

PUPPY SMUGGLING

A TRAGEDY IGNORED

EU SUMMARY

Investigation into the continuing abuse
of the EU's Pet Travel Scheme



Dogs Trust is the United Kingdom's largest dog welfare charity and is the founding member of the EU Dog & Cat Alliance. In 2017 Dogs Trust carried out its third investigation into the abuse of the EU's Pet Travel Scheme.

Each year a significant number of companion animals are illegally traded across EU Member States by unscrupulous breeders and dealers abusing the EU's pet movement legislation. Regulation 576/2013 (known as the Pet Travel Scheme), which is meant for non-commercial movements of pet animals, such as going on holiday, is being used to commercially move pets across borders for sale. Legally, this should instead be carried out under commercial Directive 92/65/EEC.

Two previous investigations by Dogs Trust in 2014 and 2015 found abuses of the Pet Travel Scheme in Lithuania, Hungary and Romania. This third investigation followed the route of trafficked puppies bred in Lithuania and Poland, transported across a number of Member States and illegally imported into the United Kingdom. It illustrates the arduous journey puppies are subjected to in appalling conditions so that they can later be sold to unsuspecting owners, who often think they are buying a healthy, locally-bred pup.

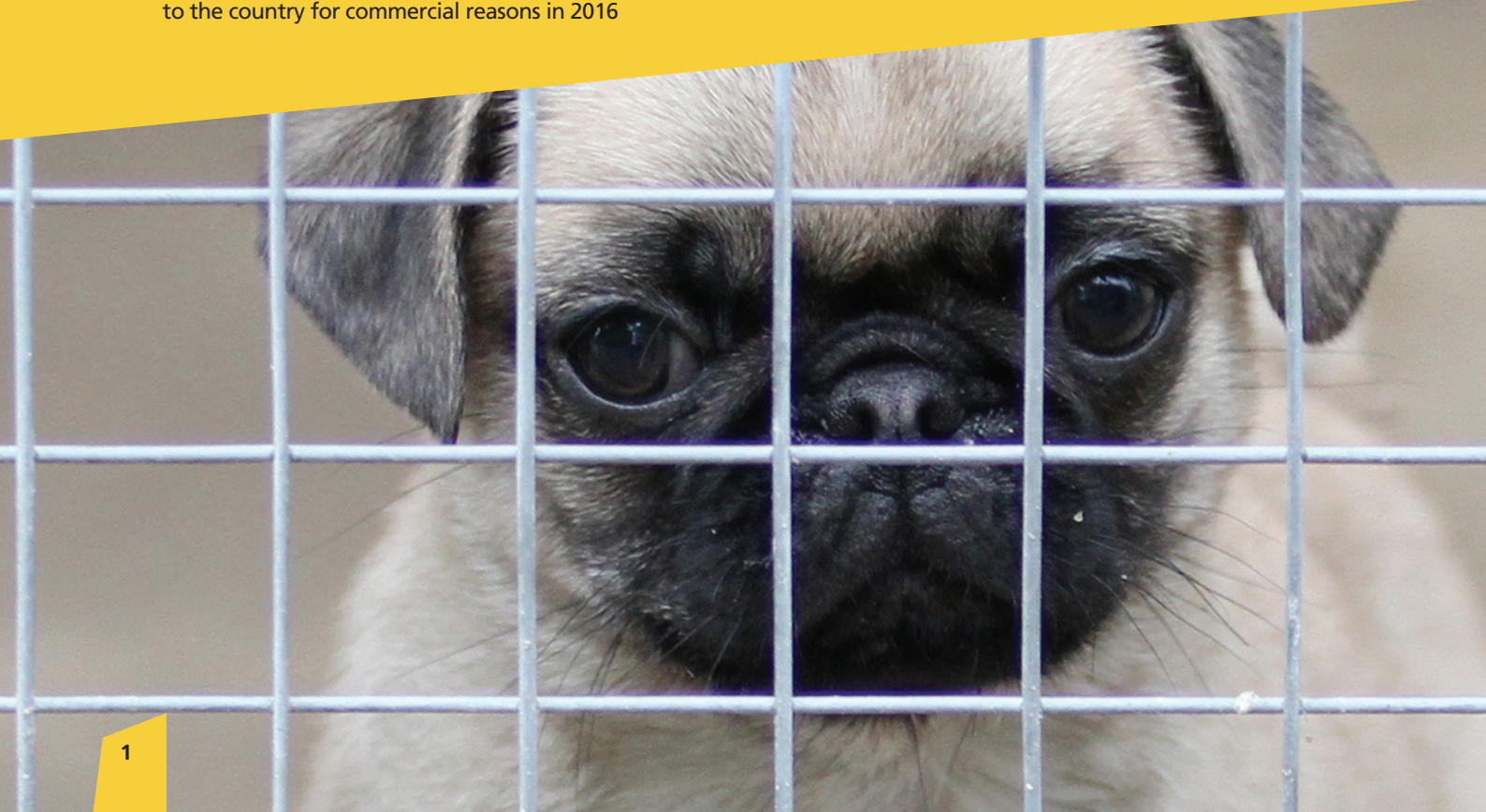
WHY IS THIS RELEVANT ACROSS THE EU?

While it is easier to gauge numbers of puppies being trafficked into the UK compared to most other EU countries as it has a physical border, the illegal trade in companion animals is just as rife in different countries across the EU. Most Member States are either source, destination or transit countries.

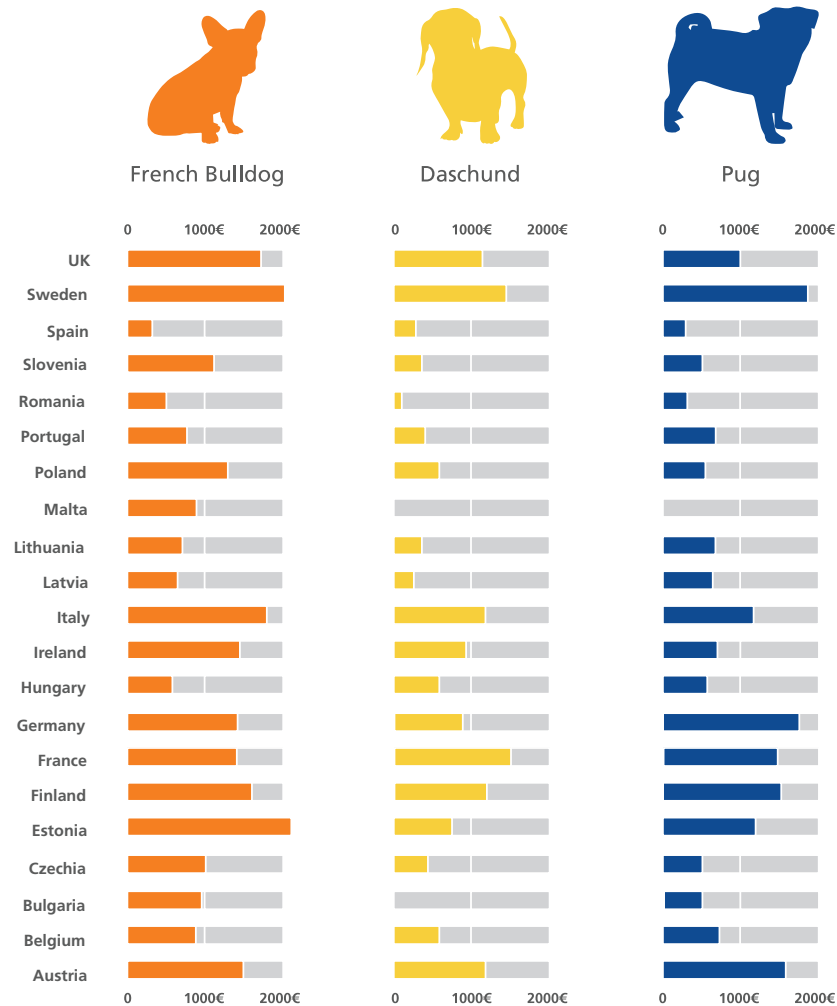
The illegal trade springs from abuses of EU pet movement legislation and differences in pet welfare standards and prices across the Union, and can only be addressed through a coordinated EU-wide approach which would specify concrete actions for Member State authorities and other stakeholders.

KEY FINDINGS OF THE INVESTIGATION

- 🐾 Puppies bred in large numbers in terrible conditions in Central and Eastern Europe
- 🐾 Puppies subjected to long journeys in cramped, filthy conditions with no opportunity to leave their cages for exercising or toileting and with minimal, if any, food, water or human contact
- 🐾 Veterinarians in Lithuania and Poland falsifying data on pet passports, allowing puppies under the legal minimum age of 15 weeks to travel into the UK under the Pet Travel Scheme
- 🐾 Lithuanian vets suggesting it is easier to smuggle a sedated puppy into the UK following the change in passport protocol. One vet went so far as to sell the undercover investigators the sedative for the puppy
- 🐾 Some experienced traders are importing puppies when they are 12-14 weeks of age, instead of below 10 weeks, making it much harder for authorities to assess their age. However, puppies much younger than this are still being detected at the borders too
- 🐾 Puppies travelling in ones and twos rather than litters of four or five, again so as not to raise the suspicion of the authorities
- 🐾 Lithuanian puppies openly for sale in the UK despite Directive 92/65/EEC figures showing that no dogs have travelled to the country for commercial reasons in 2016



PRICES PAID FOR PUPPIES ACROSS THE EU



Source: EU Dog & Cat Alliance Members

* see page 7 in the full report for figures

ILLEGAL PET TRADE AND PUBLIC HEALTH RISK

Current EU pet legislation is focused on preventing rabies; however, there are other zoonotic diseases currently not covered by EU legislation which can potentially be spread by the illegal trade.

ECHINOCOCCUS MULTILOCULARIS

Not currently found in Finland, Sweden, Malta, Ireland and the United Kingdom, this tapeworm can easily infect dogs. Although it produces no clinical signs in dogs it can cause potentially fatal conditions in humans. EU law states that dogs must receive treatment with wormer between one and five days prior to their entry into these five countries.

BABESIOSIS

Transmitted through ticks, this disease is found in Southern and Central Europe and can cause fever, weight loss, enlarged lymph nodes, enlarged spleen and jaundice. Without treatment, this disease can be fatal to dogs. People who are infected can develop flu-like symptoms including fever, body aches and nausea. Because the Babesia parasites infect red blood cells, babesiosis can cause haemolytic anaemia.

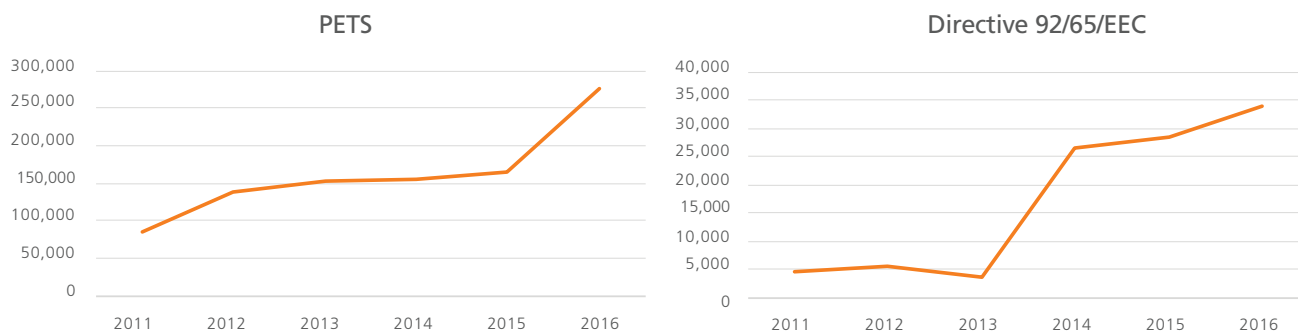
EHRlichiosis

Transmitted by ticks, this disease is reasonably common in Southern Europe. The infection can lead to chronic debility and neurological disease in dogs.

LEISHMANIOSIS

This infectious disease is transmitted by sandflies and can be picked up in coastal areas on the Mediterranean. The sandfly that transmits this disease is not present in much of Northern Europe. A significant number of infected dogs will develop skin lesions and suffer hair loss. If left untreated the disease is fatal, with renal failure the most common cause of death. However, symptoms can take years to develop. Leishmaniosis is likewise zoonotic, meaning it is also a health risk to humans.

NUMBER OF PUPPIES IMPORTED TO GREAT BRITAIN FROM CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE UNDER THE PET TRAVEL SCHEME (REGULATION 576/2013) AND DIRECTIVE 92/65/EEC BETWEEN 2011 AND 2015



CONCLUSIONS

- 🐾 The third Dogs Trust investigation sets out very clearly that the abuses of the Pet Travel Scheme (Regulation 576/2013) are rife.
- 🐾 Puppies that have been transported under the Pet Travel Scheme from Central and Eastern Europe are appearing for sale on UK websites. Most are well disguised and there is often little to give away to the unsuspecting buyer that they have been imported.
- 🐾 Despite two previous investigations and ongoing public awareness and public affairs work, the situation is not being adequately addressed either at the national or European levels.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE EUROPEAN UNION

- 🐾 The European Commission should draw up an action plan to tackle the illegal trade in companion animals across the EU, which should involve the European Commission, European Parliament and Member States, including agencies and border and veterinary authorities.
- 🐾 The action plan should address not only the implications of the trade to animal health and welfare, but also to public health, consumer protection and the functioning of the EU's internal market. It should also include sufficient measures to tackle the trafficking practices carried out by networks of unscrupulous breeders, veterinarians, transporters and sellers.
- 🐾 EU tertiary legislation to be adopted requiring the compulsory permanent identification and registration of dogs on a database which is linked to an EU database. The new EU Regulation on transmissible animal diseases ("Animal Health Law") provides framework legislation under which this could be introduced.

The full report is available on <https://www.dogstrust.org.uk/puppy-smuggling/>

ABOUT THE EU DOG & CAT ALLIANCE

The EU Dog & Cat Alliance represents over 70 organisations from 24 countries of the European Union. This includes veterinary organisations, organisations which are involved in the rescue/rehoming of dogs and cats and organisations which are working to protect dog and/or cat welfare. The Alliance's main focus is on improving EU legislation in relation to dogs and cats.

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