

Ownership of an XL Bully Dog – guidance for owners

It's now a criminal offence to own or possess an XL Bully dog in England and Wales unless you have a valid Certificate of Exemption.

It's also an offence to:

- sell an XL Bully dog
- abandon an XL Bully dog or let it stray
- give away an XL Bully dog
- breed or breed from an XL Bully dog
- have an XL Bully in public without a lead and muzzle

If you have a Certificate of Exemption

For the life of the dog, you must:

- keep the dog at the same address as the certificate holder (you can keep the dog at a different address for a maximum of 30 days in a 12-month period)
- tell Defra if you permanently change address (you do not need to do this if the dog is temporarily kept at a different address, which is allowed for a maximum of 30 days in a 12-month period)
- tell Defra if the dog dies or is exported
- have third party public liability insurance for your dog and provide Defra with proof that it's been renewed each year
- keep the dog muzzled in public places – Defra recommends using a muzzle that does not inhibit the dog from panting, breathing or drinking
- keep the dog on a lead in public places – the lead must be securely held by someone at least 16 years old
- keep the dog in secure conditions that will stop it from escaping

When asked by a police constable or authorised local authority officer, you must also provide:

- access to the dog to read its microchip
- confirmation of suitable third party liability insurance within 5 days of their request
- the Certificate of Exemption within 5 days of their request

If you do not follow the requirements, your dog will no longer be exempt from the ban and it could be taken by the police. New exemptions can only be authorised by a court order.

Replacement Certificates

Defra will only issue a new certificate if your existing certificate is lost or if you change your name or address.

To get a replacement certificate, email dogsindex@defra.gov.uk.

Third Party Public Liability Insurance

If you have a Certificate of Exemption for your XL Bully dog, you must have third party public liability insurance for your dog. This can be provided by [Dogs Trust Membership](#).

The policy must:

- be renewed annually for the life of the dog
- be in the same name as the person named on the Certificate of Exemption

If you use a different insurance provider, you must check that the policy:

- covers the policyholder for death or bodily injury to any person caused by the exempted dog
- is suitable for a prohibited breed as defined under the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991

You must provide Defra with proof that you've renewed the insurance each year. Email your insurance renewal confirmation document to dogsindex@defra.gov.uk, or post it to: Dogs Index, PO Box 68250, London, SW1P 9XG

Neutering an XL Bully dog

For your Certificate of Exemption to remain valid, you must arrange to have your XL Bully dog neutered. Male dogs must be castrated. Female dogs must be spayed. Vets may be asked to confirm if your dog has been neutered.

If your dog was:

- less than 1 year old on 31 January 2024, you must provide Defra with proof of neutering on or before 31 December 2024
- older than 1 year old on 31 January 2024, you must provide Defra with proof of neutering on or before 30 June 2024

You must use the [confirmation of neutering form](#) to tell Defra your dog has been neutered. Defra recommends having your dog neutered as soon as possible so that you meet these deadlines.

Microchips for dogs less than 8 weeks old

If your dog was less than 8 weeks old when you applied for a Certificate of Exemption, you have until 31 March 2024 to give the microchip number to Defra.

Email the microchip number along with your dog's index number to dogsindex@defra.gov.uk, or post to: Dogs Index, PO Box 68250, London, SW1P 9XG

You can find the dog index number on the Certificate of Exemption. Defra will send you a new Certificate of Exemption when you provide the microchip number.

Dogs certified as unfit for a microchip. If your dog was unfit to be microchipped when you applied for a Certificate of Exemption, you must send a copy of the veterinary certificate to Defra by 31 March 2024. The certificate must show that your dog was certified as unfit to be microchipped at the time you applied. You must then arrange to have your dog microchipped and provide the microchip number to Defra within 28 days of the expiry date of the veterinary certificate.

Email the veterinary certificate along with your dog's index number to dogsindex@defra.gov.uk, or post to: Dogs Index, PO Box 68250, London, SW1P 9XG

Buying, selling or transferring XL Bully dogs

It's illegal to rehome, sell, buy, or transfer ownership of an XL Bully dog to another person.

Stray and Abandoned dogs

It's illegal to abandon an XL Bully dog or allow it to stray.

If you find a stray or abandoned dog of any breed, you should contact Lewes District or Eastbourne Borough Council as appropriate.

Rehoming Organisations

It's illegal to rehome, sell or transfer ownership of XL Bully dogs. Rehoming organisations should not rehome XL Bully dogs.

If you think you have an XL Bully dog in your care and you did not apply for a Certificate of Exemption, you should contact your local police.

Withdraw a Certificate of Exemption

If you no longer think your dog is an XL Bully, you will be able to ask Defra to withdraw your certificate. Defra will provide more information about how to do this soon.

Vets will not be expected to report XL Bully dogs and their owners to the police.