

Police officers are not prepared for XL Bullies

Frontline police officers are not properly trained or equipped to deal with potential attacks by out-of-control XL bully dogs according to the Scottish Police Federation (SPF).

David Kennedy, general secretary of SPF, which represents rank and file officers, said the risks facing officers having to confront the powerful dogs were “significant”.

Mr Kennedy said: “The federation is concerned about the training and equipment available to officers when dealing with XL bully dogs.

“The financial and workforce constraints make it challenging to ensure all officers are adequately prepared.

“Thankfully we rarely have any officers being injured in such incidents but the potential risk is significant.”

The claim comes after it emerged Police Scotland told officers not to seize unregistered XL bullies, despite new laws meaning they must be registered, neutered and muzzled in public following a spate of fatal attacks.

It is now illegal to keep an XL bully without a valid exemption certificate, while breeding, selling, giving away or abandoning the dogs is banned.

A leaked email revealed police chiefs instructed staff not to seize XL bullies without an exemption certificate due to "financial implications" such as kennelling costs.

It said dogs should be seized "only if they are a threat to public safety due to their actions not their breed", with the ban said to be placing a huge burden on the force.

Mr Kennedy also warned that a raft of police office and station closures means Police Scotland may have nowhere to house seized XL bullies, amid warnings 29 stations were at risk as part of cost-cutting measures.

He said: "Regarding public safety the Federation believes that while enforcement is crucial, it must be balanced with the resources available to ensure officers can safely and effectively manage these situations.

"This again is rushed legislation without a thought for how and by what means a reduced Police service can and will respond."

He added: "The closing of police offices and stations means that the police have nowhere to keep seized dogs and again highlights the need for further funding and investment."

Scottish Conservative shadow minister for community safety Sharon Dowe MSP said the SNP Government had to ensure officers had access to training and equipment necessary to keep them safe.

She said: "Given the mess SNP ministers made of implementing this ban, it is vital these serious concerns from frontline police officers are listened to.

"We have already seen many horrific incidents in Scotland involving these dangerous animals.

"The Scottish Government can now ill-afford to drag their heels again in ensuring the appropriate training and resources

are in place for the police to guarantee the laws are being upheld, and to enhance their own protection on the job.”

Data shows 3418 exemption certificates have been issued to allow XL bully owners in Scotland to legally keep the dogs, which have been linked to 23 fatal mailings across the UK since 2021.

But there are feared to be hundreds more unregistered dogs living in homes across the country, with the government admitting the true number is unknown.

It was reported in February there had only been one person convicted of illegally owning an XL bully in Scotland since the new laws came into effect.

The powerfully built dogs continue to pose a serious threat to public safety, with a string of attacks on people and pets over the last year.

A Police Scotland spokesperson said: “All officers are given an awareness of how to deal with dog calls. However, if we attend a call where the conduct of the animal means it cannot be dealt with by attending officers, a specialist resource is identified to attend.

“With the ever-increasing range of dog breeds, our policy around handling these incidents is constantly being reviewed.

“Officers will continue to respond to any report expressing concern about a potentially dangerous breed of dog and take the appropriate action to minimise the risk to the public, as well as our officers and staff.”

The Scottish Government said Police Scotland had received £166,000 to train officers to identify banned breeds and buy specially-equipped vans to transport dangerous and out-of-control dogs.

The official definition of an XL Bully can be found [here on](#)

[The Scottish Government website.](#)



One example of an XL Bully courtesy of DEFRA