

Animal Welfare & Control (including the Draft Animal Welfare (Jersey) Law 202-) Review

Submission: Spotted Wellies

Dated: 11th January 2025

My sister Levi and I run Spotted Wellies, a pet care business offering dog walking (group and solo), home boarding, pet sitting, puppy care, cat visits and small animal visits. We work closely with clients and take animal welfare very seriously.

Overall, I think the intention behind the Draft Law is a good one and anything that helps improve animal welfare across the Island is welcome. My main thoughts are around how some of the proposals will work in real life for small businesses like mine.

At the moment, it isn't completely clear how the new rules would apply day to day. A lot seems to be left to future codes of practice and guidance, so it's hard to know exactly what will be required until those are published.

The idea of a new licensing system could have a big impact on businesses like ours. It would be helpful to understand:

- which services will need a licence,
- what the costs might be,
- how often licences would need renewing,
- how inspections would work and how long the process might take.

My main concern is that this doesn't become overly complicated or expensive, as small businesses already have a lot of admin to manage. I also think there needs to be clear guidance around responsibility when animals are in our care. We always act in the best interests of the animals, but we rely on information given by owners, particularly when it comes to health or behavioural issues.

One of the challenges in Jersey is that there are a lot of dogs but not a lot of space, especially for exercising, and essentially, anyone can get a dog. In my experience, the welfare issues don't tend to come from businesses like ours; they come from members of the general public who don't always follow the law, for example, keeping dogs on leads in on lead areas or managing their dogs' behaviour in a responsible way while in public. These situations often create the problems the law is trying to prevent. Better education, then monitoring and enforcing the current laws could help, along with more education from authorities like the State Vet, could be likely to have a good impact than adding additional laws for pet care business.

Spotted Wellies was not consulted during the development of this Draft Law, and I think involving local dog walkers, pet sitters and boarders when creating future codes of practice would be really helpful to make sure they are practical and realistic.

In general, I feel the Draft Law has the potential to improve animal welfare in Jersey, but it will be important that the rules, licensing process and penalties are clear, fair and proportionate so that responsible small businesses are supported rather than put under unnecessary pressure.