018, a Parliamentary Committee conducted a review into controlling dangerous dogs. The report made a series of recommendations to improve dog ownership and reduce dog attacks, and the Government has responded positively to these suggestions. Ministers have now commissioned research by Middlesex University into dog attacks which will consider different approaches and the effectiveness of current dog control measures. It will also seek to identify and examine the factors and situations that may cause dog attacks. The report is currently being peer reviewed and will be finalised in light of peer review comments. I understand that the intention is to publish the final report later this year.

Of course, the behaviour of any dog depends on several factors, including the training, the actions of the owner and the environment in which it lives, and my ministerial colleagues recognise that they have to balance the views of people who wish to repeal breed-specific legislation with their responsibility to ensure that the public are properly protected from dog attacks. That is why I support the Government's efforts to promote responsible dog ownership. Compulsory microchipping has been introduced and the maximum penalty for those held responsible for a dog attack has been increased to 14 years' imprisonment.

Under the Dangerous Dog Act 1991, it is an offence to allow a dog to be dangerously out of control in any place. This includes any occasion on which there are grounds for reasonable apprehension that a dog will injure someone, whether or not it actually does so. In addition, the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs' statutory Code of Practice for the Welfare of Dogs asks owners to ensure that they keep their dog under control and safe at all times and do not let them stray. I am aware that in England and Wales, local authorities can create Public Space Protection Orders, so that in certain areas a dog may have to be kept on a lead. If you are concerned about



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the behaviour of dogs in a specific public area, I would therefore encourage you to contact your local authority.

I agree that dogs should not spend long periods of time in kennels while any court case takes place, but this must be balanced with the threat to public safety posed by the dog. Where the relevant Chief Officer of Police is satisfied about the dog's temperament, and suitability of owner, a seized suspected prohibited dog can be released back to the owner while the court case is waiting to be heard.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Chris'.

CHRIS HEATON-HARRIS MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR DAVENTRY