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Press Release – For immediate release

Sarah Champion
Member of Parliament for Rotherham
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SARAH CHAMPION MP HELPS RAISE AWARENESS OF PUPPY SMUGGLING

Dogs Trust, the UK's largest dog welfare charity, highlighted the UK's growing puppy smuggling problem at its annual House of Commons reception.

Sarah Champion MP attended the event and said:

"I am pleased to support Dogs Trust in raising awareness of the issue of illegal puppy smuggling - something which affects many people in my constituency each year. Not only is this issue affecting unwitting people buying puppies without knowing where they have come from, but there is a risk of disease to both humans and dogs. There are huge welfare concerns for puppies being transported such long distances at such a young age and it is evident that greater measures are needed to deter people from smuggling puppies into this country illegally."

Following its initial report in November 2014, Dogs Trust conducted another investigative report focused on puppies travelling illegally into Britain under the Pet Travel Scheme (PETS). To emphasise how easily unethical dealers can bring under-age, sickly or undocumented puppies into Britain, MPs were surrounded by toy puppies that Dogs Trust had smuggled through Britain's ports to illustrate the ineffectiveness of patrols at the ports.

Adrian Burder, Dogs Trust CEO, commented:

*"Dogs Trust's famous slogan: **A dog is for life, not just for Christmas** is 37 years old but is still, sadly, as relevant as ever. As we approach the festive period, I would remind people to ensure they know where their dog is coming from before bringing a four-legged friend into their home."*

"Dogs Trust would like to see more being done with proper checks at ports, fines are handed out to act as a deterrent and that a nationwide multi-agency strategy put in place to deal with this issue once and for all."

To find out more about Dogs Trust and to read findings on puppy smuggling, visit www.dogstrust.org.uk

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Notes to Editors:

Despite recent changes to the PETS designed to strengthen the scheme, the report found evidence of:

- Ineffective border controls and enforcement of PETS at British ports, with no requirement on enforcers to carry out even a basic sight check on the animal being imported
- Dogs Trust managed to transport a stuffed toy with a pet passport three times without anyone noticing the dog was not alive
- Breeders and dealers from Lithuania and Romania using the Pet Travel Scheme (PETS) for the commercial importation of puppies to Great Britain, it is just for owned pets
- Breeders and dealers from Lithuania and Romania supplying young puppies under 12 weeks of age – the legal age at which puppies can be vaccinated against rabies – with dates of birth simply being faked on pet passports
- Vets in Lithuania and Romania falsifying data on pet passports for PETS
- Puppies bred in horrendous conditions in Eastern Europe
- Puppies from Eastern Europe advertised online with no reference to their countries of origin