

Posties take tougher line on dog attacks

Owners of dogs that attack postmen face having their deliveries cancelled, the Royal Mail has warned, as a new report into attacks on postal workers calls for dangerous dog laws to be toughened.



There were over 3,000 dog attacks on postmen and woman last year Photo: ALAMY

By James Hall, Consumer Affairs Editor The Daily Telegraph

Royal Mail pledged to take a more "robust" approach to suspending deliveries at addresses where its staff are attacked by animals. It also said it would actively pursue legal action against the owners of dangerous dogs.

The moves follow the publication into an independent inquiry into dog attacks.

The inquiry, headed by former High Court judge Sir Gordon Langley, said that laws regarding dangerous dogs need to be strengthened in order to protect postmen.

Under present laws, a dog owner in England is only open to criminal sanctions if his or her dog is out of control "in a public place or somewhere it should not be". The law does not apply to private property, where the majority of attacks take place.

Postmen were subject to 3,250 dog attacks last year, equivalent to 10 a day. An estimated 24,000 postal workers have been attacked by dogs on delivery rounds since 2006, the group said.

Following publication of the report Donald Brydon, the Royal Mail's chairman, said that the firm would strengthen sanctions against owners of violent animals.

"We welcome the findings in Sir Gordon Langley's independent report, especially his call for an urgent reform of the laws. We have also taken on board his comments that Royal Mail should take a more robust approach with customers whose dogs attack postmen and women. We will adjust our policies immediately," said Mr Brydon. Despite the thousands of attacks suffered by staff, the number of properties where mail deliveries have been suspended is only in the hundreds, a Royal Mail spokesman said.

Sir Gordon's report called on the issue of dangerous dogs to be addressed "vigorously and urgently".

The report said that the law should be changed to cover offences by dangerous dogs "wherever the dog may be". It also called for all dogs to be microchipped so their owner's details are held on a database, among other things. The report urged Royal Mail to "act robustly in suspending deliveries where there is evidence of a perceived risk to the safety of postal workers from a dog or dogs", action that it has taken on board.

The report concluded: "It would be scandalous and tragic if before anything was done there was another appalling attack on private property".

Billy Hayes, the general secretary of the CWU union, which represents postal workers, said: "England will soon be the only part of the UK without updated dogs laws as Scotland and Northern Ireland have already introduced new improved legislation and Wales is legislating in the current session.

"This Government has procrastinated and steadfastly refused to act on the issue of dangerous dogs while people continue to suffer serious injuries and lose their lives in dog attacks."