

Media Release

Friday, 12th July 2024



**An Roinn Forbartha
Tuaithe agus Pobail**
Department of Rural and
Community Development

Minister Humphreys Announces Ban on XL Bully Dogs

- ***Illegal to import, breed, or re-sell XL Bullies from October 1st***
- ***Ban on ownership of these dogs from February 1st 2025***
- ***Owners require 'Certificate of Exemption' to keep existing dogs***
- ***Minister Humphreys: 'Public Safety my number one priority'***

The Minister for Rural and Community Development, Heather Humphreys TD has today (Friday, 12th July 2024) announced a ban on XL Bully Dogs.

From October 1st 2024, new regulations will prohibit the importing, breeding, selling and re-homing of XL Bullies.

From February 1st 2025, it will be illegal to own an XL Bully without a 'Certificate of Exemption'.

Following consultation with the chairperson of the Stakeholder Group on Dog Control, Retired Deputy Garda Commissioner John Twomey, Minister Humphreys has announced the ban in order to protect public safety.

The Minister is announcing the ban in the interest of public safety following a number of recent horrific attacks by XL Bullies, which included the death of a young woman, Nicole Morey, in Limerick.

Commenting on her decision, Minister Humphreys stated:

"I am bringing in regulations to ban the breeding, sale, rehoming and import of XL Bully dogs from 1st October 2024.

"These new regulations will ensure that, from October, nobody in the State can take ownership of these dangerous dogs and that it will be illegal to breed, sell, import, rehome, exchange, gift or abandon XL Bully dogs.

"Secondly, I will be bringing in a system of certification for existing owners of XL Bully dogs. Over the period 1st October 2024 to 1st February 2025 all existing XL Bully owners will have to apply for a Certificate of Exemption."

Certificates of Exemption will be issued subject to strict criteria, including a requirement for licensing, microchipping and neutering. Other possible criteria will be discussed with the Stakeholder Group on Dog Control put in place to advise on these issues.

After 1st February 2025, any owner not compliant with the new regulations will have their dog seized and euthanized.

Similar measures have been recently announced in both the UK and Northern Ireland.

Minister Humphreys continued:

"My officials are working across Government, including with local authorities, the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, An Garda Síochána, and Revenue Commissioners, to ensure effective enforcement of these regulations.

"The timelines I have set out will ensure that existing owners have time to obtain Certificates of Exemption, and that the systems are in place to enforce the regulations once enacted."

On the need for such a ban, Minister Humphreys continued:

"I know a lot of people will not agree with this decision. I'm a dog owner myself and I know people love their dogs. We must be mindful however that no dog's life is worth more than human life. Ultimately that is what guided me in making this decision.

"The XL Bully was responsible for the horrific attack on Alejandro Mizzan in Wexford last year and it was also the breed which killed a young woman in Limerick recently. If we do not take action now the number of these dogs in the country will grow and my fear is that these attacks will become more frequent. It is my strong view that Ireland should not be out of step with neighbouring jurisdictions in Northern Ireland and the UK on this matter."

Additional funding for local authorities

The Minister has also allocated an additional €2 million in capital funding to local authorities to expand and improve their pounds and warden facilities. This funding is in addition to €2 million announced for dog warden facilities in November last year (2023). This funding will help local authorities manage any increased demands due to these regulations, and help support their wider dog control remit.

ENDS

Notes to editors:

Next Steps:

Between now and 1st October 2024 the necessary regulations will be put in place, with cross Government work on this already commenced.

Penalties for offences will be set out in the regulation, and will be in line with the penalties in the Control of Dogs Act (outlined below)

The Stakeholder Group on Dog Control will continue its work and will inform any necessary future actions with regard to dog control.

Penalties

Under Section 27(f) of the Control of Dogs Act, any person in breach of any regulation under Section 19 of the Act shall be guilty of an offence.

A person guilty of an offence under the Act shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine of up to €2,500, or to imprisonment of a term of up to 3 months, or both.

Stray or abandoned dogs

Any dog found straying, or indeed abandoned, will be seized by a dog warden. That dog may then be put down after five days if not claimed and any charges paid.

Actions already taken

Earlier this year, Minister Humphreys established the new Stakeholder Group on Dog Control in response to a number of attacks on both people and livestock.

The Minister also took a series of other actions at the end of 2023 and earlier in 2024, including:

- Increasing the on-the-spot fines for offences (Including trebling them for the most serious offences)
- Investing €2 million in dog warden facilities (announced in November)
- Launched a major public awareness campaign to remind dog owners of their responsibilities