



The Time is Meow

Regulation of animal welfare establishments

Animal welfare establishments (AWEs) include individuals or organisations that take in vulnerable animals on a regular basis – whether companion, farmed, wild or other animals – with the intention of rehabilitating, rehoming, providing long-term care, or releasing them back into the wild.

Why it matters

Those who take animals into their care usually do so with the very best of intentions. But sometimes the standards of animal welfare in such settings can fall short, perhaps due to a lack of training, resources or equipment, or because of a desire to help more animals than can be coped with.

While anyone caring for animals in England and Wales must meet the welfare standards and duty of care set out in the Animal Welfare Act 2006, there is no specific regulation of AWEs. Ensuring the highest standard of care in these settings is important not only for the welfare of cats and other animals, but also to give new owners confidence they are adopting a healthy rescue pet.

What the government can do

Introduce regulation of AWEs through a system of licence conditions and inspections. This should run alongside training and support for local authority inspectors to ensure effective enforcement.

In addition, the public should have access to a national database of licenced AWEs. This should outline relevant conditions – for example, the number and type of animals permitted – and detail any breach or revocation of licence.



Aerial view of our Chelmsford Adoption Centre



← Turn over to read more

The government should also consider a ban on cats being transported from abroad for rescue. Such journeys can be stressful for cats, risk the introduction of disease and make it more difficult to rehome the many cats already in need of a home in the UK. A more effective way to help cats in need abroad is to support local charities running neutering and education programmes.

The benefits

1. Minimum welfare standards would safeguard the health and wellbeing of cats waiting to be rehomed.
2. Regulations would help distinguish genuine rescue centres from back-street breeders and third-party sellers attempting to bypass laws on commercial kitten sales.
3. Greater confidence for would-be owners in adopting a rescue cat, with the knowledge that any concerns over a licenced centre could be reported to the local authority.

The Association of Dogs and Cats Homes (ADCH) is made up of 143 organisations, including Cats Protection, which take in around 250,000 animals each year¹. As the UK's largest cat charity, Cats Protection helped draft its minimum standards, a set of guidelines for members to ensure best welfare practices. Although important, this voluntary code is only followed by ADCH members, and the legal framework of regulation is needed to ensure good welfare standards in all settings.

Cats Protection rehomes over 40,000 cats every year across the UK through its centres and volunteer-run branches.



For further information about our advocacy work visit www.cats.org.uk/timeismeow or email advocacy@cats.org.uk

¹ www.adch.org.uk