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Jen Persson  
By email: [request-771530-83f6851e@whatdotheyknow.com](mailto:request-771530-83f6851e@whatdotheyknow.com)

Our ref: FOI2021/17552  
2 August 2021

Dear Jen Persson,

**REQUEST FOR INFORMATION: Pet ID proposals: Cat and Dog Microchipping and Scanning in England**

Thank you for your request for information of 6 July 2021 about cat and dog microchipping and scanning in England. We have handled your request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

Your information request and our response are set out below.

Question 1

*With regards to the plans about cat and dog microchipping and scanning in England:*  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/cat-and-dog-microchipping-and-scanning-in-england>

*From meetings that included this topic since December 2019 and which included staff of other government Departments (for example Home Office or Cabinet Office) or police representatives, please provide the minutes including list of attendees, and any presentation materials shared.*

We can confirm that this information is held and that the following meetings took place:

**12 May 2021:** Officials from Defra, Home Office, Ministry of Justice, Gwent Police, West Mercia Police, Association of Police and Crime Commissioners, Sussex Police and Crime Commissioner, Border Force, Local Government Animal Welfare Group.

**8 June 2021:** Officials from Defra and Department for Transport.

**9 June 2021:** Officials from Defra, Home Office, Ministry of Justice, Gwent Police, West Mercia Police, Office of the Sussex Police and Crime Commissioner, Gloucestershire Police and Crime Commissioner, Crown Prosecution Service, Border Force, Local Government Animal Welfare Group.

**16 June 2021:** Officials from Defra, Home Office, Ministry of Justice.

**22 June 2021:** Officials from Defra, Local Authorities (City of London, Basildon, Surrey), Local Government Authority, Police.

**29 June 2021:** Officials from Defra and the Regulatory Policy Committee.

**30 June 2021:** Officials from Defra, Home Office, Ministry of Justice.

**5 July 2021:** Officials from Defra and Ministry of Justice.

After careful consideration we have decided to withhold the names of the attendees under sections 40(2) and 40(3A) of the FOIA as the information constitutes personal data relating to persons other than you. These sections exempt personal information from disclosure if that information relates to someone other than the applicant, and if disclosure of that information would breach any of the data protection principles in Article 5(1) of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

We consider that disclosure of this personal information is likely to breach the first data protection principle, which provides that personal data must be processed lawfully, fairly, and in a transparent manner. Disclosure would not constitute 'fair' processing of the personal data because the information relates to non-Senior Civil Service members of staff who are not public facing officials, and who would not reasonably have expected their names to be made public. We have therefore limited the information released to a list of attending organisations or departments.

Additionally we are withholding the minutes under section 35(1)(a) of the FOIA which relates to the formulation of government policy. Please see below for further detail.

### Question 2

*Please provide in addition any materials from meetings internal to DEFRA, or with any external third party, with reference to the merging of microchip databases from various commercial providers <https://www.gov.uk/get-your-dog-microchipped> .*

We can confirm that this information is held by Defra. However, the information is being withheld as it falls under the exemption in section 35(1)(a) of the FOIA, which relates to the formulation of government policy.

In applying this exemption, we have had to balance the public interest in withholding the information against the public interest in disclosure.

We recognise that there is a public interest in disclosure of information concerning meetings held by senior officials, as this may promote greater public understanding of the policy-making process, which would be consistent with the Government's commitment to greater transparency. However, it is also important that public authorities have a safe space in which officials can operate and discuss policy options in private, and release of the information requested would risk inhibiting officials and Ministers from having full, frank and open discussions as part of the process of formulating policy, particularly if they felt that speculative information relating to live policy issues would be released before final decisions were made on those issues. The Government's policy on microchipping of cats and dogs is still under review and proposals have not yet been agreed at ministerial level.

Therefore, we have concluded that in all the circumstances of the case, the information should be withheld.

In our obligation to advise and assist under section 16 of FOIA we can advise that we intend to publish our response to the consultation in the autumn. We will then also put forward proposals following our review of the Microchipping of Dogs (England) Regulations 2015, which includes a review of the database systems. We also refer you to the public record of a recent Westminster Hall Debate on microchipping of pets, which took place on 28 June 2021: [Microchipping of Pets - Monday 28 June 2021 - Hansard - UK Parliament](#).

Information disclosed in response to this FOIA request is releasable to the public. In keeping with the spirit and effect of the FOIA and the government's Transparency Agenda, this letter and the information disclosed to you may be placed on [GOV.UK](#), together with any related information that will provide a key to its wider context. No information identifying you will be placed on the GOV.UK website.

We attach Annex A, explaining the copyright that applies to the information being released to you, and Annex B giving contact details should you be unhappy with the service you have received.

If you have any queries about this letter please contact me.

Yours sincerely

**Jo Collinge**  
**Information Rights Team**  
[InformationRequests@defra.gov.uk](mailto:InformationRequests@defra.gov.uk)

## **Annex A**

### **Copyright**

The information supplied to you continues to be protected by copyright. You are free to use it for your own purposes, including for private study and non-commercial research, and for any other purpose authorised by an exception in current copyright law. Documents (except photographs or logos) can be also used in the UK without requiring permission for the purposes of news reporting. Any other re-use, for example commercial publication, would require the permission of the copyright holder.

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## **Annex B**

### **Complaints**

If you are unhappy with the service you have received in relation to your request you may make a complaint or appeal against our decision under section 17(7) of the FOIA or under regulation 11 of the EIRs, as applicable, within 40 working days of the date of this letter. Please write to Andrew Mobsby, Head of Information Rights via email at [InformationRequests@defra.gov.uk](mailto:InformationRequests@defra.gov.uk) and he will arrange for an internal review of your case. Details of Defra's complaints procedure are on our website.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, section 50 of the FOIA and regulation 18 of the EIRs gives you the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) for a decision. Please note that generally the ICO cannot make a decision unless you have first exhausted Defra's own complaints procedure.

The ICO's offices are currently closed so please visit their website on how to contact them during this period, here:

<https://ico.org.uk>

Additionally if you wish to make a complaint to the ICO please use the following link:

<https://ico.org.uk/make-a-complaint/official-information-concerns-report/official-information-concern/>