



MEETING TITLE	DAERA/PSNI/Council Multi-Agency Animal Welfare Forum
DIVISION/BRANCH REFERENCE	AE1/26/881558
VENUE	[REDACTED]
DATE/TIME	03/03/26 at 10.30am
LIST OF ATTENDEES	[REDACTED]
APOLOGIES	[REDACTED]
KEY POINTS DISCUSSED	
[REDACTED] welcomed everyone to meeting and invited all to introduce themselves. 1. Minutes and action points from last meeting on 06/11/25 Previous APs cleared – 2, 3, 5, 7 and 9 Previous APs carried forward – 1, 4, 6 and 8 2. DAERA Items • The Minister visited the USPCA offices to meet with their representatives. The USPCA are keen to discuss intelligence reporting processes. The Chief Executive will have a conversation on this with [REDACTED] (DAERA) to take forward. [REDACTED] has shared her frustration on how information is being shared. • Animal Welfare Statistical bulletin is currently being finalised, it will be published online once it has been cleared.	

- The Dogs Trust is removing 3rd party insurance for XL Bullies, they are currently charging £25.00 for owners who are renewing their policies. DEFRA cannot get them an alternative provider. It could be from 6 months to 7 years before a new provider is found to offer this insurance. The current system stops on the 30th June 2026. Any current client who takes renewal insurance out to this date will be covered for 1 year. This is now closed for new clients. Belfast City Council's renewal happened in December, they have very little to renew between April – June 2026.
- The Council areas need to look at their enforcement around XL Bullies, and DAERA needs to look at the legislation to see what can be amended or tightened up. DAERA is waiting on written advice coming through on this.
- The Animal Welfare Pathway will be published. Owners of cats, kittens, dogs and puppies will have to register with the council. It is on track to deliver this from April 2026. Work is underway with this register for the list of puppy breeders. The register needs to be transparent, and it should not be able to only publish some of the information. It is hoped that the register will improve buying a puppy for the new owners. If a breeder is not on the register, they are very limited to being able to sell a puppy. They will not be able to advertise their puppies through the proper channels. The report is not finalised yet, but not sure if it will go the councils.
- [REDACTED]
- CCTV is now mandatory in slaughterhouses.
- Dog licencing policy is going to increase in line with inflation.
- Rescue and Rehoming policy of 4 or more animals annually will be going out for consultation in May. It has to be back with the minister before summer recess - this is not giving the council long to look at it. The paper will go out as an individual document.
- Farmed animal reforms ongoing
- [REDACTED] updated on enforcement activities regarding a seizure, care and collection contract, staff training for dealing with difficult situations and persons.
- [REDACTED] advised that there was training for personal safety arranged for 14th April, this will be a full day face to face training. If training is a success the training may be rolled out to other DAERA staff via an online course. At the personal safety training it will be looked at how investigations take place, getting an awareness on these issues.

- [REDACTED] recently attended training on Animal abuse and Personal Abuse delivered by the Links Group. They are an organisation trying to promote an awareness on abuse in the home and on animals. There were 19,000 cases of domestic abuse last year.
- USPCA has had an incident reported to them, they are looking a meeting to discuss horse welfare this has been highlighted because of the [REDACTED] case. [REDACTED] will forward email from [REDACTED] on this. [REDACTED] circulated paper with [REDACTED] and stated the legal position will not change. The Minister is bringing forward a sentencing review. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] have met with staff from Department of Justice. The Magistrate's court does not have a strong sentencing appeal, a lot depends on the Magistrate's knowledge.
- WEB is looking at the transportation of horses. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]. A horse or horses have to stay in the final destination for 48 hours, a lot of the horses are coming through NI going to the Republic of Ireland moving on to Europe for slaughter.

3. Council Items

- Councils are undergoing change at the minute, [REDACTED] is taking over as Manager in Omagh
- Recent FOI request from Dogs Trust received in relation to funding from government and expenditure of AW and dog control service delivery.
- Councils to work with DAERA in relation to Responsible Dog Ownership Campaigns and Paws for Thought.
- Judicial Review Letter is being drafted for Ministial approval, hope to have it cleared for March/April 2026.
- Reform met with Policy side; there may need to be a new group set up. This will be up to each Individual Council how they will handle this.
- There are a lot of exotic animals being brought in from around Europe, this will have to be looked at.
- [REDACTED]
- Southern Area Council have a couple of cases in Court at present.

5. AOB

- Next meeting to be held on 25/06/26 with Council to chair in [REDACTED]

ACTION POINTS/OFFICIAL RESPONSIBLE/TARGET DATE:

AP1 – DAERA to send out minutes of meeting – cleared – sent 27/03/26

[REDACTED]

AP3 (CF) – Council to request in writing to DAERA that, for formal consideration by Policy and DSO, DAERA officers could be authorised under council powers to allow them to inspect and investigate welfare concerns at licensed establishments.

AP4 (CF) – [REDACTED] to remind Comms team to keep PSNI informed, DAERA to ‘tag’ PSNI (in any social media campaigns re Responsible Dog Ownership)

AP5 (CF) - [REDACTED] to share council report on outcome of recent LCC ‘Max’ pitbull case

AP6 - Council to send invites for next meeting on 25/06/26

Minutes written by:

[REDACTED]

Date:

03.03.26