

**Open letter to Prime Minister Rishi Sunak from the
Dog Control Coalition
20 December 2023**

Dear Prime Minister

Open letter postpone the XL Bully ban

We, the Dog Control Coalition, are urgently calling for a delay to the introduction of the ban on XL Bully dogs scheduled to come into force on 31 December 2023. We strongly oppose banning any breed, as it is unfair on responsible owners and their dogs, and has historically proven to be ineffective in keeping the public safe. However, in the absence of a decision to reverse the ban, we are calling on the Government to extend the unnecessarily short deadline for the ban to come into force so owners, rescue centre staff and vet teams can act to do the best for the dogs in our care.

Our main concerns are as follows:

- The ban is being introduced at speed with little time for those affected to prepare - leaving owners confused and anxious, and placing a huge emotional and logistical burden on rescue centres and vet teams.
- A lack of clear communication from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), which is leading on the ban, means owners are either unaware of what they need to do to comply with the new law, causing them to potentially miss the deadline to exempt a beloved family pet, or are struggling to understand how to type their animals. There is also inadequate financial support for owners to comply with the exemption, making it impossible for some to keep their dogs and adding to the burden of those who can, in an already difficult economic climate.
- With the exact numbers of XL Bully dogs not known, it is unclear whether the vet profession has the capacity to neuter the estimated tens of thousands of dogs to comply with the ban, which risks owners and dogs being penalised. We continue to ask the UK Government to extend the neutering window to the summer of 2025 for dogs under seven months old at this current time. The cross-party Environment, Food and Rural Affairs committee is also calling on Defra to extend this timeline.
- The pace of this policy change is impacting significantly on the rescue sector. We face the very real risk of dogs being dumped in large numbers, leaving the rescue sector, already full to bursting, having to pick up the pieces. There is a lack of funding for neutering and inadequate funding for euthanasia, placing extra pressure on animal charities.



- This uncertainty is compounded by the lack of available enforcement support from the police, with concerns about limited availability, and delays in training, of Dog Legislation Officers to tackle the expected increased demand for their services.

Additionally, rescue centre staff face being forced to put to sleep pet animals simply because of the way they look, and who, if they were a different breed, they would potentially be able to take the time to train, rehabilitate and prepare for secure and safe homes.

The lack of information resulting from the pace of the policy change is also impacting significantly on operations at rescue centres. There is no clear guidance on how to manage puppies in rehoming centres, despite the coalition repeatedly asking for clarity leaving huge uncertainty. Dogs can only be assessed as an XL Bully type when fully mature, based on physical characteristics, which leaves a grey area for puppies and juveniles who cannot yet be accurately assessed.

We urgently need more information and support from the Government so that we can help support owners and dogs affected by this ban and we, the rescue sector of the coalition will also need help and support to get through this too.

On behalf of responsible XL Bully owners, animal welfare charities and veterinary professionals, we are asking that you act urgently to extend the implementation of this legislation.

Yours Sincerely

Dog Control Coalition

Blue Cross, Battersea, British Veterinary Association, Dogs Trust, Hope Rescue, PDSA, RSPCA, Scottish SPCA, The Kennel Club and USPCA