



On Tuesday 19 December 2023, the government laid a Statutory Instrument which sets out the exemption scheme for American Bully XLs for rehoming organisations. Rescues have between 1 and 22 January 2024 to apply for an exemption for dogs in their care before 30 December 2023 who had not been rehomed before the 31 December 2023 deadline, and they wished to care for, for the rest of the dog's life.

The SI sets out the following conditions to hold a certificate of exemption as a rescue which are relevant to how the dog is cared for:

*(iii) to ensure that a sufficient number of staff are present daily at the premises where the dog is living to provide for the care and management of the dogs being kept at those premises;*

*(vi) to keep the dog muzzled and on a lead when in a public place;*

*(vii) to keep the dog in sufficiently secure conditions to prevent its escape;*

The ADCH accepts that there are circumstances where particular animals can enjoy a high standard of welfare and a good quality of life in a kennel environment over a long period. However, it is important to remember that animal welfare is more than just physical health and freedom from disease. Other factors, particularly the animal's behavioural needs, which include the expression of social behaviour, have a profound effect on its welfare.

The World Health Organisation defines "health" as "a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity." Organisations which intend to keep dogs on a long-term basis need to consider whether the environment and resources available are capable of meeting the behavioural and psychological needs of the dog. Dogs must be regularly reviewed for signs of deterioration in physical and mental health. The 5 Domains model provides a means of evaluating the welfare of an animal in a particular situation

Do remember that whilst a dog with an exemption certificate can move sites within the same rescue (after a new certificate is applied for), they cannot move to another rescue organisation or stay in a foster home. The dog must live in your kennels for the rest of their life. ADCH recommends the following points are taken into consideration when caring for an American Bully XL for life:

- The rescue needs to ensure that they have a clear programme of monitoring and future planning for the dog,
- The rescue needs to ensure that the dog's needs are frequently assessed, and future plans reviewed,
- At least annual check-ups with a qualified veterinary surgeon should take place,
- Documented plan for staff and volunteer training for day-to-day care of the dog, e.g. dog movement around the site, enrichment, handling and exercise,
- The rescue must consider the quality of life provided for the dog in a kennel and provide additional space and enrichment resources and activities.