

STATES OF JERSEY



DRAFT DOGS LAW (JERSEY) AMENDMENT REGULATIONS 202- (P.63/2025) – COMMENTS

**Presented to the States on 29th September 2025
by the Environment, Housing and Infrastructure Scrutiny Panel**

STATES GREFFE

COMMENTS

The Environment, Housing and Infrastructure Scrutiny Panel (hereafter ‘the Panel’) received a briefing from the Comité des Connétables and the States Veterinary Officer on 16th September 2025 regarding the proposition Draft Dogs Law (Jersey) Amendment Regulations 202- (P.63/2025) (‘the Proposition’). The Proposition seeks to introduce a registration scheme for dangerous dogs, apply restrictions to dangerous dogs, and modernise the drafting of the Dogs (Jersey) Law 1961.

Support for the Proposition

The Panel is broadly supportive of the aims of the Proposition. In particular, it welcomes the introduction of a new registration scheme for dangerous dogs, which is intended to strengthen public safety by ensuring that ownership of such dogs is regulated, recorded, and subject to clear conditions. The Panel also supports the creation of new restrictions on dangerous dogs, including requirements for insurance, control in public spaces, and neutering, which it understands are designed to reduce the risks posed to the public and to animal welfare.

The Panel further acknowledges the importance of the modernising amendments to the Dogs (Jersey) Law 1961, which will update outdated drafting and bring the legislation into line with current standards.

The Panel understands that the new registration scheme will be enforced within 30 days of enactment, with the intention that the annual parish dog licensing cycle will capture these registrations from January 2026.

Resourcing and Capacity

During its briefing, the Panel raised concerns about the resourcing and capacity within the States Veterinary Office to introduce and operate the new registration scheme. The Panel subsequently sought views from the Minister for the Environment by correspondence sent on 22nd September 2025.

The Panel received a response from the Assistant Minister for the Environment, Connétable Mike Jackson, on 26th September 2025. The Assistant Minister advised that the department did not anticipate an unreasonable impact from the implementation of the amended Dogs Law and the revised Animal Welfare Law. While the department acknowledged there may be an initial surge in registrations, it considered this manageable within existing resources. However, the Assistant Minister also noted that if there were significant non-compliances with the new registration requirements, this could increase the impact on staff time and resources.

The Panel remains concerned that the Department’s response underestimates the potential resource implications, particularly if levels of non-compliance are higher than anticipated. The Panel further notes that new Article 5B(5) of the Proposition grants the Minister an Order-making power to prescribe fees for the registration of dangerous dogs and would urge the Minister to make use of this power to ensure that the States Veterinary Office is appropriately resourced to deliver the scheme.

Enforcement and Livestock Worrying Offences

The Panel received correspondence from a member of the public raising concerns about the enforcement of existing provisions in the Dogs Law, particularly livestock worrying offences. The Panel subsequently raised this issue in its letter to the Minister for the Environment. In response, the Assistant Minister stated that the revised Dogs (Jersey) Law 1961 could close existing gaps by strengthening the definition of “agricultural land.”

The Panel notes that, while the amendments contained in the Proposition address the issue of dangerous dogs and their owners, they also include a change to Article 9 of the Dogs (Jersey) Law 1961, which impacts all dogs but was not highlighted during the briefing process.

Having reviewed the Proposition, the Panel observes that no new or amended definition of agricultural land has been included. Instead, amended Article 9 will expand the offence of livestock worrying to cover damage to agricultural land that creates a hazard to the health of livestock. The Panel understands that “damage” would include fouling on agricultural land.

While this amendment provides useful clarification, it does not address the issues raised by stakeholders. The Panel therefore considers that the Assistant Minister’s response may have overstated the effect of the Regulations in this regard. The Panel notes further that, although the Proposition introduces a limited change to Article 9, it does not resolve the broader enforcement challenges within the Dogs Law, particularly in relation to livestock worrying offences. These remain areas of concern for the Panel and will be a focus for future scrutiny.

Conclusion

The Panel is supportive of the Proposition and its objectives to enhance public safety, modernise the Dogs (Jersey) Law 1961, and introduce clear controls on the ownership of dangerous dogs. It does not wish to delay the implementation of the new registration scheme, recognising the importance of aligning it with the annual parish dog licensing cycle from January 2026.

However, the Panel emphasises the importance of resourcing being given due consideration by the Minister to ensure the scheme can be implemented effectively. The Panel also notes that, while the Proposition makes limited amendments to Article 9, it does not address the wider enforcement challenges raised by stakeholders in relation to livestock worrying offences and the general control of dogs. These remain matters of concern and will be a focus for the Panel’s future scrutiny.

Comment under Standing Order 37A

The Panel regrets that these Comments have been lodged later than intended. This was due, in part, to the timing of Panel meetings and the proposition briefing, as well as concerns raised at the States Members briefing on 29th September 2025, which required the Panel to convene an additional urgent meeting to consider and approve the Comments. The delay does not reflect a lack of diligence but rather the compressed timetable within which the Panel was required to respond.