

P-06-1283 Introduce the mandatory microchipping of cats in Wales – Correspondence from the Petitioners to the Committee, 15 June 2022

We thank the Minister for Rural Affairs for her positive response and are satisfied that this adequately addresses the issue of mandatory microchipping in cats. We very much look forward to the completion of the analysis of the research, as well as any future public consultation.

We are thrilled at the success of this petition which presents the high level of support in Wales for the consideration of introducing mandatory microchipping in cats. This was further highlighted following the Ross Gazettes' reader poll for Wales;



The Ross Gazette
@RossGazette

...

This year will see England bring in legislation for all cats to be microchipped.

Do you support or oppose the mandatory microchipping of household cats?



The recent PDSA paw report shown that 46% of UK cats were not microchipped, rising to 68% in 2018 and 71% in 2019. Regardless of relentless campaigning by many organisations, including our own, unfortunately there is now an evident stagnation on cats being microchipped. It is estimated that more than a fifth of cats are not microchipped in Wales. Cats that are owned, but are not microchipped, place strain on charity resources, veterinary practices, local authorities and, most importantly, the cats lives are at stake and owners risk a lifetime of heartache not knowing where their cat is and never being afforded closure for a lost/deceased beloved pet. Vets are only obliged to administer pain relief, and we have heard of many cases where cats have sadly been euthanized following a road accident with minor cuts and bruises, simply because no owner could be traced/come forward. As highlighted in the Codes of Practice Summary for the Welfare of Cats, owners have a legal responsibility to make sure that their cats welfare needs are met, whatever the circumstances. Owners can not ensure this if they are untraceable in the event of an emergency. Also, at a time when shelters have gone far beyond breaking point, some having hundreds of cats on waiting lists to enter the rescue, strain would taken off by introducing mandatory microchipping. During our meetings as stakeholders for the England legislation, we learnt that many rescues feel a large chunk of cats in their care do have homes with owners searching for them. Without being identifiable, space has been taken leaving rescues unable to help genuine strays and ferals.

In terms of scanning, our previous successful petition, P-05-779 Compulsory scanning of domestic pets for microchips by councils, saw Wales become the first all-scanning nation in the world in 2017. However, this was voluntary and, although almost all local authorities have continued to maintain a good system whereby cats are routinely scanned and, where a microchip is present, owners are notified, there are those where standards fall below what is expected of residents. We receive numerous complaints about Cardiff council in particular, and would urge further work with this council in this area.

To scan cats found actually saves locally authorities money, which we would have thought would be much appreciated in the current climate. During our research for DEFRA, data revealed that local authorities pay between £6.71 - £30 per cat for the uplift and disposal of. Our research working with official council data swiftly became clear that there is a financial burden on councils when a cat is not microchipped. Although this was a small scale study for the benefit of the microchipping research for DEFRA, we were able to combine these findings with previous findings from a larger scale study in partnership with the London Assembly which focused on 4312 cats collected from 28 councils. Being able to combine both sets of solid data, we were able to conclude that London councils alone spend around £129,390.00 on the disposal of cats that are not microchipped. Applying this to all councils in England shown that a little over £44 million could be saved in a 3 year period. DEFRA are in receipt of the details of this, and we are happy to disclose further detail to yourselves if you require. We acknowledge that scanning, and potential updates to the database system, is ongoing with DEFRA and, at the time of writing this, DEFRA have not yet published proposals on new policies in this area. However, regardless of whether Wales ultimately decides to align policies on this with England at a later date, we would urge work to be done in the meantime to aid cat owners and local residents' concerns. The reasons for standards falling short in some areas is not necessarily due to a lack of will to have an effective system, but a lack of resources and understanding on the process. Issues, we have found, tend to fall into the areas of reporting, storing and equipment. We have come across many cases where refuse workers have a lack of understand of how to use the scanning equipment and no training has been given. One example would be that, one council believed that the number that appears on the microchip scanner indicated that no chip had been found. What this actually means is there is a chip and that is the identifying number. That particular council did not understand that they required vet codes to access owner details to notify owners. A very simple and honest mistake which greatly upset cat owners and the staff themselves. There is currently no official guidance for councils to adhere to, and at very least we urge Wales to introduce this to help guide councils on the correct and right thing to do. We are happy to send further details on this while all await DEFRA's conclusion on mandatory scanning.

CatsMatter