

EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM TO

The Dogs (Licensing and Identification) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014

S.R. 2014 No. 283

1. Introduction

- 1.1. This Explanatory Memorandum has been prepared by the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development to accompany the above-named Statutory Rule (“the Regulations”) which is laid under the negative resolution process before the Northern Ireland Assembly.
- 1.2. The Regulations are made under powers contained within the Dogs (Northern Ireland) Order 1983 and will come into operation on 1st January 2015.

2. Purpose

- 2.1. The Dogs (Licensing and Identification) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 revoke the requirement for a dog to wear a coloured licence identification tag from 1st January 2015. From this date compulsory microchipping will be the sole method of licence identification. There is also a minor amendment to the Regulations to clarify the requirement for dog owners to maintain up to date contact information on microchip databases.

3. Background

- 3.1. The licensing and identification of dogs is required by the Dogs (NI) Order 1983. This was amended by the Dogs (Amendment) Act (NI) 2011 to introduce compulsory microchipping.
- 3.2. During scrutiny of the Bill which led to the Dogs (Amendment) Act, the Agriculture and Rural Development (ARD) Committee recommended that the Department consult with Councils to assess whether there is a future need for dual identification systems (microchipping and collar tags) of licensed dogs post April 2012. DARD consulted Council Chief Executives at that time and the agreed way forward was to allow microchipping to bed-in (for approx 18-21 months) and review the need for collar tags in 2014.

3.3. These Regulations honour that pledge and carry forward all the provisions in The Dogs (Licensing and Identification) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012 and :

- revoke the requirement for a dog to wear a coloured licence identification tag from 1st January 2015 and
- clarify the requirement for dog owners to maintain up to date contact information on microchip databases.

4. Consultation

4.1. An 8 week consultation with Council Chief Executives was undertaken for these Regulations from 17 June 2014. The majority of responses to the consultation were in favour of abolishing the need for coloured tags from January 2015, with compulsory microchipping being the sole method of identification. A summary of the consultation responses was placed on the DARD website.

5. Equality Impact

5.1. Under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 DARD has considered and assessed the Regulations for any equality implications. An Equality Impact Assessment has not been carried out as the policy does not have any differential impact on any Section 75 group.

6. Regulatory Impact

6.1. The proposal to microchip all dogs was subject to a regulatory impact assessment when the policy proposals for the Dogs (Amendment) Bill were consulted on. Removal of the coloured tags is the final step in that process. Therefore, there was no need to repeat a Regulatory Impact Assessment for the Regulations.

7. Financial Implications

7.1. There are no financial implications identified for the dog owners or the Department. However, there is potential for Councils to reduce costs through the further development of Council online services and increasing online licensing. Data supplied during the consultation, and based on the statistics for previous years, it is estimated that by abolishing the requirement for coloured licence tags, Councils could potentially generate an annual saving

in the region of £78,000. Further savings may also be generated through the reduction in administration.

8. Section 24 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998

8.1. The Regulations comply with the requirements of section 24 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

9. EU Implications

9.1. Not applicable.

10. Parity or Replicatory Measure

10.1. This is stand alone legislation for Northern Ireland and there is no impact on GB devolved administrations.

11. Additional Information

11.1. Not applicable.

12. Contact

12.1. Jim McKelvey at the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development.
Telephone: 028 90525470 or e-mail: Jim.McKelvey@dardni.gov.uk