

Requested Information

Information concerning puppy movements from Northern Ireland to Scotland during July and August 2026.

Exemption / Exception under consideration

Section 30 – Investigations and proceedings

Reasons why the public interest would favour disclosure:

The Department considers that confirming or denying whether the requested information is held would contribute to openness and transparency regarding the movement of dogs through Northern Ireland ferry ports and the measures taken by DAERA and partner agencies to identify, deter and address illegal dog trafficking. Disclosure would enhance public understanding of the Department's role in protecting animal welfare and enforcing relevant legislation.

Reasons why the public interest would favour withholding:

Information about actual or potential investigations into illegal dog trafficking is sensitive. Confirming or denying whether the requested information is held could reveal details about enforcement activity and may help individuals seeking to avoid detection or regulatory controls.

The Department has a responsibility to protect the effectiveness of its enforcement and investigative work. Confirming or denying whether information is held could prejudice current or future investigations and reduce the ability of DAERA and partner agencies to prevent, detect and investigate offences.

For these reasons, the Department considers it appropriate, where the FOIA allows, to neither confirm nor deny whether the requested information is held.

Conclusion

The Department recognises the public interest in being open and transparent about animal welfare enforcement and the transportation of animals. However, after considering the arguments for and against disclosure, we believe there is a stronger public interest in protecting the Department's ability to investigate and enforce animal welfare legislation effectively. For this reason, the Department does not consider it appropriate to confirm or deny whether the requested information is held.