



# Issues in focus



**YouGov**<sup>®</sup>  
What the world thinks

**pdsa**  
for pets in need of vets



for pets in need of vets

PDSA's history in the UK dates back to 1917. During that time the charity has had a huge impact on animal health and welfare across the UK, providing around 100 million free treatments to more than 20 million sick and injured pets. Today, PDSA's work goes beyond just treating pets in its 50 PetAid hospitals UK-wide; the charity is a leading authority on pet wellbeing and is committed to providing education on all aspects of responsible pet ownership.



What the world thinks

YouGov is one of the UK's leading research companies, providing accurate insights into what people are thinking and doing all over the world, all of the time. The most quoted research agency in the UK, YouGov has an established track record of consistently accurate and high quality survey data, representing all ages, socio-economic groups and other demographic types. YouGov is thrilled to be working with PDSA to gain an even deeper understanding of pet ownership behaviours during 2012.

# Issues in focus 2012

04\_Introduction

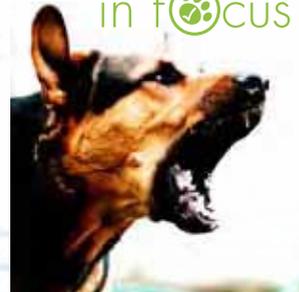
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In 2011 we launched the first ever *PDSA Animal Wellbeing (PAW) Report* in conjunction with YouGov, which highlighted the many health and welfare issues facing the UK's dogs, cats and rabbits. **This was the biggest report of its kind produced which gave the most comprehensive insight ever into the state of animal wellbeing in the UK.**

While revealing we are a nation of animal lovers, the Report also highlighted a number of significant welfare issues facing pets in the UK. There is a widespread misunderstanding of how to meet pets' needs and **over ten million pets are not as healthy and happy as they should be – with many suffering in silence from preventable conditions.**

**As the UK's leading veterinary charity, we simply cannot ignore this and want to do all we can to improve the physical health and mental wellbeing of pets.**

# Neglected... the



Richard Hooker BVMS (Hons), MRCVS  
PDSA Director of Veterinary Services

This year, the *PAW Report* focuses in even more detail on four of the most alarming pet health and welfare issues revealed in the *PAW Report 2011*. We have asked pet owners, veterinary professionals and for the first time, children, in-depth questions to find out what they truly think, feel and believe when it comes to these issues. This is so we can provide the support they need to help them achieve a better life for all pets.

## Issue 1



**The importance of a suitable diet**

so that pets don't

suffer and die prematurely from obesity-related conditions such as diabetes, arthritis or heart disease.

## Issue 2



**The importance of training and socialising dogs**

to ensure that they are well behaved, so they don't scare or attack people or other pets.

## Issue 3



**The importance of preventive treatments**

to protect pets from life-threatening diseases and promote responsible ownership.

## Issue 4



**The importance of researching pet ownership** and

associated costs before even taking on a pet to help reduce the high numbers of unwanted and abandoned pets.

# needs of millions of pets

Pet ownership benefits people in so many ways, and we all have a responsibility to work towards giving our pets the lives they deserve.

Owners rarely set out deliberately to cause suffering, but until there is a deeper understanding of what pets need in order to

lead happy and healthy lives, improving pet wellbeing will continue to be a challenge.

At PDSA our vision is a healthy life for all our pets and we pledge to help educate the nation to prevent the preventable, and continue treating the sick and injured pets of people in need.

We can't do this on our own, so join our campaign to help make a better life for pets.

#abetterlifeformpets

*a better life for pets*



We have surveyed...

3,956  
pet owners

466  
vets & vet  
nurses

553  
children



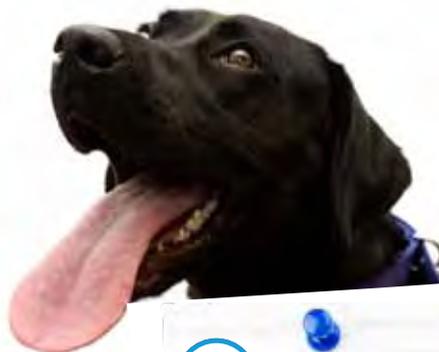
# The five welfare needs

## What are they?



### Environment

Make sure your pet has a suitable place to live



### Health

Ensure your pets are in good health and seek veterinary advice if they become ill



### Diet

Make sure your pets are fed a suitable diet for their age, breed and health



### Behaviour

Your pet should be able to show normal behaviour patterns



### Companionship

Some pets like to live with other animals, some don't

# Why do they matter?

**The Animal Welfare Act 2006\*** introduced a 'duty of care' for all pet owners to meet the welfare needs of their pets. These requirements are split into five areas that act as a simple framework to help owners ensure their pets have good physical health and mental wellbeing.

Find out what your pet needs. Download one of our reference guides for dogs, cats and rabbits



[pdsa.org.uk/](https://pdsa.org.uk/pawreport)  
pawreport

\*When referring to the Animal Welfare Act this includes the Animal Welfare Act 2006 covering England and Wales, the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006, which applies to the whole of Scotland, and the Welfare of Animals Act (Northern Ireland) 2011.

# Our pet nation

**Pets continue to be a big part of people's lives. The following statistics give an insight into just how important they are.**

**53%**  
of households in the UK  
have a pet\*



\*includes all pets, not just cats, dogs and rabbits

23%

of households in the UK  
have **dogs** as pets



8.3million

27%

of households in the UK  
have **cats** as pets



11.9million

4%

of households in the UK  
have **rabbits** as pets



1.7million

# Diet/in focus





# Foxt

pets

Killing with kindness

# Diet/summary

**12 million UK pets are being fed too many fatty treats**, including takeaways, cheese, crisps and cakes, often on a daily basis, which is fuelling the UK pet obesity epidemic.



## What we know ...

The 2011 *PAW Report* provided the most compelling evidence to date that too many people are sharing junk food with their pets.

Pets need diets that are suitable for their species, age, health and body size.

The outline illustrates the ideal shape for this breed of dog.



Obesity is one of the biggest welfare issues affecting pets in the UK today ...

... and it's entirely preventable.



I am pleased to see PDSA stressing the important message that pet obesity is entirely preventable. Prevention is vital to reduce the number of overweight and obese pets, and a key benefit of PDSA's research would be to help set a national agenda on pet obesity prevention. PDSA's research shows that owners are aware of the harmful consequences of pet obesity, and yet many continue to feed treats. Many owners report that this makes them and their pet feel happy, but somehow the act of feeding those treats needs to be linked with the future upset that occurs when pets are diagnosed with diabetes, arthritis and other serious diseases. Obesity and these associated diseases reduce both a pet's quality of life and life expectancy. Pets may feel happy at the moment they are given a treat, but it's essential that owners consider their future health and wellbeing as well.

**Dr Alex German**

Leading animal obesity specialist at University of Liverpool Veterinary School

# Diet/in focus

**We have dug even deeper into owners' understanding of pet diets and this is what we have found.**

**Despite a good understanding among owners of the pet obesity problem and what contributes to it, pet obesity levels continue to rise.**

61%

of pet owners think severely overweight pets should be removed from an owner who persistently ignores veterinary advice.

51%

of pet owners think that overweight owners are more likely to have overweight pets.



71%

of owners are aware that food meant for humans shouldn't be part of a pet's daily diet.

91%

of owners understand that their pets will have a shortened life span if they are overweight.

93%

of owners understand that pets can get the same obesity-related conditions as people.

95%

of people we asked agree that owners have overall responsibility to learn about their pet's dietary needs.



# Diet/in focus

tv adverts 1%

guilt over leaving  
pet alone 9%

my pet looking  
hungry 8%

my pet begging 14%

it makes me  
happy 29%

having a treat  
myself 13%

**We asked  
what influences owners  
to give their pets a treat**

*(excluding treats for training)*

While owners acknowledge that pets will have a shortened life span and an increased likelihood of ill health due to obesity, it appears this isn't translating into positive action. Pets' diets are being influenced by human emotion rather than an understanding of what they really need.





it makes my pet  
feel happy 48%

treats are a part of my  
pet's daily diet 34%

i never give my  
pet a treat 16%

# Diet/in focus



# Food



for



thought

While three-quarters of all vet practices offer clinics and information about pet diets and there is a wealth of advice available to owners about healthy diets, the pet obesity problem continues to rise.



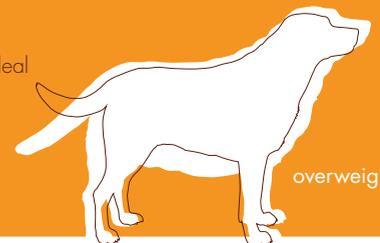
# 98%

of dog owners are giving their pet treats

The proportion of dog owners who rate their dogs as overweight or obese has risen from 16% in 2011 to 31% this year.

Just 3% of dog owners can identify the ideal healthy shape of a dog when shown a range of images.

ideal



overweight

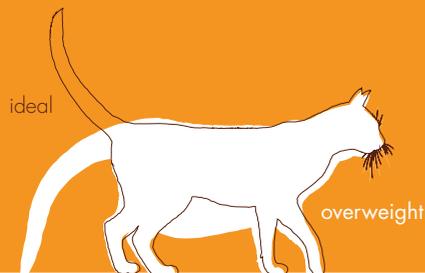


# 56%

of cat owners with an overweight cat believe that their cat's shape is as it should be.

This suggests a significant misunderstanding of what a healthy shape should look like.

The number of owners feeding their cats treats is 90% compared to 86% last year.



# 44%

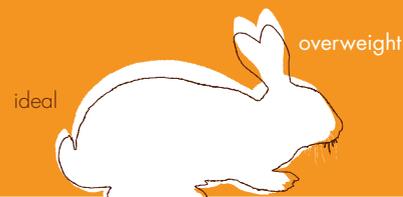
of rabbit owners continue to feed rabbit muesli as their rabbits' main source of food.

Many owners may think this is typical 'rabbit food', but may not be aware it is actually unsuitable for rabbits and linked to dental and digestive health problems.



Rabbits should eat at least their own body size in hay or grass each day but 36% don't.

This is an improvement from last year when 45% of rabbits weren't eating enough hay or grass.



# ADSA'S PET DIET AND EXERCISE ADVICE CLINIC



Time to **STOP** the treats...

# ... and **GO** exercise

## REGULAR EXERCISE

Build up activity levels gradually, as a pet shouldn't go from couch potato to marathon runner overnight.

Encouraging play and games is a great way to increase a pet's activity levels.

## PREVENTION IS BETTER THAN CURE

Preventing obesity is much easier than getting a pet to lose weight. A good diet when a pet is young is essential.

## CUT OUT THE TREATS

Feeding a pet even a small treat can significantly increase their daily calorie intake. If you give your pet a treat, perhaps for training purposes, reduce the amount of food given in their main meal on that day.

## BALANCED DIET

Weight loss requires a combination of the right diet and the right amount of exercise. Many owners feed 'by eye' and it's easy to overfeed pets accidentally, so use scales to weigh out the daily food allowance and follow packet feeding guidelines.

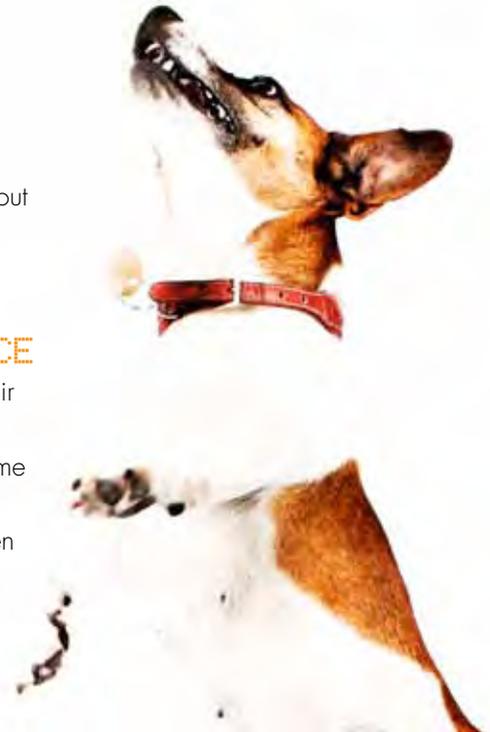
## SEEK VETERINARY ADVICE

PDSA advises owners to speak to their vet before making major changes to their pet's diet or activity levels. In some pets, such as cats and rabbits, rapid weight loss can be dangerous or even fatal, so it's important for a vet or vet nurse to oversee the weight loss to ensure it is gradual and safe.

## KNOW THE HEALTHY SHAPE FOR YOUR PET

Many owners don't know what a healthy shape is for their pet. Owners should ask their vet or visit the PDSA website for advice and guidance on a correct body shape for their pet at

[pdsa.org.uk/obesity](http://pdsa.org.uk/obesity)



## TAKE ACTION NOW

Some owners are worried about seeking advice for their overweight pet for fear of being prosecuted. However, cases of prosecution for pet obesity are very rare and are usually a result of owners continually ignoring advice from their vet over a period of time.

# Fit



# together

**PDSA helped six-year-old Labrador Lucky to shed a quarter of his body weight** as part of its ongoing work to help tackle pet obesity. And Lucky's weight loss journey prompted his owner to go on a diet too.

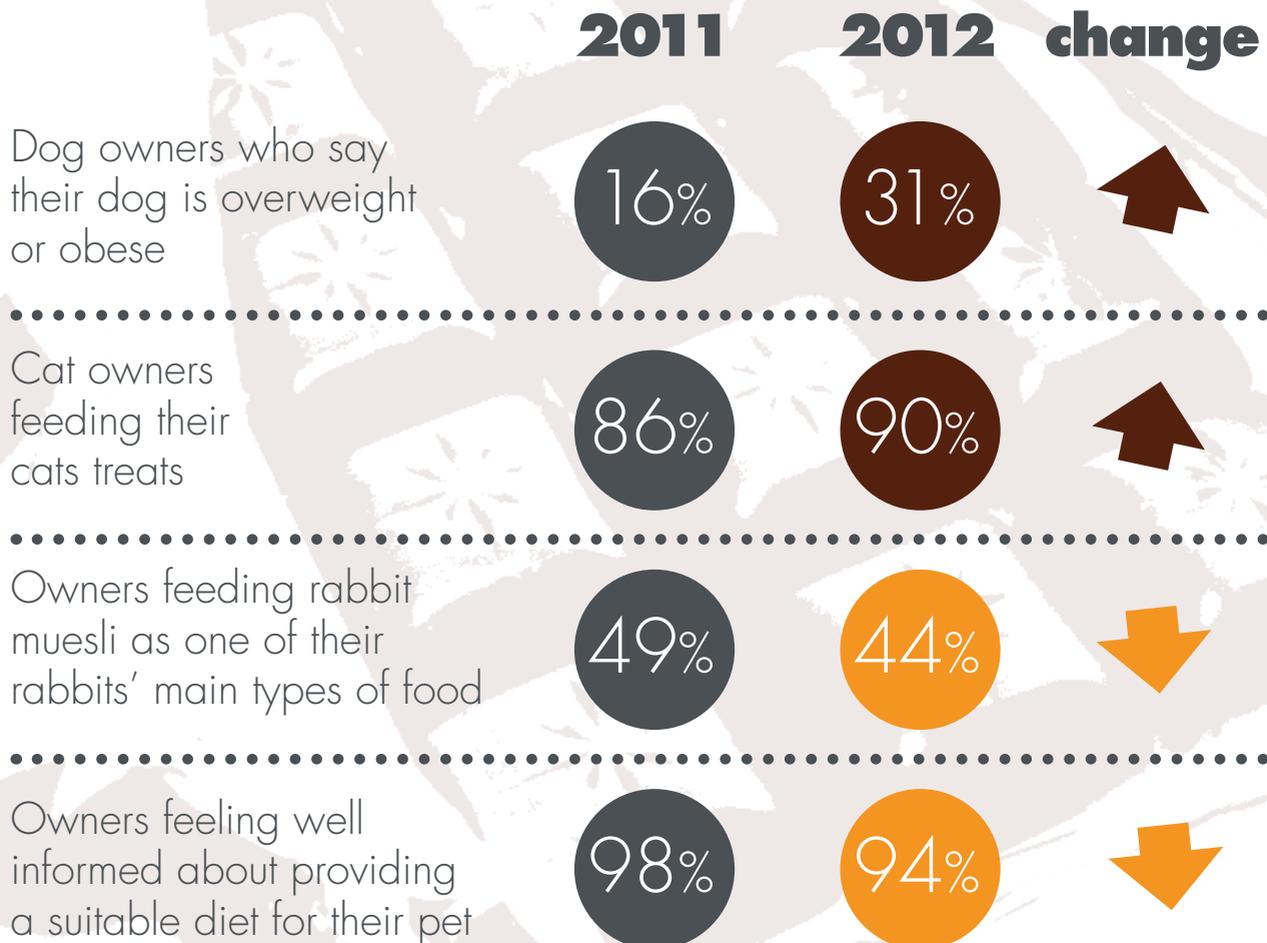


Owner Alyson explains: 'I decided when Lucky started his diet with PDSA that I would go on a diet too. All the extra exercise Lucky was getting resulted in me losing five stone, so it's been a real weight loss journey for

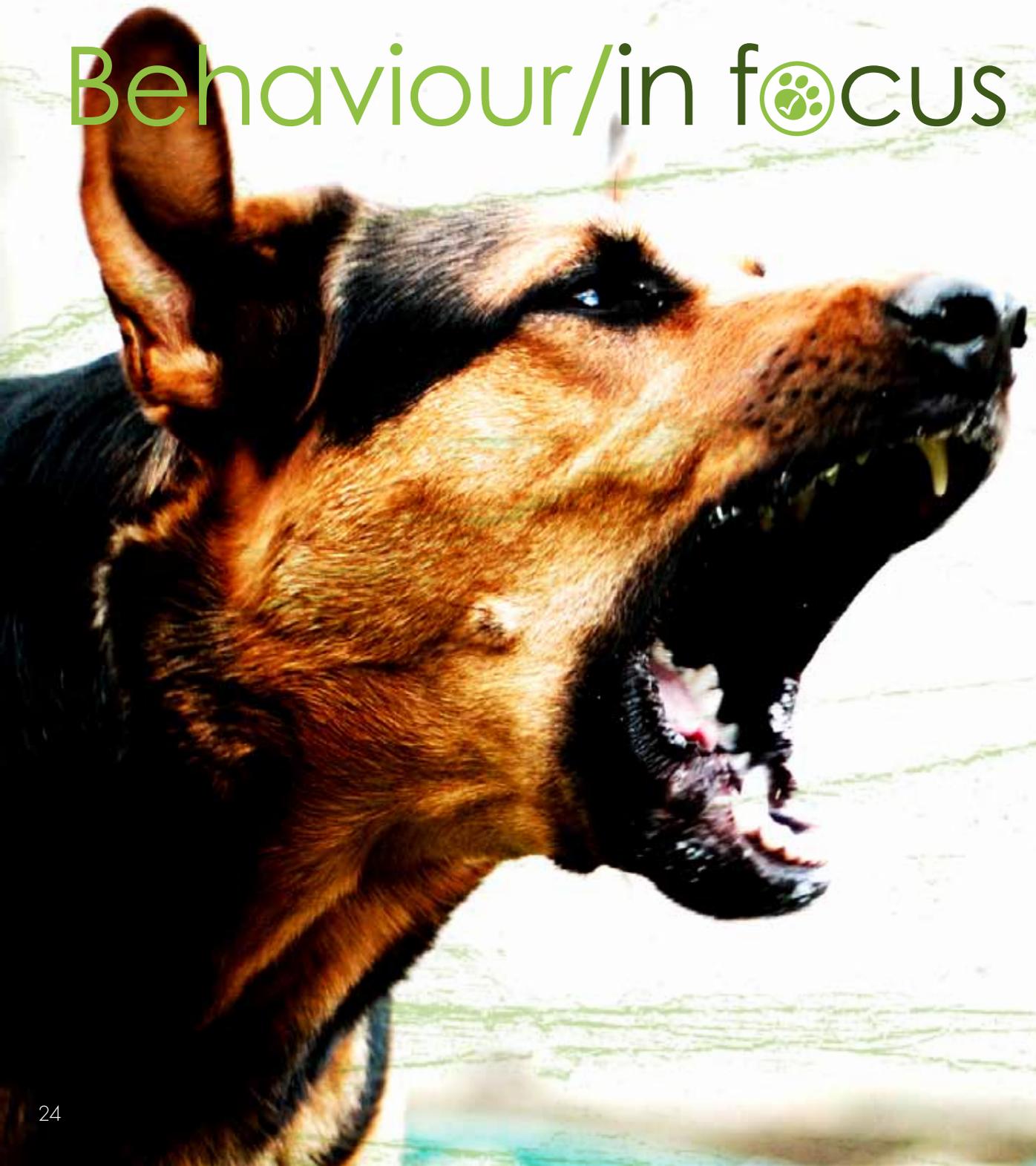
both of us. When he was overweight he struggled to walk properly because of pain in his joints and hated all types of exercise.'

## Case study

# For better or worse?



# Behaviour/in f🐾cus





Pets out of control

# Behaviour/summary

## **Problem behaviour in dogs continues to be a serious public and pet safety issue.**

**Each year there are awful stories of dogs attacking pets and children – sometimes with fatal consequences. This has to stop.**

Around 5.3 million dogs never attended training classes

In 2011 the *PAW Report* revealed that over one million dogs display aggressive behaviour towards people and pets on a weekly basis which includes growling, snarling, and biting.

The public has already told us that they feel the current dangerous dogs laws may not be as effective as they could be, with an overwhelming 87%

within their first six months of life

of people believing that pet owners should face tougher penalties if their dog attacks another person or animal.

Last year, our research found

25%

of owners who had their dogs as puppies did not adequately socialise them.

### Why is this happening?

In some cases, dogs are deliberately trained to be aggressive. In the majority of cases, a lack of socialisation and basic obedience training when dogs are young are the underlying problems.



“

Good puppy socialisation and training classes undoubtedly help to reduce the initial development of dog aggression, but it is also essential to provide our pets with guidance in good behaviour, at home and elsewhere, throughout their lives. ‘Training’ should be synonymous with ‘living with’ and never stops.

David Ryan

PG Dip (CABC) CCAB,  
Clinical Animal Behaviourist

# Behaviour/in focus



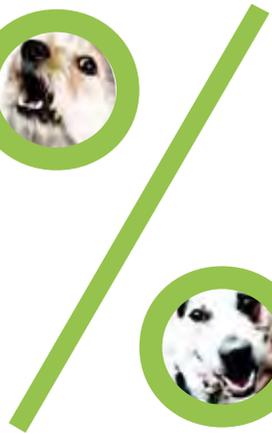
The impact of problem behaviour in dogs on both people and their pets cannot be underestimated. This is what you told us ...

- 40% of dog owners would consider giving up their dog because of aggressive behaviour.
- 31% would consider having their dog put to sleep because of aggressive behaviour.
- 25% who have given up their dog did so because of aggression and 22% because of uncontrollable behaviour.
- 67% of pet owners have been concerned or frightened by another dog's behaviour, an increase of 3% on last year.
- Worryingly, 65% of children have also been frightened or scared by the way a dog has behaved towards them.
- 81% of owners agree the Government should take the issue of dangerous dogs more seriously.
- 86% of children and 80% of adults believe that any breed of dog can be aggressive.
- 84% of pet owners also feel that certain breeds are more aggressive than others.

Behaviour/in focus



Almost one in three  
dog owners has been  
**bitten** or **attacked**  
by a dog... 51% know  
someone who has.



Should dogs  
always be on a  
lead in public?

**Yes** say

72%  
of cat owners

70%  
of rabbit owners

56%  
of dog owners

46%  
of vets and nurses

What do  
you think?

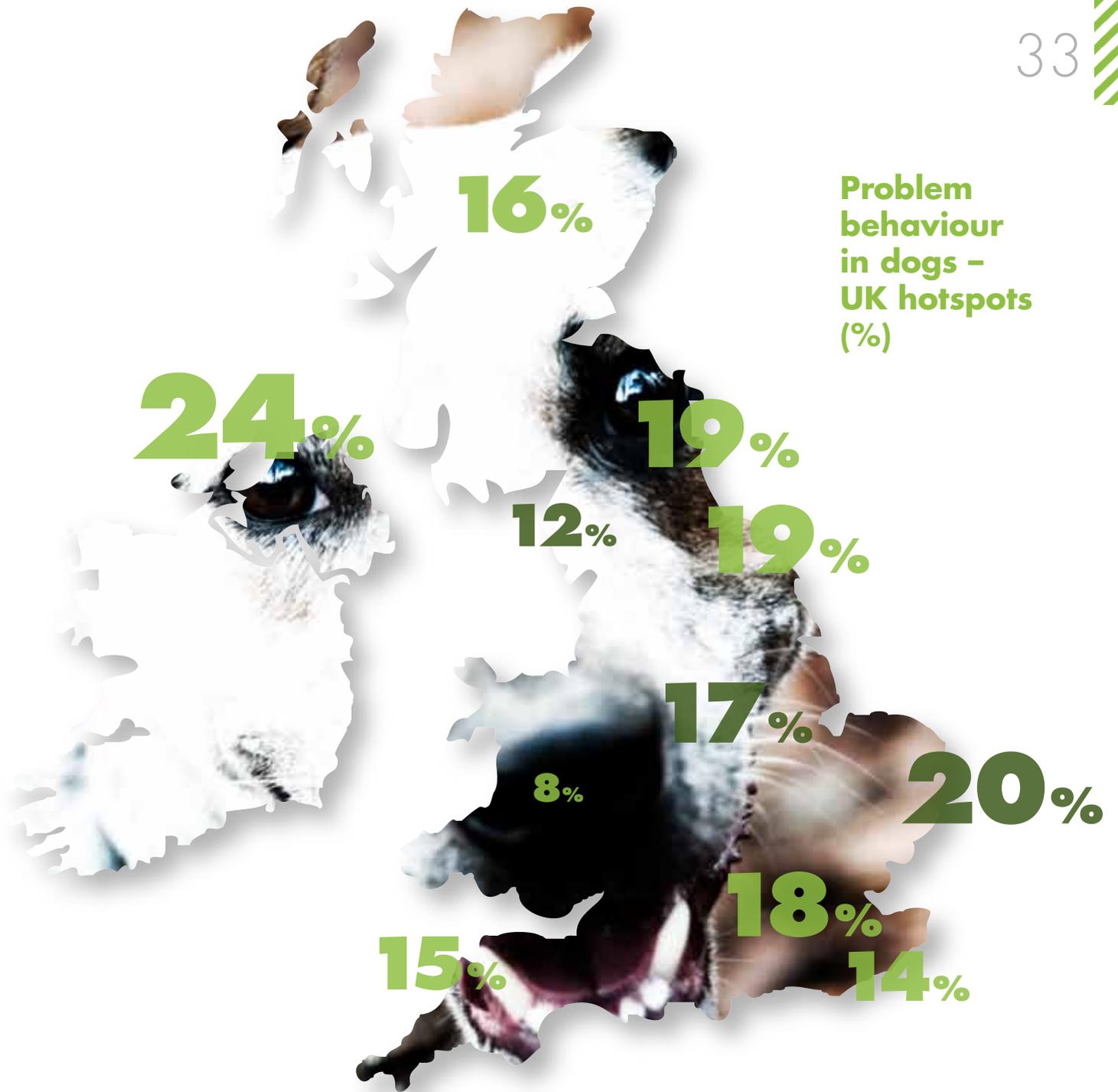


# Behaviour/in focus

**We asked dog owners to report what types of problem behaviour their pets show on a regular basis.** These included destructive behaviour; aggression towards people; aggression towards other pets; growling or snarling; fighting and biting other dogs. We have used these answers to develop a geographical insight into problem behaviour hotspots UK-wide.

Carefully socialising dogs in the first few months of their life will reduce the risk of serious behavioural problems later on.

**Northern Ireland 24%**  
**East of England 20%**  
**Northeast 19%**  
**Yorkshire & Humber 19%**  
**London 18%**  
**Midlands 17%**  
**Scotland 16%**  
**Southwest 15%**  
**Southeast 14%**  
**Northwest 12%**  
**Wales 8%**



# Behaviour/in focus



## **Tracy Arnold**

from Gillingham knows how important correct training and socialisation are for dogs. Her own dog, Fifi, was attacked and injured by a larger dog, while out walking last year.

Tracy says

“

As a result of the attack, Fifi is very scared of all dogs.

I trained Fifi from when she was a puppy to understand basic commands.

Dogs shouldn't pose a threat to other animals or people, which is why training pets to behave well is so important.

*The PAW Report says*

87%

of people believe that pet owners should face tougher penalties if their dog attacks another person or animal.

Case  
study

You also said ...

35

82%

of pet owners agree that children's play areas should be dog-free zones

11%

of dog owners see their dog as their protector

20%

of pet owners feel it is acceptable to leave a dog unattended with a child

95%

of pet owners feel that dog owners must take full responsibility for their dog's behaviour





Behaviour/in focus

# Training and socialisation

**Problem dog behaviour is most often due to a lack of training and little or no socialisation.** Socialisation is the process of gradually and carefully introducing puppies to everyday sights and sounds during their first few weeks of life. Effective socialisation is the best way of preventing fears from developing, which can be a cause of aggression in later life. Anyone with a young dog should, without exception, make a commitment to socialising and training their pet using kind and effective methods. It is up to owners to make sure that they provide appropriate early experiences for their young dog so that their pet grows up to be friendly and outgoing.



70% of children believe all dogs should go to training classes. In reality 61% of dogs never went to training classes in their first six months of life.

81% of owners with an aggressive dog agree that inappropriate or inadequate training leads to aggressive behaviour. 79% believe that problems can be due to a lack of positive experiences as a puppy.

Only 21% of those with an aggressive dog had trained them at all in their first six months of life.

# Behaviour/in focus

**PDSA believes that addressing problem behaviour in dogs requires a combination of education and new legislation.**



Amendments to dangerous dog laws to focus on deed not breed.



Compulsory microchipping to identify dogs and their owners.



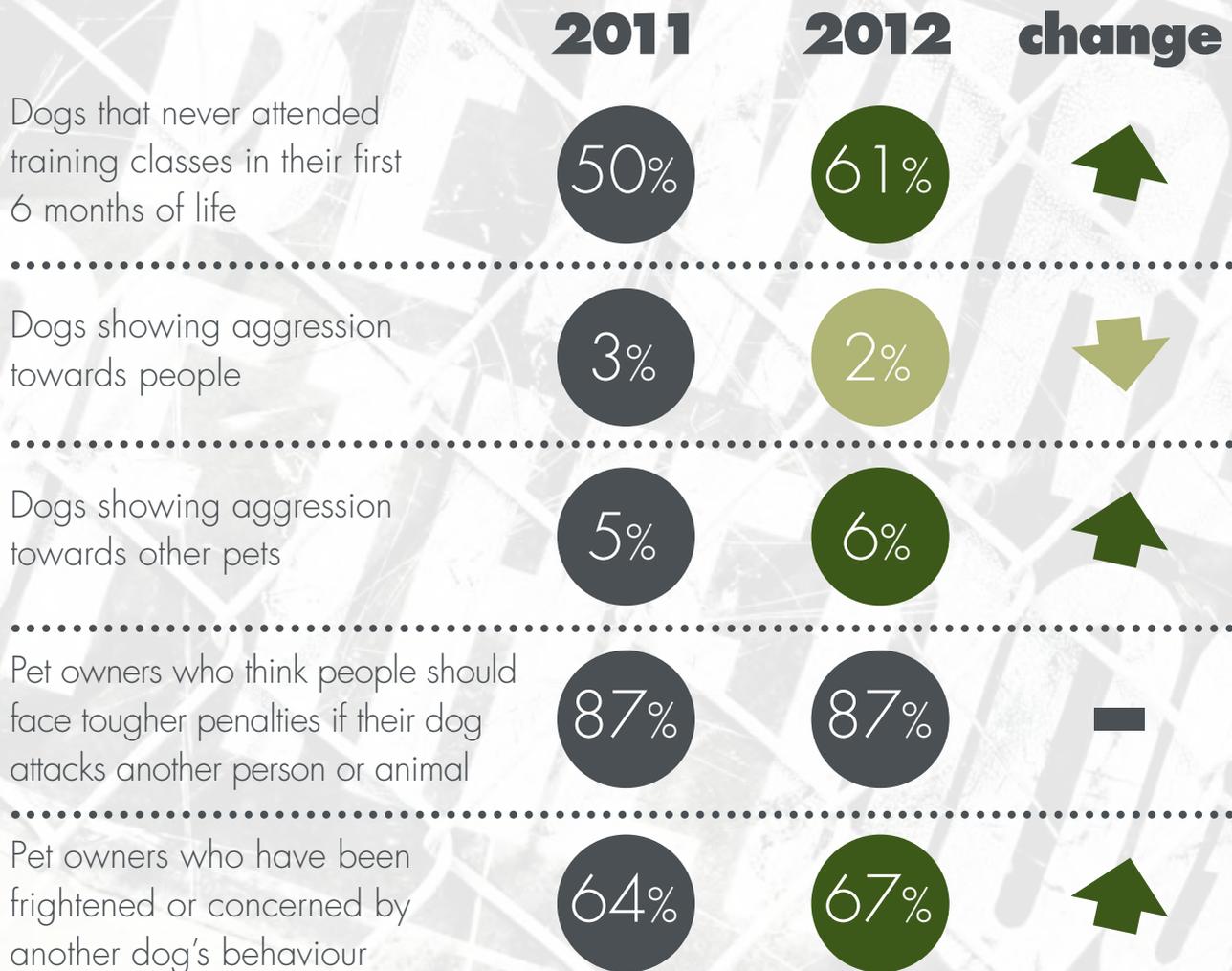
Education and advice on training and socialisation that is accessible for everyone.



Dog-free areas

for children to play.

# For better or worse?



# Health/in focus





Preventive health in focus

# Health/summary



The whole veterinary team is there to help keep your pet healthy and happy. Vets aren't just there when something goes wrong; you can talk to them about preventive healthcare throughout your pet's life. Our number one recommendation to pet owners is to register with a local veterinary practice.

The British Veterinary Association

Our research highlights that millions of UK pets still aren't receiving vital and often lifesaving preventive care, such as vaccinations, neutering, flea and worm treatments, and microchipping.

Meanwhile millions of pets aren't registered with a vet. The consequence of neglecting the health needs of pets can prove fatal. Pets that aren't vaccinated or neutered are at serious risk of developing life-threatening illnesses and diseases.

This year we investigated why the uptake of preventive care is low.

This is what owners told us...

## Top 3 reasons for not taking up preventive care for pets...

1 2 3



not neutered

not vaccinated  
(primary course)

not microchipped

**Don't believe in it**

**Not necessary**

**Not out supervised**

Want to breed from my dog

Too expensive

Not necessary

Worried about personality change

Haven't thought about it

Has an ID tag



not neutered

not vaccinated  
(primary course)

not microchipped

**Too young**

**Too expensive**

**Not necessary**

Haven't thought about it

Not necessary

Haven't thought about it

Haven't got round to it

Don't agree with it

Too expensive



not neutered

not vaccinated  
(primary course)

**Haven't thought about it**

**Not necessary**

Too expensive

Too expensive

Worried about general anaesthetic

Haven't thought about it

We also looked at why pets weren't being insured or registered with a vet...

### Not insured

In all species the top 2 answers were it's **too expensive** and it's **not necessary**.

### Not registered with a vet

In all species the top 2 answers were that **you can just turn up** and that it's **not necessary** as the pet is fine.

Older pet owners (over 55 years old) are significantly more likely to have had their pet neutered, had booster vaccinations, microchipped their pet, treated them for fleas and registered with a vet.

# Health/in focus



Cats are such prolific breeders that if we didn't neuter them, we would have a population explosion that would result in sick, stray and abandoned cats roaming the streets. As a nation of animal lovers, I don't think anyone would find this acceptable.

Many cat owners don't realise that cats can get pregnant as early as four months of age so we are working to encourage cat neutering at around four months of age, which is a significant move away from the traditional six months.

Maggie Roberts  
Director of Veterinary Services at Cats Protection.

## Neutering

The top reason given by male pet owners as to why they haven't had their pet neutered (given by 24% of men with unneutered pets) is because they don't believe in it.

Only 11% of female owners gave this reason. The top reason for women is that it's too expensive (16%).

There are no benefits to letting a pet have a litter before she is spayed, and the longer you leave it the higher the risk that she will get a serious disease such as breast cancer.

Cats can be neutered from 4 months of age.



Rabbit owners should think about neutering as there is an 80% chance that female rabbits over the age of 5 will get womb cancer.

# Myths & facts

45

## Microchipping

Cats stray and dogs can get stolen. Without a microchip you may never see your pet again. Microchipping is quick, simple and cheap. PDSA is part of the Microchip Alliance and supports compulsory microchipping for all dogs.

96% of the veterinary profession and

79% of pet owners support compulsory microchipping for dogs

Microchipping has a number of welfare and social benefits. To find out more, visit

[pdsa.org.uk/  
microchipping](https://pdsa.org.uk/microchipping)

## Vaccinations

Vaccinations prevent a wide range of potentially fatal diseases from which pets die every year.

A primary course is not enough. Pets need regular boosters throughout their lives. Ask your veterinary practice for more information.

Vaccines aren't as expensive as many owners think. It's a price worth paying to save a life.

# Health/in focus

Help us improve pet health across the UK by doing one of these things today to keep your pet healthy and happy.

**Register with a veterinary practice for advice and support on all aspects of your pet's wellbeing.**

**Check your pets' vaccinations are up-to-date and, if not, make an appointment at your vet's to start the course today.**

**Give your pet a wellbeing check - visit**

**[www.pdsa.org.uk/pawreport](http://www.pdsa.org.uk/pawreport)**

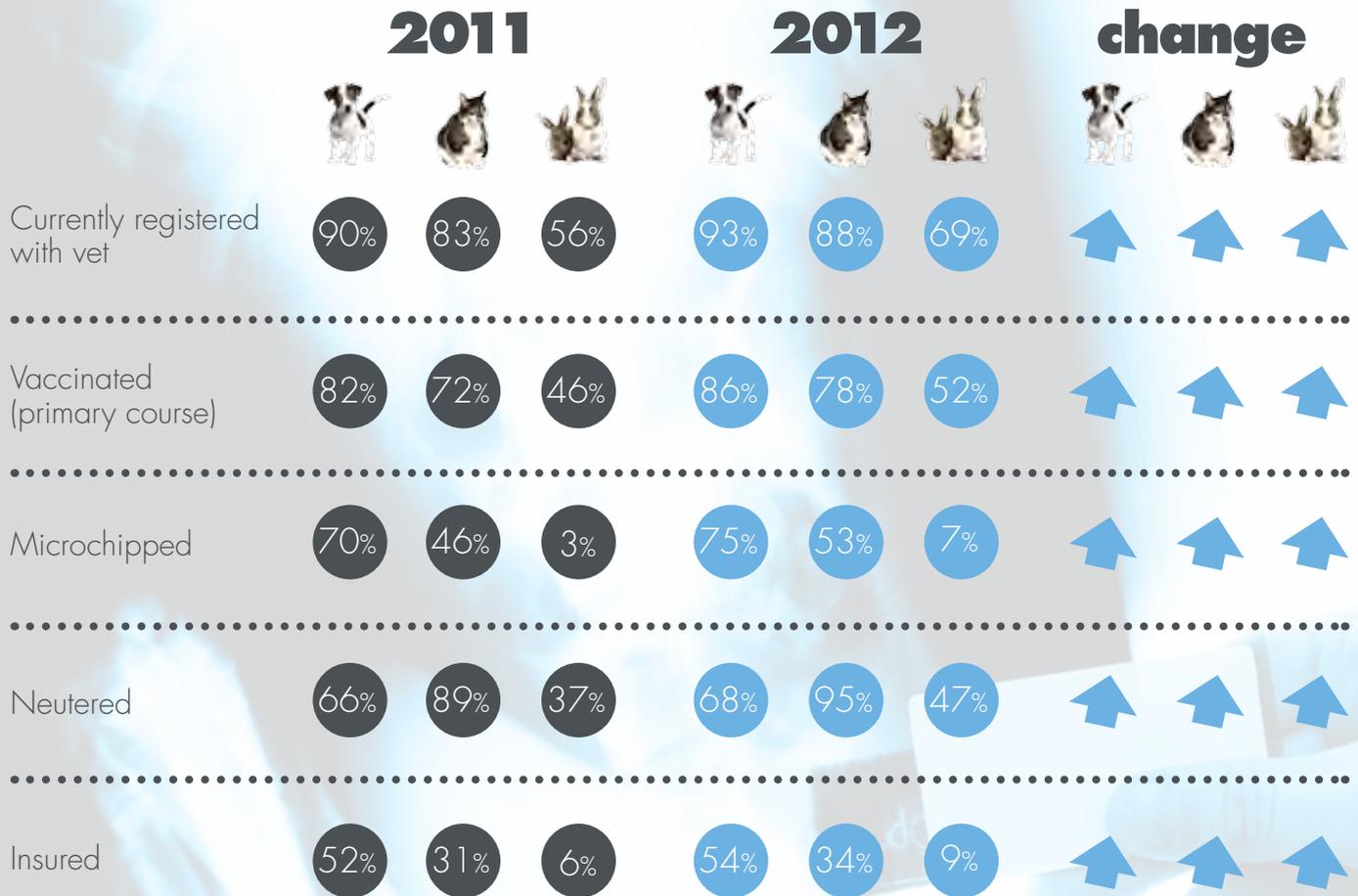
**to find out how.**

**Book an appointment with a local groomer or do it yourself at home.**

**It's your chance to check your pet from head to toe and spot matted fur, fleas or skin complaints.**

**Give your dog or cat a present they will thank you for in the long run - a worming tablet!**

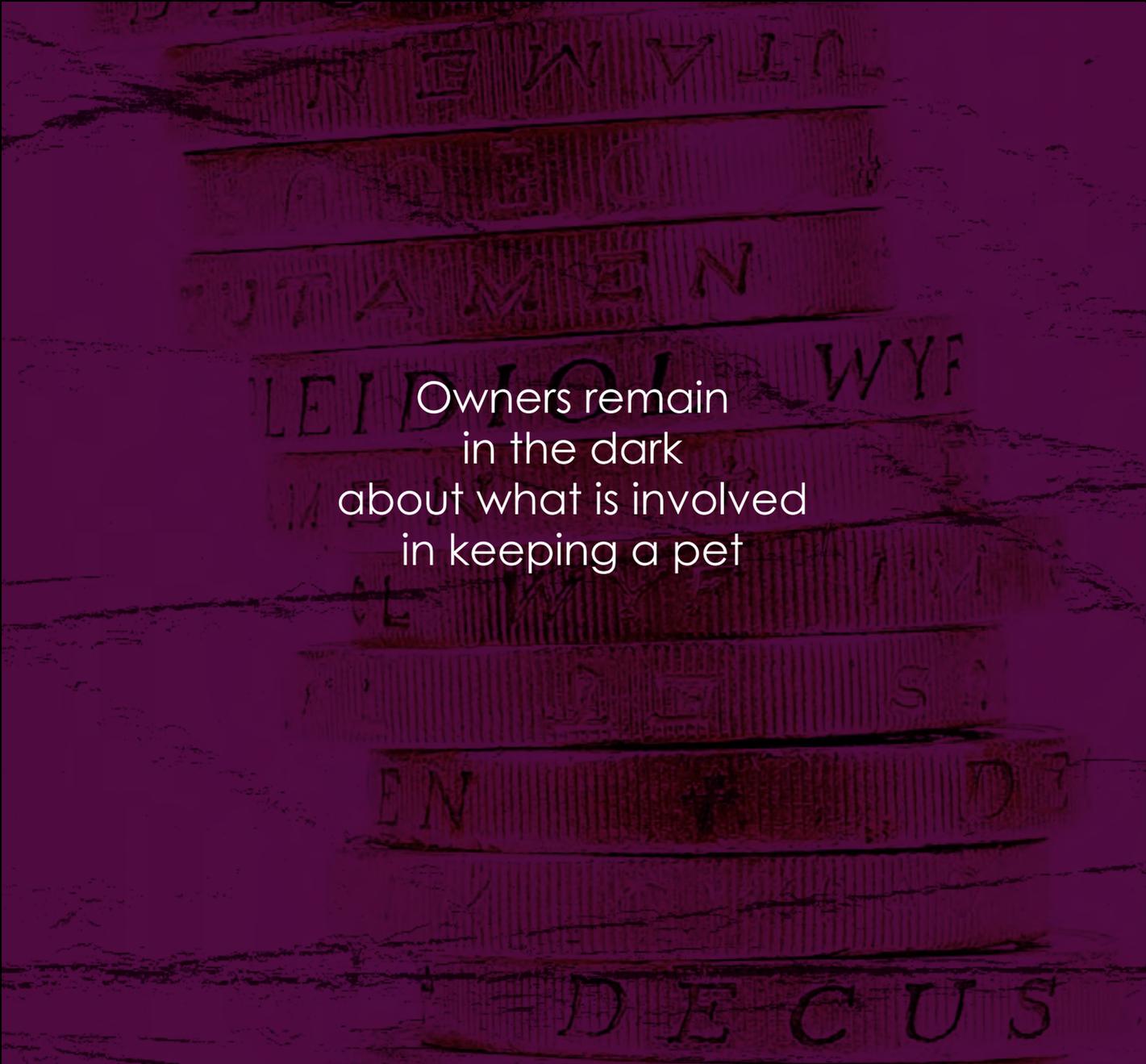
# For better or worse?



These results show an encouraging trend in the uptake of preventive care since the 2011 PAW Report.

# Ownership/ in focus

A small, light-colored silhouette of a person standing next to a dog, positioned behind the word 'focus' in the title.



Owners remain  
in the dark  
about what is involved  
in keeping a pet

# Ownership / summary

In the *PAW Report 2011*  we revealed that while we are a nation of animal  lovers, many of us do not fully understand what our  pets need, are unaware of the laws surrounding pet ownership  and our duty of care, and have no idea about the costs and long-term



commitment involved  when we take on a pet. Owning a pet can be a very enjoyable and fulfilling experience with both physical and mental benefits for owners, and we owe it to our pets to ensure we can give them everything they need throughout their lives.      

Ownership/in focus



# The Animal Welfare Act



*The Animal Welfare Act*  
and the five welfare needs  
contained within it provide

pet owners are familiar with  
the *Animal Welfare Act*.

**a simple framework to  
help owners understand  
their responsibilities.**

# 92%

of pet owners agree that all pet owners should have a basic understanding of the five animal welfare needs as outlined in the Animal Welfare Act 2006. This has increased from 89% last year.

Yet the number of pet owners who have heard of the Act has decreased from 78% to 75% since the last Report and the number of owners who feel familiar with the Act is only 31%.

96% of veterinary professionals say there is value in encouraging owners to understand the five welfare needs contained within the Act.

But only 15% of owners were given any information about the five welfare needs when they got their pet and a further 24% of pet owners were not given **any** advice on any aspect of health or welfare when they got their pet.

Information needs to be even more accessible and relevant to pet owners both when they first get a pet and throughout the pet's life.



To find out about the five welfare needs for all pets, visit

[pdsa.org.uk/  
pet-health-advice](https://pdsa.org.uk/pet-health-advice)

Owners and community groups can book talks from PDSA veterinary nurses or complete an e-learning module on pet health and welfare topics.

Pet Care videos and leaflets can also be found there or join us on Facebook or Twitter to chat to other pet owners.



# Ownership/in focus

## Choosing the right pet

**Choosing the right pet and considering the lifetime costs are both extremely important for potential pet owners.**

**Half of owners decided to acquire a pet to make the owner happy (49%). But nearly a quarter (23%) of owners find owning a pet is harder work than they expected so making the right decision is vital.**

There are many factors to consider including which type of pet would be most suitable and where to get the animal from. Worryingly, we have found that 42% of pet owners would consider getting a pet from the internet, allowing inappropriate breeding practices to continue and increasing the chances of people taking on pets that are inappropriate for their lifestyle.

24% would consider getting a dog from a puppy farm. 23% of pet owners did no research at all before taking on their pet.

If you are struggling with your pet, contact your veterinary practice or visit

[pdsa.org.uk](http://pdsa.org.uk)

for help and advice

For information on choosing the right pet for your lifestyle, information on costs and where to get your pet from, visit the award-winning Your Right Pet at

[your-right-pet.org.uk](http://your-right-pet.org.uk)

**Our research showed that the average time spent choosing a pet was often less than the time spent thinking about buying Christmas presents or a TV, and staggeringly, behind choosing a holiday. Owners invested the most time deciding on a car and house.**

A pet could live for over 20 years and cost over £30,000 during its lifetime, so how much time do people spend making that important decision of which pet would be most suitable for them?

15% of owners spend longer choosing Christmas presents, energy and insurance providers, holidays, TVs or cars than they do choosing a pet.



“

Our research shows where owners' priorities lie when it comes to preparing for pet ownership. Given that pets are thinking and feeling animals, it is unacceptable that they are given less thought than a holiday. This needs to change.

Nicola Martin  
Head of Pet Health and  
Welfare, PDSA

# Ownership / in focus

## In 2011 we found that very few owners understood the cost of ownership.

Nearly half (47%) of vets and vet nurses feel that cost is one of the least well understood aspects of pet ownership and only 12% of pet owners were given information about lifetime costs by the person who sold them their pet.

Cost should be a vital consideration for anyone deciding to take on a pet. The results opposite highlight that a large proportion of owners still vastly underestimate the lifetime costs of pet ownership.

### Actual likely lifetime cost



### Owner-estimated lifetime cost

	2011	2012
<£1K	19%	23%
£1K-5K	50%	47%
£5K-10K	23%	21%
£10K+	8%	8%
<£1K	33%	38%
£1K-5K	51%	47%
£5K-10K	13%	12%
£10K+	3%	3%
<£1K	81%	81%
£1K-5K	18%	19%
£5K-10K	1%	1%
£10K+	0%	0%

The likely costs above are based on estimates calculated by PDSA using current market prices and include: **initial costs** of the purchase of pet(s); neutering; first vaccinations; microchipping and accessories as well as the **ongoing costs** of food; boosters; pet insurance; toys; grooming; worming and cat litter in the case of cats. They do not include veterinary costs if a pet becomes sick or injured, so these average lifetime costs could be even higher.



# 17%

of pet owners would consider giving up their pet due to the associated costs if they became too expensive.

This increases to

# 33%

among 18–24-year-old pet owners.

# 40%

of owners have found that vet fees are more than they expected. Despite this, 59% of owners haven't taken out pet insurance.

47% of owners who don't insure their pets say it is because it's too expensive; an increase of 7% from last year.

# 20%

of owners have found the overall cost of pet ownership is more than they had expected it to be, an increase of 4% from last year.

To find out how much a pet will cost during its lifetime visit

[your-right-pet.org.uk](http://your-right-pet.org.uk)

# Children have their say

This year we surveyed over 500 young people (aged 10–16) to understand their thoughts and level of knowledge about some of the key pet wellbeing issues.

## The law

68% of young people have a pet in their household, yet only 7% of them have heard of the 5 animal welfare needs. If this knowledge is not acquired before they become pet owners themselves, future pets are at risk of not having their needs met.

While 58% of children know that pets are protected by the law, only 25% have actually heard of the Animal Welfare Act.

## Educating together

Tackling this lack of education about the legal requirement to provide for a pet's welfare needs is essential. One of the ways in which PDSA is working to improve this situation is through a new team of Community & Education Veterinary Nurses employed to educate

the public and run workshops in schools teaching thousands of children to care for animals.

[pdsa.org.uk/education](https://pdsa.org.uk/education)

## Learning about pets

Only 16% have been taught at school about caring for pets and yet 76% think they should be.

65% think that everyone should have to take a test before taking on a pet.

The major animal welfare charities and organisations have formed the Animal Welfare Education Alliance and all the resources available to teachers to help children learn about pet care can be found at:

[peteducationresources.co.uk](https://peteducationresources.co.uk)



## Pet friends

The main reasons young people give for wanting a pet is that...

... they are fun to play with.



... they want them to be their friend.



... because they are cute.



Dogs are the pet they would most like to have. Results indicate that young people prioritise personality and looks over health when choosing a dog although when questioned 79% state that it is not acceptable to breed a dog for looks over health.

When asked how much a pet would cost to look after for a year the answers were:

£500

£250

£150

This amount would be spent on food alone, highlighting the need to provide better education about costs so that young people understand what is involved if they take on a pet in the future. This is supported by the finding that 21% of 18–24-year-olds have found the overall cost of pet ownership is more than they had expected.

## A nation of animal lovers?

While 70% of young people think most people in the UK love animals, they also said that the biggest issue they saw facing pets was neglect and lack of care.

# The voice of the profession

1

64%

Not understanding the cost of pet ownership

**The veterinary profession has identified its top 3 concerns relating to pet care and ownership in general.**

2

42%

Lack of pre-purchase education on pet choice

They also felt that lack of understanding of the cost of pet ownership is likely to have the greatest welfare implication for pets in 10 years time.

3

35%

Lack of awareness of the five welfare needs

Veterinary professionals are still the main source of pet care advice for three-quarters of pet owners, with nearly half of owners now also using the internet, and a quarter asking friends and family, as well as referring to books.





## The top 3 welfare concerns in different pet species:

### cats

- 1 low uptake of neutering
- 2 multi-cat households
- 3 chronic stress

### dogs

- 1 aggressive behaviour
- 2 obesity
- 3 inadequate socialisation

### rabbits

- 1 inappropriate diet
- 2 dental disease
- 3 inadequate space for exercise

vets public

Pet insurance should be compulsory for all owners

55%

36%

It is acceptable to leave a child unattended with a dog

20%

20%

I have been concerned or frightened by a dog's behaviour

92%

67%

Children's play areas should be dog-free zones

77%

82%

The UK is a nation of animal lovers

83%

87%

Owners must take full responsibility for their dogs' behaviour

99%

95%

Microchipping should be made compulsory for all dogs

96%

79%

Dog licences should be reintroduced

78%

67%

Anyone breeding puppies should be licensed and regulated to meet certain standards

97%

93%

HM Government should take the issue of dangerous dogs more seriously

86%

81%

Owners should face tougher penalties if their dog attacks another person or animal

85%

87%

Prospective owners should pass a test before taking on a pet

65%

47%

# A better life for pets...

## What PDSA has done

**Launched *Your Right Pet***, an award-winning online tool designed to help prospective pet owners choose the right pet for their lifestyle. ✓

**Set up a team of Pet Wellbeing Nurses** to work in local communities offering free health checks, talks and schools workshops. ✓

**Introduced preventive services** for our clients including neutering, vaccination, microchipping, worming and flea treatment. ✓

**Became Patrons of the Advisory Council on the Welfare Issues of Dog Breeding** to make a difference to the lives of future generations of dogs. ✓

**Completed over 50,000 free health checks** for dogs through our PetCheck programme over the last 10 years. ✓

**Worked collaboratively with many animal welfare charities and organisations** to promote neutering, microchipping and rabbit welfare. ✓

**Developed a wide range of e-learning modules, pet health videos and digital content** for pet owners and all those working in animal health and welfare roles to expand their knowledge. ✓

During 2011 alone we ...

Provided 2.4 million free treatments to sick and injured pets of people in need.

Provided over 420,000 preventive treatments; vaccinated 80,000 dogs, cats and rabbits, neutered over 30,000 dogs, cats and rabbits, and implanted over 15,000 microchips.

Engaged over 300,000 children with our pet health messages through a range of educational resources, workshops and talks.





We will be running a series of initiatives based on the biggest issues, all with the aim of achieving a better life for pets.

We will be working with the Veterinary profession to offer more accessible advice to help people choose the right pet from the right place and ensure pet ownership is an enjoyable experience.

We are playing an active part in the Education Alliance securing a place for the five welfare needs in the National Curriculum and educating the pet owners of the future.

We will be giving every client who registers with us information on what the five welfare needs are, and how to provide them for their particular pet.



We are working with Cats Protection to promote their early neutering scheme to all our clients and PetAid hospital staff.

We have created a **Pet Wellbeing Task Force** so that each of our PetAid hospitals can tackle the issues that concern them the most.

We are launching our first ever **Pet Wellbeing Month** to promote the five welfare needs to all our clients.

We are partners in **Rabbit Awareness Week**, educating rabbit owners on what their rabbits need.

# A better life for pets...

## What can you do?

Give your pet a **Pet wellbeing check.**

To find out how visit

[pdsa.org.uk/  
pawreport](http://pdsa.org.uk/pawreport)

Visit one of our **PetCheck vehicles** or **book a Wellbeing Nurse visit** for

your school or community group and find out how you can help achieve a better life for pets.

[pdsa.org.uk/  
petcheck](http://pdsa.org.uk/petcheck)

**Help us treat even more sick and injured pets** –

some things just can't be prevented and we want to make sure we are always here for pets in need – visit

[pdsa.org.uk/  
build](http://pdsa.org.uk/build)

**Parents – enrol a child to the PDSA Pet Protectors Club** to help us teach more young children about caring for pets.

**Watch our brand new animation** to find out more about the state of our pet nation.



[pdsa.org.uk/  
pawreport](http://pdsa.org.uk/pawreport)

and...

**Make your voice heard**

and tell us how you will make a difference at

[abetterlifeformpets.co.uk](http://abetterlifeformpets.co.uk)

Together we can make a difference

And if you  
can...



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**0800 019 9166** or  
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stores. Plus, you could  
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you think...



HAVE YOU EVER BEEN BITTEN OR  
ATTACKED BY A DOG?

DO YOU FIND PET OWNERSHIP  
IS NOT WHAT YOU EXPECTED  
IT TO BE?

HOW DO YOU THINK THE PET OBESITY  
CRISIS SHOULD BE TACKLED?

DO YOU THINK THERE SHOULD  
BE DOG-FREE PLAYGROUNDS  
FOR CHILDREN?

SHOULD PETS BE SOLD ON  
THE INTERNET?

DO YOU KNOW WHERE  
TO GO TO GET ADVICE  
ABOUT PET WELLBEING?

HAVE YOU EVER BEEN  
BITTEN OR ATTACKED  
BY A DOG?

Join our campaign

#abetterlifeformpets

and help us improve  
pet wellbeing today.

*a better life for pets*



## References

When referring to the Animal Welfare Act this includes the Animal Welfare Act 2006 covering England and Wales, the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006 which applies to the whole of Scotland, and the Welfare of Animals Act (Northern Ireland) 2011.

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