

Decision to be taken

Ms Emily Sutcliffe, 80 Coastal Road, Hest Bank, Lancaster.

13th June 2022

Urgent Item Report

PURPOSE OF REPORT

A report from a member of the public raised concerns for the welfare of dogs housed at the above licenced dog breeding premises. A joint visit between Lancashire Police and Lancaster City Council Animal Licensing Officers was made on 7th June 2022. 16 adult dogs and 9 puppies were found onsite in outbuildings. There was evidence to suggest that the dogs had been left for a considerable period. At the time of the visit all the dog's welfare were not being met and all of the puppies and adult dogs appeared in distress. A decision was made to take all 25 dogs into care. There were 11 licence breaches. The overall conditions and severity of the breaches are sufficient to justify licence revocation and due to the imminent threat to the welfare of the dogs, the recommendation is this should be immediate.

This report is public.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To revoke the dog breeding licence with immediate effect on the grounds of number and severity of the breaches of licence conditions, and the impact this has had on the health and welfare of the dogs.

1 Introduction

The report is provided in accordance with the requirements of the Councils Constitution which provides that any urgent decisions must be taken by the Director in consultation with the Chair or Vice Chair of Licensing Committee.

2 Allegation

On 7th June 2022 Animal Licensing Officers received a notification from the police of concerns raised for the safety and welfare of dogs housed at a licenced dog breeding establishment – 80 Coastal Road, Hest Bank. The concern was raised after a visit to another establishment, following a call by a member of the public. On arrival nobody was on site. The licence holder has held a dog breeding licence for 1 year.

Summary of the licence details:

Ms Emily Sutcliffe
80 Coastal Road
Hest Bank, Lancaster.

Last inspected on 20th August 2021, when a 4-star (2 year) Licence was issued.

3 Officer inspection

Sarah Jones and Sarah Hayland (Animal Licensing Officers) arrived at approximately 17.30 on 7th June 2022 to find no one on site. The property is a large, semi-detached property with a stable block to the rear consisting of two separate blocks.

Under Section 23 of the Animal Welfare Act 2006 Officers have Power of entry to any part of a licensed premises, which is not a domestic dwelling. On entering the stable block, the dogs were discovered.

In Stable Block 1: 15 dogs of various breeds with no light, no water, no food, and heavily soiled bedding.

In Stable Block 2:

Pen 1: 2 puppies with no mum, no water, no food, and heavily soiled bedding.

Pen 2: Mum with 5 puppies, no water, no food, and heavily soiled bedding.

Pen 3: 2 older puppies with no mum, no water, no food, and heavily soiled bedding.

It was apparent that their needs were not being met, contrary to Section 9 of the Animal Welfare Act and there were 11 easily identifiable breaches of his Animal Licensing conditions, notably all welfare.

4 Officers Investigations and findings

Details of licence breaches are listed below:

General conditions:

- 5.1 Provision of suitable environment (due to the deficiencies noted, the conclusion is that the environment was not suitable).
- 5.3 Provision of a clean and comfortable environment (the bedding was soiled in all pens).
- 5.9 Left unattended for longer than 4 hours (it was clear from the observations that there had not been a responsible person on site within the last 4 hours).
- 6.5 Constant access to fresh clean water (all pens were without water).
- 7.2 Opportunities to exercise (due to the apparent lack of recent attendance, none of the dogs had been given any exercise).
- 8.3 Daily opportunity to interact with people (the evidence suggests that nobody has been in attendance to interact with the dogs).
- 9.13 Monitoring at least one per day (if a responsible person had been on site during the day, it is reasonable to assume they would have attended to some or all of the welfare needs. Therefore, it is safe to assume this condition has not been met).

Specific conditions:

- 2.2 Size requirements for 1 of the kennels were not met.
- 2.12 Clean and comfortable sleeping area (bedding was heavily soiled).
- 4.3 Opportunity to exercise at least twice per day (due to the listed welfare issues it is clear that there has not been anyone in attendance, therefore no opportunity for exercise).
- 6.6 Health and safety checks at start and end of day (the observations listed strongly suggest that there have not been any checks made).

Limitation on number of dogs permitted - Licence states 5 and 16 were found on site at time of visit.

It should also be noted that Ms Sutcliffe was been spoken to on 9th June, to advise her of the actions taken on 7th June and that her dogs are now in our care. Ms Sutcliffe stated that a friend was meant to be looking after the dogs, but has not been formally interviewed or asked for an explanation for the conditions and breaches noted.

She has been informed she will be asked to attend a formal interview under caution, and this will be her opportunity to answer specific questions and explain what happened. Due to the severity of the welfare failings and number of breaches of the licence, it is intended to prepare a prosecution file for this incident.

5 Council's Policy and Legislation

The Council's Constitution states that "the Director for Communities and the Environment" in consultation with the Chair or Vice Chair of Licensing Committee can revoke a dog breeding licence under Section 15 of the Animal Welfare (Licensing of activities involving animals) (England) regulations 2018 Part 3, Schedule 15 - Grounds for suspension, variation without consent or revocation of a license.

A local authority may, without any requirement for the licence holder's consent, decide to suspend, vary, or revoke a licence at any time on being satisfied that—

- (a) the licence conditions are not being complied with,
- (b) there has been a breach of these Regulations,
- (c) information supplied by the licence holder is false or misleading, or
- (d) it is necessary to protect the welfare of an animal.

A Local Authority can with immediate effect revoke a licence where poor welfare conditions are discovered, and it would otherwise benefit the welfare of the animals involved to be removed from the licensable activity.

6 Conclusion

The Director of Communities and Environment in consultation with the Vice Chair of Licensing Committee are asked to determine whether Emily Sutcliffe should have her Licence to Breed Dogs revoked with immediate effect.

Emily Sutcliffe, in connection with the licensable activity has failed to meet the needs of the dogs and puppies involved in the activity of breeding, thereby also breaching her license conditions. The request for revocation is due to Emily Sutcliffe's apparent disregard for her animal's welfare as we have reasonable grounds to believe that she was out of the country for 6 days, and from the observations outlined in this report it is clear she did not make sufficient and reliable provisions for the care and welfare of the dogs in her possession. The reason this should take immediate affect is to ensure she does not have time to restart the business immediately.

CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT

(Including Diversity, Human Rights, Community Safety, Sustainability and Rural Proofing)

No significant impact. Ms Sutcliffe has the right of appeal if the licence is revoked

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Financial Services have not been consulted

SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS

Section 151 officer has not been consulted

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

These are detailed in the report in respect of the relevant Constitutional requirements.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

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