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## Quarantine reform campaign report published

◆ The Quarantine Reform Campaign has published its report 'The case for change'. The report is published jointly by veterinary surgeons in support of change, the RSPCA, and Passport for Pets. Richard Hill reports.

**T**HE report supports the bill before Parliament which would 'allow the importation of pet animals from the European Union and rabies-free countries without quarantine upon proof of vaccination, blood tests and permanent identification by microchip; to improve standards in quarantine kennels; and for connected purposes.'

Introducing the report, John Rolls, of the RSPCA said, "We decided to back reform after holding a conference last year to review all aspects of the quarantine issue, at which international and national representatives agreed that reform was both possible and desirable. The coming together of these three groups today represents the start of an alliance campaigning on this issue. Together we hope to be able to make rapid progress towards a new, modern, efficient and humane system of rabies control."

Also speaking was Lady Fretwell, Chair of Passport for Pets. "The scientific committee that has been set up by Dr Cunningham under Professor Kennedy reports back to the government quite soon," she said. "It is looking at the scientific evidence and the serious risk assessments that have been done in other rabies free countries, and we believe there is only one conclusion: Modern science and modern methods of

control should replace the present system. The danger we foresee on this is officials who have blocked change since 1994 will find new pretext of stalling. Responsibility for change lies with the British government and parliament, and we want to ensure that they are both fully aware of the facts and the need for urgent reform."

Representing Vets in support of change was Lord Soulsby. He began by outlining a document circulated to over 1500 veterinary practitioners. "77 of those who responded were in favour of the changes," said Lord Soulsby, "The present quarantine laws in

the world has such draconian laws as we have."

"The law for the requirements of quarantine were changed in 1970 to include vaccination and which was included so that any rabies coming into quarantine would not spread within quarantine kennels, and since 1970, we have had no rabies in this country in imported dogs or otherwise. So it really has been vaccination that has stopped the importation of rabies, not quarantine. The quarantine regulations have in fact been modified to allow commercial dogs and cats to be imported under what is known as the Balai directive."

Lord Soulsby hopes that



Launch of the Case for Change report (Left to right): Lady Fretwell, Chairman, Passport for Pets, John Rolls, Director of Communications, RSPCA, Lord Soulsby of Swaffam Prior, Vets in Support of Change.

this country are out of date and indefensible from the point of view of scientific basis, what we know about rabies and the immunity to rabies. No other country in

the committee set up under Professor Kennedy will recommend that a risk assessment be undertaken, similar to that carried out in

other countries. He believes that the result will lead to a new system of allowing dogs and cats to be imported. He described the method by which the pet passport scheme would operate. "The animal has to have been resident in the country of origin for six months and that would include this country. It must have been vaccinated with an approved vaccine and must show proof that the vaccine has worked by the use of an approved test, done in a laboratory, approved by the World Health Organisation. The animal must be suitably identified by a microchip and it must be accompanied by a veterinary certificate to show that all these things have taken place. All these things take time to arrange. The vaccination must be done when the dog or cat is over three months of age and the blood tests must be done several months later."

In its conclusion the Quarantine Reform Campaign makes the following recommendations: *A system comprising vaccination blood testing and permanent identification could and should be introduced at the earliest opportunity for pet animals entering the UK from the European Union and countries classified by the World Health Organisation as being free from rabies*

*Animals from other countries would be subject to a period of quarantine on entering the country but the list of approved and non-approved countries should be under constant review. In the light of risk assessments and modern rabies control methods it may be possible for countries to enter the approved list and for the necessary period of quarantine to be reviewed.*

*Statutory welfare standards should be introduced as soon as possible for all quarantine kennels to ensure the well-being of animals which may*



*pass through quarantine before and after, the system is reformed. The bill introduced by Paul Flynn MP which attempts to achieve this should be given government support throughout its parliamentary stages.*

*Decisions in this area must be based on science and not on emotion. Any changes*

*must be properly planned implemented and enforced.*

**Copies of the Quarantine Reform Campaign report are available from: RSPCA 01403 223 284.**

**Passport for Pets 0181 870 5960.**

**Vets in Support of Change PO Box 12414, London SW18.**



Lady Fretwell, Chairman of Passport for Pets.