Case studies of illegally imported puppies
FROM THE PUBLIC AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT

This document provides a series of case studies of incidents where puppies have been suspected to be illegally imported and the outcomes. These cases show the types of issues and problems with regard to the importation of puppies and dogs and also the difficulties of enforcing the law. The RSPCA believes that many of the cases they have investigated may be connected and show the large coordinated scale of puppies potentially being imported illegally into the UK.

Case study 1:
In March 2012 following an RSPCA investigation, 19 dogs (English bulldogs, French bulldogs and pugs) were seized from the back of a van at Dover. These dogs had been specifically bred in Poland for the puppy trade market and were due to be marketed on the internet from Wales. No further action was taken as they had come in under veterinary certification.

Case study 2:
Between December 2012 and March 2013 a puppy dealer imported 29 puppies illegally from Poland including 23 French bulldogs, beagles and Labradors. These puppies were shown to be too young to be vaccinated against rabies and had no health certificates. The dealer was successfully prosecuted by Hampshire Trading Standards and conditionally discharged for two-years in October 2013.

Case study 3:
In November 2012 88 live puppies were seized following an RSPCA investigation of which 58 had been imported from Ireland through Holyhead. Though the majority of these dogs were microchipped, some dogs were of unknown origin. In this incident a French bulldog found at a puppy dealer’s premises had a microchip but no passport; the dog had been imported by Lithuanian puppy dealers and the passport was discovered a year later at the home of another puppy trader, showing that dogs are being sold without the correct documentation. This dog had come in through Dover on an incomplete pet passport which showed no vaccinations.

Case study 4:
In September 2013 ten Maltese terriers imported from Holland and sold on the internet were discovered, during a check-up at the vets, to have invalid passports and no rabies vaccination; two were subsequently euthanized and the others put into quarantine. The importer was given a two-year conditional discharge and fined.

Case study 5:
In November 2013 a joint RSPCA investigation with Bury and Salford Trading Standards into welfare concerns about puppies being sold in Manchester found 41 dogs and puppies with 50 pet passports including at least six that had not been completed and had only veterinary stamps and rabies vaccine stickers but no date, owner or dog name completed. The use of pre-filled in and fraudulent passports cast doubt on the validity of all passported dogs that had been seized in this case. Some of these puppies had been advertised on the internet. As the evidence was not available to prove the importers evaded controls, the animals were not placed into quarantine.

For further information: politicalaffairs@rspca.org.uk www.politicalanimal.org.uk
Case study 6:
In January 2014 Hampshire Trading Standards seized and quarantined nine German shepherd puppies from one puppy dealer who had imported them from Bulgaria.

Case study 7:
In January 2014 two pug puppies were seized and quarantined by Hampshire Trading Standards after being illegally imported from Lithuania.

Case study 8:
In February 2014 Swindon Borough Council successfully prosecuted a dealer who imported up to 30 puppies, mostly dachshunds from the Czech Republic. Although some of these dogs had pet passports and were microchipped they had not been vaccinated against rabies and were being sold as British puppies. The dealer was fined and sentenced to 200 hours community work; the dogs were put into quarantine.

Case study 9:
In February 2014 a shih tzu illegally imported had to be euthanized in Keighley; it had been sold over the internet and was only found to be illegally imported when it was taken to the vets.

Case study 10:
In February 2014 six pug puppies were seized by East Riding animal welfare officers that had been illegally imported under PETS; two other cases had been found in East Riding since 2013 including Jack Russell puppies imported illegally.