

**Animal Health and Welfare Policy
Division**
Animal Identification, Legislation and
Welfare Branch



Department of
**Agriculture, Environment
and Rural Affairs**

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Dear Suzanne,

I am writing to advise you of the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (the Department) intention to make the Councils' dog statistical returns publicly available on the Department's website, and to include a link to the returns on the NI Direct Website. You may already be aware of this as it has been discussed and agreed at the Animal Welfare Council Project Board on 18th January 2017. More recently it also received the approval of the Northern Ireland Dog Advisory Group (NIDAG). The reason for this approach is outlined in the following paragraphs.

The Dogs (Northern Ireland) Order 1983 (Article 52) requires Councils to provide information as required by the Department. This information is collected on a quarterly basis, collated and held by the Department. It is then referred to by Councils and the Department when providing responses to dog related information requests.

Both the Department and Councils deal with a range of requests for dog-related information, for example, correspondence cases, Assembly Questions, media requests and Freedom of Information requests. Making the dog statistical information available on-line will provide direct access to this information without first having to approach the Department and/or Councils. It is anticipated that this will have the effect of reducing the volume of dog related statistical requests made to the Department and Councils. You may also wish to consider putting your Council's dog related statistics onto its website.

On 1st August 2017 my colleague (Kay Faulkner) wrote to officers in each Council who are involved in providing the Department with the quarterly statistical returns, and advised them of the Department's intention. It is intended to commence publication of statistical returns on 2nd October 2017, starting with the first quarter of the current financial year, namely April to June 2017. Thereafter, publication dates will be as detailed in the table provided below.

Quarter:	Councils to provide statistics to the Department by:	Department to collate and publish returns by:
Apr - Jun	31 st July	2 nd Oct
Jul - Sep	31 st Oct	30 th Nov
Oct - Dec	31 st Jan	28 th Feb
Jan - Mar	30 th Apr	31 st May

The Department plans to issue a Press Release in late September to advise the public that dog statistics for each Council area will be available online from 2nd October 2017. I will ensure that you are copied into the Press Release.

Historically, there have been some issues around the timely provision of the quarterly returns and Departmental officials have worked with the Councils to ensure accuracy and to improve turnaround times. It will now be the responsibility of each Council to ensure that all required statistical information has been provided by the designated date. The Department will be publishing the information on the specified publication date and therefore, any omissions or outstanding returns will be annotated in the publication.

There will be a footnote added to the published document advising that figures have been provided by local Councils and that any enquiries regarding the content should be made to the relevant Council.

I am happy to discuss any issues or concerns you may have regarding the content of this letter, if you would find that helpful.

Yours sincerely

Brenda Kelly

BRENDA KELLY