businesscompanion
trading standards law explained

Licensing of animal activities

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In this guide, the words 'must' or 'must not' are used where there is a legal requirement to do (or not do) something. The word 'should' is used where there is established legal guidance or best practice that is likely to help you avoid breaking the law.

This guidance is for Wales

The Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (Wales) Regulations 2021 require persons to be licensed in order to carry out certain activities. The Regulations set out the duties of local authorities to license activities involving animals and the relevant establishments relating to this.

The licensing of activities involving animals

Under the Regulations, a licensable activity means an activity carried on in the course of a business. An activity could, for example, be carried out if the business operator either:

- makes any sale by, or otherwise carries on, the activity with a view to making a profit
  or
- earns any commission or fee from the activity

If you are uncertain as to whether an activity falls under the Regulations, please contact your local council for clarification and for detail on any fees payable.

Your responsibilities

You have legal responsibilities under the Digital Markets, Competition and Consumers Act 2024 (for business-to-consumer contracts) and the Business Protection from Misleading Marketing Regulations 2008

(for business-to-business contracts).

If you are selling animals, it is your responsibility to ensure that any form of representation (including advertising) made in connection with the sale, in order to promote the supply or transfer of ownership, is true.

Representation includes such things as the identity of the animal, its identification records, date of birth, pedigree certificate, breeding records, health status, history and any description you apply to it.

All information given by you or in any document must be true. It is a criminal offence to mislead.

It is an offence for a business to mislead by pretending to be a private seller to avoid their legal obligations. If you are in business and selling animals, you must declare (for example, in advertisements or when negotiating a sale) that you are a business or connected to a business.

For more information, please see 'Buying and selling livestock'.

Trading Standards

For information on the work of Trading Standards services - and the possible consequences of not abiding by the law - please see 'Trading Standards: powers, enforcement and penalties'.

In this update

Changes made to reflect the coming into force of the Digital Markets, Competition and Consumers Act 2024 (Part 4, Chapter 1: 'Protection from unfair trading').

Last reviewed / updated: April 2025

Key legislation

- Rabies (Importation of Dogs, Cats and Other Mammals) Order 1974
- Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976
- Animal Health Act 1981
- Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986
- Animal Welfare Act 2006
- Business Protection from Misleading Marketing Regulations 2008
- Aquatic Animal Health (England and Wales) Regulations 2009
- Microchipping of Dogs (Wales) Regulations 2015
- Equine Identification (Wales) Regulations 2019
- Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (Wales) Regulations 2021
- Digital Markets, Competition and Consumers Act 2024

Please note

This information is intended for guidance; only the courts can give an authoritative interpretation of the law.

The guide's 'Key legislation' links go to the legislation.gov.uk website. The site usually updates the legislation to include any amendments made to it. However, this is not always the case. Information on all changes made to legislation can be found by following the above links and clicking on the 'More Resources' tab.

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