



**PUBLIC PETITION NO.**

**PE01396**

### **Name of petitioner**

Ian Robb on behalf of Help for Abandoned Animals (Arbroath)

### **Petition title**

The over breeding and abandonment of Staffordshire bull terriers

### **Petition summary**

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to investigate and prevent the over breeding and abandonment of Staffordshire bull terrier dogs.

### **Action taken to resolve issues of concern before submitting the petition**

I have written to all Angus councillors and have talked to the leading dog rescue organisations in Scotland who all agree this is a problem. The councillors say they are aware of the problem but there is no quick fix to the situation at a local level.

I have raised the profile of the issue at a national and local level and have received support from STV <http://news.stv.tv/scotland/tayside/243848-stigmatised-staffies-are-being-abandoned-by-addicts-who-puppy-farm-them-claim-animal-charities/>, the BBC and the Courier (copies of press articles are available from the Clerk)

I have previously contacted my local MSP Andrew Welsh in 2008 and through him received a response from the Minister (Richard Lochhead) who indicated he considered existing legislation was in place to deal with the issue, which has now gotten worse. I have also recently been in touch with my local MSP Graeme Dey who has visited the kennels and is supportive of the aims of the petition.

I am currently working with Angus Council and the local police, who have allocated a police constable to this issue, to try and tackle the problem at a local level.

### **Petition background information**

In the last six years the Staffordshire Bull Terrier (SBT's) has become stigmatised by the drug culture in Scotland (and the rest of Britain). Drug addicts are over breeding SBT's to fund their drug habits by selling the puppies for around £50 - £100, to buy a SBT from a registered breeder would cost between £300 - £400.[]

SBT's are a lovely breed of dog but if they are not reared properly and disciplined at the right times they can become problematic. Unfortunately for this breed it is often the wrong people in our society who are now breeding them. The SBT is also a prime candidate for being cross bred with pit bulls for dog fighting. They are also often sought out on websites that offer things free/for sale so they can be used as live bait for other fighting dogs. The type of people that are involved in this are often also involved in the

drug culture. Male SBT's are kept as a status symbol while females are kept for breeding purposes.

This creates two main reasons why it is then extremely difficult to re-home a SBT. Firstly many of these dogs are trained to be aggressive, either to fight other dogs or to enhance their owner's status and protect their property. Some SBT's have been known to have been trained to attack people wearing uniforms, such as the police. They are usually also very aggressive towards other dogs.

Dogs that exhibit signs of aggression like this cannot be re-homed. When a SBT comes into our rescue centre it is put on a rehabilitation programme, if it cannot be rehabilitated then it cannot be re-homed and it would have to be put to sleep. This is the same policy as other rescue centres nationwide, BBC Panorama broadcast a documentary in April 2010 on the Battersea Cat and Dog Home where in the previous year they had to put to sleep 3000 dogs, mostly SBT's because they were unable to re-home them.

This leads to the second reason which is that SBT's as a breed are also stigmatised by their association to this aspect of society and members of the general public do not wish to re-home an abandoned or rescued SBT even if the dog itself has come from a good home and has no aggressive tendencies.

These are the figures supplied to me by dog rescue centres in Scotland with regards to the percentage of all Staffordshire bull terriers and crosses of the breed currently in the centres.

HFAA Angus: 60%

Brown Street Dundee: 25%

PADS Perth: 35%

SSPCA: 40%

Haven Rescue, Fife: 80%

Langdykes, Fife: 65%

2nd Chance, Fife: 20% (limited spaces allocated for SBT)

Staffie Rescue Scotland: Inundated with people looking to rehome SBT

Argyle Rescue

Dogs Trust Scotland: 25% (limited spaces allocated for SBT)

Dumfries and Galloway Rescue: 25% (limited spaces allocated for SBT)

Edinburgh Cat and Dog Home: 35%

It has now become a real struggle for dog rescues in Scotland to find new homes for the massive amounts of SBT's that are abandoned on a weekly basis in Scotland. As you can see quite a few of the rescue organisations have had to put a limit on the amount of SBT's that they are able/willing to take.

Ultimately many rescues and charities who currently take in SBT's may either start to refuse to them in or cease operating as it is very difficult to find volunteers and many people will not wish to give up their spare time to work in what is effectively 'death row kennels' where young, healthy dogs are being put to sleep.

The reason I am raising this petition is to make the Scottish Parliament aware of the tragic situation of this specific breed of dog. It would be good if the Scottish Government could carry out its own investigation to see the massive problem for itself and then decide the appropriate course of action to take.

For example I believe that there is more that the police and local authorities could be doing to work together to help provide a solution. I don't believe that the existing legislation and local policies as being enforced properly. Those for example in relation to breeding dogs and tenancy agreements that restrict the number of dogs a local authority tenant can have. The Scottish Government could also look at other new ways of stopping this over breeding, perhaps by making SBT's a breed that can only be bred by those who have been granted a special licence. These SBT puppies could be micro-chipped and the original breeder made responsible for updating the records if the SBT moves to a new owner at any point in its life.

While the recent legislation - Control of Dogs (Scotland) Act 2010 –deals with people

who do not keep a proper control of their dog it will not stop more and more SBT's being bred.

**Unique web address**

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/GettingInvolved/Petitions/PE01396>

**Related information for petition**

**Do you wish your petition to be hosted on the Parliament's website to collect signatures online?**

**NO**

**How many signatures have you collected so far?**

519

**Closing date for collecting signatures online**

N/A

**Comments to stimulate online discussion**