
STATUTORY RULES OF NORTHERN IRELAND

2026 No. 000

ANIMALS

ANIMAL WELFARE

**The Welfare of Animals (Supply of Puppies and Kittens)
Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2026**

Made - - - -

xxth December 2026

Coming into operation

xxth March 2027

The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (**a**) makes these Regulations in exercise of the powers conferred by section 11(1), (2)(a), (3)(a) and (4) of the Welfare of Animals Act (Northern Ireland) 2011(**b**).

In accordance with section 11(5) of that Act, it has consulted such persons appearing to it to represent any relevant interests as it considers appropriate.

Citation and commencement

1. These Regulations may be cited as the Welfare of Animals (Supply of Puppies and Kittens) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2026 and they come into operation on XXX.

Interpretation

2. In these Regulations —

“breeding establishment” has the meaning given by regulation 2 of the Welfare of Animals (Dog Breeding Establishments and Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2013(**c**) and “breeding establishment licence” means a licence granted under regulation 5 of those Regulations for the operation of a breeding establishment;

“dog licence” and “dog pound” have the meanings given by Article 2(2) of the Dogs (Northern Ireland) Order 1983(**d**);

“kitten” means a cat which is less than 6 months old;

(a) Formerly the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD); see Article 3(4) of the Departments (Northern Ireland) Order 1999 (S.I. 1999/283 (N.I. 1)). DARD was renamed the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) by section 1(2) of the Departments Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 c. 5 (N.I.)

(b) 2011 c. 16 (N.I.)

(c) S.R. 2013 No.43

(d) S.I. 1983/764 (N.I. 8)

“puppy” means a dog which is less than 6 months old;

“rescue and rehoming charity” means a charity registered, or exempt from registration, under the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008^(a) whose activities include-

- (a) the provision of care to dogs or cats which have been abandoned or relinquished by the persons responsible for them; and
- (b) the rehoming of dogs or cats in their care;

“supply” has the meaning given in Regulation 3.

Meaning of “supply” and exemptions

3.—(1) In these Regulations “supply” –

- (a) means give or sell, in relation to a puppy; and
- (b) means sell, in relation to a kitten.

(2) These Regulations do not apply to the supply of-

- (a) a puppy or kitten to or by a rescue and rehoming charity;
- (b) a puppy to a dog pound;
- (c) a puppy kept at a dog pound.

Conditions of supply

4.—(1) A person must not supply a puppy or kitten for which the person is responsible unless the conditions in the Schedule are met.

(2) The Schedule (conditions) has effect.

(3) A person who, without reasonable excuse, fails to comply with paragraph (1) is guilty of an offence.

Record keeping

5.—(1) In this Regulation “supplier” means a person who supplies a puppy or kitten for which the person is responsible.

(2) The supplier must maintain a record of the following information about the puppy or kitten-

- (a) its date of birth;
- (b) its sex;
- (c) the address where it was bred and kept by the supplier;
- (d) details of any veterinary treatment (while the puppy or kitten was kept by the supplier);
- (e) in the case of a puppy, its microchip number; and
- (f) in the case of a kitten, its microchip number (if known) or colour and distinguishing marks.

(3) The record must also contain-

- (a) the supplier’s full name;
- (b) the name, address, and telephone number of the person to whom the puppy or kitten is supplied;
- (c) the date on which the puppy or kitten is supplied by the supplier; and
- (d) details of every advertisement relating to the puppy or kitten placed by the supplier.

(4) The record must be retained for a minimum of three years from the date on which the supplier supplies the puppy or kitten.

(a) 2008 c. 12 (N.I.)

(5) The information must be recorded not later than the day after the date on which the supplier supplies the puppy or kitten.

(6) A person who, without reasonable excuse, fails to comply with paragraph (2), (3), (4) or (5) is guilty of an offence.

Advertisements

6.—(1) This Regulation applies if a person advertises, or arranges for the advertising of, the supply of a puppy or kitten for which the person is responsible.

(2) The advertisement must-

- (a) specify the council in whose district the person keeps the puppy or kitten;
- (b) include a recognisable photograph of the puppy or kitten, showing it with its mother;
- (c) state the age of the puppy or kitten;
- (d) state where the puppy or kitten was bred and whether it is kept in Northern Ireland; and
- (e) include a statement as follows- “WARNING. An animal is not a toy. Getting one is a life-changing decision. It is your duty to ensure the animal’s health and welfare and not abandon it.”

(3) Paragraph (2)(b) does not apply if the mother is dead or if separation of the puppy or kitten was at the time of the photograph necessary for the health or welfare of the puppy or kitten, other puppies or kittens from the same litter, or its mother.

(4) The advertisement must not contain false or misleading information.

(5) A person who, without reasonable excuse, places an advertisement which fails to comply with paragraph (2) or (4) is guilty of an offence.

Powers of entry and search under warrant

7. An offence under these Regulations is to be treated as a relevant offence for the purposes of section 22 of the Welfare of Animals Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 (entry and search under warrant in connection with offences).

Sealed with the Official Seal of the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs on [date]



Name
A senior officer of the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

SCHEDULE

Conditions

Regulation 4(2)

Interpretation

1. In this Schedule-

“supplier” means the person who supplies the puppy or the kitten;

“veterinary surgeon” has the meaning given by Article 2(2) of the Dogs Order.

Minimum age of supplier

2. The supplier must be 16 or over.

Unweaned or very young puppies and kittens

3. The puppy or kitten must not be-

- (a) unweaned, or
- (b) under the age of 8 weeks.

Puppy or kitten must have been bred by supplier

4. The puppy or kitten must have been bred-

- (a) by the supplier; and
- (b) in the case of a puppy, at the address specified on the dog licence or breeding establishment licence relating to the puppy’s mother.

Puppy or kitten must only be shown with its mother

5.—(1) The puppy or kitten must not be shown to a prospective new owner unless it is with its mother.

(2) Sub-paragraph (1) does not apply if-

- (a) separation of the puppy or kitten from its mother is necessary for the health or welfare of the puppy or kitten, other puppies or kittens from the same litter, or its mother, or
- (b) the mother is dead.

Puppy or kitten undergoing medical treatment

6. If the puppy or kitten is undergoing any medical treatment, the supplier must, before supplying the puppy or kitten, provide-

- (a) details in writing of the treatment; and
- (b) if any of the treatment is provided by or on the instructions of a veterinary surgeon, details in writing from the veterinary surgeon of that treatment.

Completion of transaction

7.—(1) The transaction for supplying the puppy or kitten must be completed-

- (a) in the presence of-
 - (i) its mother, and
 - (ii) its new owner;
- (b) in the case of a puppy, at the address specified on the dog licence or breeding establishment licence relating to the puppy’s mother; and

- (c) in the case of a kitten, at the address where the kitten was bred.
- (2) Sub-head (i) of sub-paragraph (1)(a) does not apply if-
 - (a) separation of the puppy or kitten from its mother is necessary for the health or welfare of the puppy or kitten, other puppies or kittens from the same litter, or its mother, or
 - (b) the mother is dead.

Provision of information on caring for puppy or kitten

8. The supplier must provide advice on how to obtain information on caring for the puppy or kitten.

EXPLANATORY NOTE

(This note is not part of the Regulations)

These Regulations are made under provisions of section 11 of the Welfare of Animals Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 (c.16) (“the 2011 Act”) (regulations for securing welfare of animals).

Regulation 2 defines “puppy” and “kitten” as a dog or cat which is less than 6 months old.

Regulation 3 defines “supply” as selling in relation to a puppy or kitten and also giving in relation to a puppy; there are exemptions for rescue and rehoming charities and dog pounds.

Regulation 4 makes it an offence to supply a puppy or kitten unless the conditions set out in the Schedule are met.

Regulation 5 requires records to be kept by a supplier and regulation 6 contains requirements about information required in any advertisement for the supply of puppies and kittens.

Regulations 5 and 6 make failure to comply with those requirements an offence.

Regulation 7 provides that an offence under these Regulations is to be treated as a relevant offence for the purposes of section 22 of the 2011 Act (entry and search under warrant in connection with offences). Penalties for offences under these Regulations are provided for in section 31 of the 2011 Act. Schedule 3 to that Act contains further provisions relating to powers of entry and search.