



# PAW

PDSA ANIMAL WELLBEING

# REPORT

# 2019

The essential insight into the wellbeing of UK pets

**ISSUE IN FOCUS:  
VACCINATION**





**Since 1917, we've been working to improve the wellbeing of pets across the UK.**

Our annual PAW Report, now in its ninth year, monitors key statistics to show us the state of pet wellbeing across the nation. We also work tirelessly to improve pet wellbeing through a combination of Prevention, Education and Treatment strategies in our Pet Hospitals and in communities.



**We're working with one of the UK's leading research companies to ensure our Report provides a robust and evidence-based reflection of the pet-owning population in this country.**

YouGov's thorough survey methodologies provide 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, they have an established track record of consistently accurate and high-quality survey data, representing all ages, socio-economic groups and other demographic types.

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# Introduction

Since the launch of our first PDSA Animal Wellbeing (PAW) Report in 2011, we're proud that it has become a highly respected source of statistics in the animal welfare sector. Every year we've looked at our data from different angles and tracked various animal wellbeing issues in the pet population.



One of the ways we use the PAW Report to assess and advance animal welfare is by focusing on priority topics. Our findings suggest rising levels of vaccine hesitancy amongst pet owners, so we have focused on this significant issue in this Report. We hope that our in-depth examination of some of the correlations in this area can help the Sector to improve uptake of vaccinations, and help protect pets against preventable diseases.

As well as new analyses, we continue to ask tracking questions and compare data across the years. We have again divided our data by species and Welfare Need for ease of reference and comparison.

The importance of pets in our families as a source of companionship and joy cannot be underestimated, and our vets and vet nurses regularly see the value of the strong bonds formed between pet and owner.

Our data has shone a light on this, but also on some common areas where cat, dog and rabbit owners are failing to meet, or in some cases even being aware of, their pets' 5 Welfare Needs. We hope that through concerted action in the animal welfare sector, in the coming years, we'll be able to track more improvements and fewer shortfalls.

50% of UK adults own a pet

# Methodology

In conjunction with YouGov, we surveyed a large and representative group of UK pet owners to create an accurate picture of pet wellbeing across the nation.

Using the YouGov panel methodology, outlined at [yougov.co.uk/about/panel-methodology](http://yougov.co.uk/about/panel-methodology) we surveyed a demographically representative sample totalling 5,036 cat, dog and rabbit owners; over the age of 18; and living in the UK. Therefore when talking about 'owners' throughout this Report, we are discussing cat, dog and rabbit owners, not owners of other types of pets.

Data was gathered between 7th January and 5th February 2019 using online surveys. Figures are weighted to be representative of the population by pet species and owner's region, age and gender. Differences noted between figures have been validated by YouGov and are statistically significant.

This year we have also been able to use our data to compare Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD). These are a measure of deprivation at a local scale, based on weighted factors such as income, employment levels, education and skills training, health and disability, crime, access to services and/or housing, and physical environment. The indices rank areas in deciles, where decile 1 represents the most deprived 10% and decile 10 the least deprived 10%.

We have estimated the number of owned dogs, cats and rabbits in the UK using ONS data on the total UK population, a separate nationally representative YouGov survey that determines the percentage of UK adults who own each species of pet (n=10,000) and findings from the PAW survey on the number of each species of pet that each respondent owns (n=5,036).

In various parts of this Report we have also used quotes from owners captured as part of the survey.

Percentages throughout the report are rounded to the nearest whole number. Other figures are rounded to two significant figures. When calculating numbers of pets in statistics, we have taken the total population figure for this type of pet and multiplied it by the final percentage. The resulting figure is then rounded to two significant figures.

**For example, to calculate the number of dogs walked less than once a day:**

**9.9 million** (total population of dogs)  
**x 12%** (owners who reported walking their dog less than once a day)  
**= 1,188,000.**

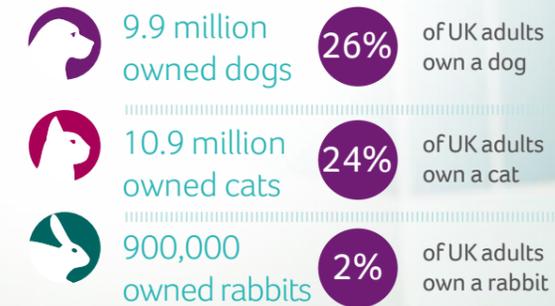
This figure would then be rounded to and presented as **1.2 million** dogs.

**We surveyed 5,036 adults to understand the wellbeing of UK pets:**



Where statistics are not from the survey detailed above (e.g. from a previous year's PDSA Animal Wellbeing (PAW) Report or other academic work), this has been noted and we have provided the sources. References can be found in the footnotes of each page.

**We surveyed 10,000 adults to estimate the UK pet populations:**



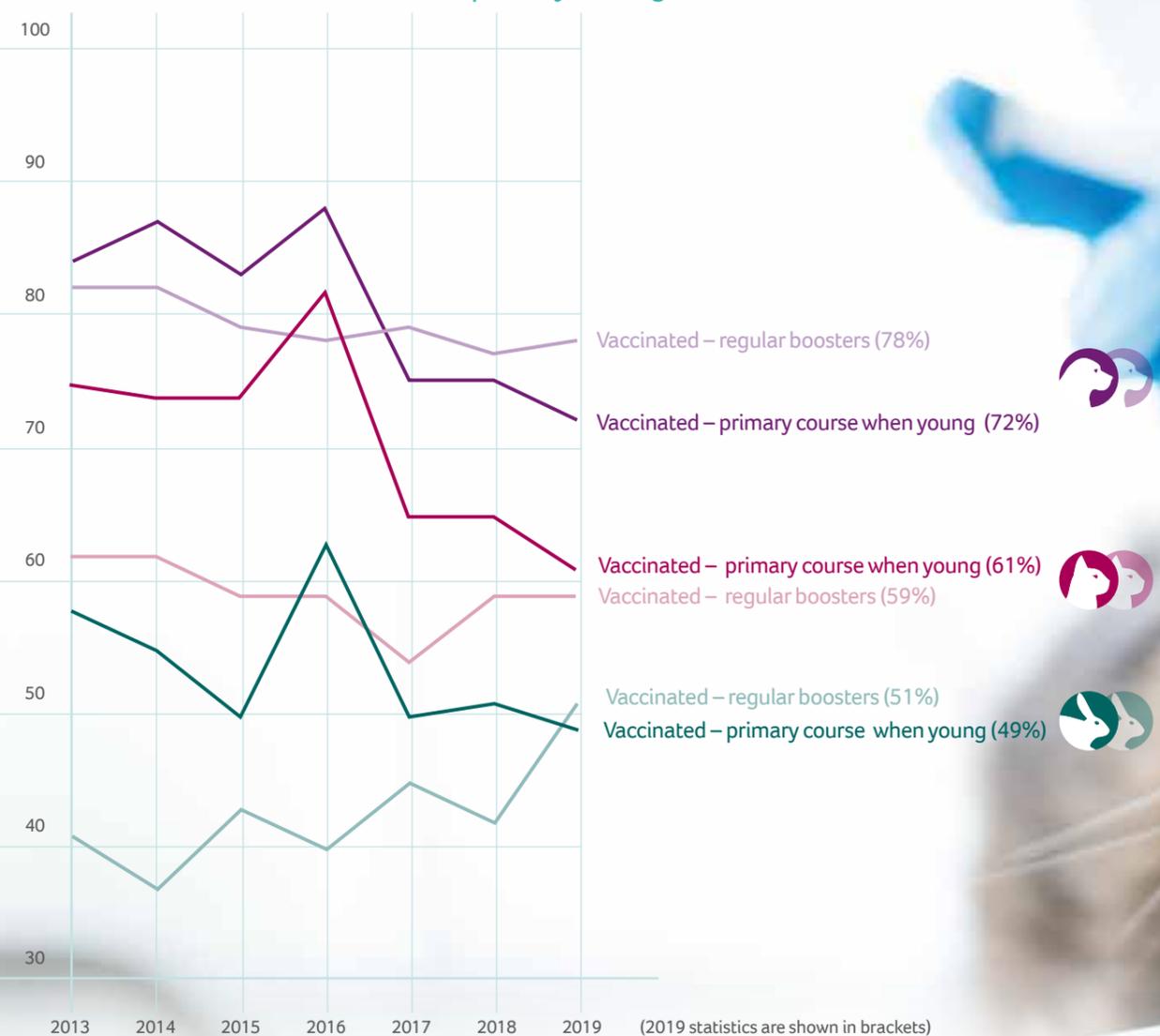
# Issue in focus: vaccinations

**ISSUE IN FOCUS:  
VACCINATION**

Vaccinations save lives and protect pets from infectious diseases. However, we first noted a reduction in the proportion of pet owners reporting that their dog, cat or rabbit had had a primary vaccination when young in 2017, and this year, our findings show a further drop.

Despite a drop in the proportion of pets given a primary vaccination when young, we haven't seen a reduction in any of the other preventive healthcare options, including pets being currently registered with a vet.

% Preventive health – vaccination (primary and regular boosters)



### Top reasons for not vaccinating (all pet owners)

- 1 Too expensive 17%
- 2 Pet doesn't come into contact with other animals 17%
- 3 Not necessary 16%
- 4 Pet finds going to the vets very stressful 13%
- 5 Haven't thought about it 11%
- 6 Not got around to it yet 10%

This year, 66% of dog, cat, and rabbit owners said their pet had a primary vaccination when young, down from 84% in 2016.

Further analysis on the specific reasons for not vaccinating, and for not giving any vaccinations since a primary course when young, for dogs, cats and rabbits can be found in the Health section for each species.



# Primary vaccination course when young



Factors associated with whether a pet has had a primary vaccination course when young:

## Owner's age

**Owners aged 18 – 24 were more likely** to say their pet had had a primary vaccination course when young (75%) than those who were:

- 35-44 (65%)
- 45-54 (67%)
- 55-64 (63%), or
- 65+ (62%).

## Owner's education

**Owners educated to university degree level or higher were more likely** to say their pet had had a primary vaccination course when young (70%) than those with no formal qualifications (57%) or with qualifications below degree level (63%)

## Owner's gross household income

**Owners in households earning £50,000 or more were more likely** to say their pet had had a primary vaccination course when young (70%) compared with owners in households earning £25,000 - £49,999 (65%) or less than £25,000 (62%)

## Pet species

**Rabbit owners were less likely** to say their pet had had a primary vaccination course when young (49%) than cat owners (61%) and both less likely than dog owners (72%).

**Further insight:** 30% of rabbit owners who hadn't vaccinated their pet selected that their pet didn't come into contact with other animals as a reason, which is higher than cat owners (19%), and both were higher than dog owners (7%).

## Dog owners: pedigree versus crossbreed dog

**Owners of crossbreeds were less likely** to say their pet had had a primary vaccination course when young (67%) than owners of pedigree dogs (73%)

## Bought versus re-homed pets

**Owners who bought their pet** (i.e. got their pet from: a breeder of one specific breed or multiple breeds, a private seller, a high volume breeding establishment, or a pet shop / garden centre) **were more likely** to say that their pet has had a primary vaccination when young (73%) than those who got their pet from a rescue or rehoming centre / shelter (65%). However, this difference could in part be due to lack of knowledge of a re-homed pet's previous vaccination history.

**Further insight:** 42% of owners who got their pet from a rescue or rehoming centre said they weren't given any evidence of previous preventive health care (such as vaccination certificate or details of the pet's microchip), so many owners of rehomed pets may not know if their pet had a primary vaccination course when young. Owners of rehomed pets were no less likely to report that their pet had regular booster vaccinations (see pages 12-13).

Further information would be needed to clarify whether the differences reported in pets receiving a primary course when young simply reflect that it's common to not know the full medical history of rehomed pets.

## Not consistently associated

Our findings indicate that the following were **not consistently associated** with whether their pet had had a primary vaccination when young:

- Owner's gender
- Marital status
- Ethnicity
- Employment status
- Social grade
- Indices of Multiple Deprivation\*
- Religion
- Region
- Age of their pet
- Length of ownership
- Awareness of the Animal Welfare Acts
- Whether a cat was pedigree or not



# Booster vaccinations



Factors associated with whether a pet has had a booster vaccination:

## Owner's age

**Owners aged 55-64 and 65+** were more likely to say their pet had had regular booster vaccinations (72% and 74% respectively) than those who were aged

- 18-24 (64%)
- 25-34 (63%)
- 35-44 (65%)

**Further insight:** Owners aged 25-34 or 35-44 were more likely to say that they hadn't vaccinated their pet because they 'hadn't got around to it' (15% and 14% respectively), compared to:

- 45-55 (5%)
- 55-64 (6%)
- 65+ (5%)

## Owner's education

**Owners educated to university degree level or higher** were more likely to say their pet had had regular booster vaccinations (72%) than owners with no formal qualifications (62%) or qualifications below degree level (63%)

## Owner's gross household income

**Owners in households earning £50,000 or more** were more likely to say their pet had had regular booster vaccinations (76%) than owners in households earning £25,000-£49,999 (68%) or less than £25,000 (58%)

## Indices of Multiple Deprivation deciles\*

**There is a gradual increase through the deciles** with those in deciles 1-3 being least likely to say their pet had had regular booster vaccinations (60%) and those in deciles 8-10 (74%) being most likely. Deciles 4-7 are in the middle (67%)

## Owner's social grade

**Owners in social grades ABC1 (72%)** were more likely to say their pet had had regular booster vaccinations than owners in social grades C2DE (61%)

## Pet species

**Rabbit owners were less likely** to say their pet had had regular booster vaccinations (51%) than cat owners (59%) and both less likely than dog owners (78%)

**Further insight:** 34% of rabbit owners who said their pet hadn't had regular booster vaccinations selected that **their pet didn't come into contact with other animals** as a reason, which is higher than cat owners (18%), and both were higher than dog owners (7%).

## Cat owners: Pedigree versus non-pedigree cat

**Owners of pedigree cats** were more likely to say to say their cat had had regular booster vaccinations (72%) than owners of domestic longhair (62%) or domestic shorthair cats (57%)

## Dog owners: Pedigree versus crossbreed dog

**Owners of crossbreed dogs were less likely** to say to say their dog had had regular booster vaccinations (73%) than owners of pedigree dogs (80%)

## Owner's awareness of Animal Welfare Acts (AWAs)

**Those who had heard of the AWAs and were very familiar or quite familiar with them,** were more likely to say their pet had had regular boosters (70%) than those who were not familiar with the AWAs (67%). Those who had not heard of the AWAs were lower than all these (61%).

**Further insight:** Those who haven't heard of AWAs (15%) or have heard of but aren't familiar (13%) were more likely to select that they 'haven't thought about it' as a reason compared to those who were very familiar (6%) or quite familiar with the AWAs (8%), when asked why they haven't given booster vaccinations.

## Length of ownership

**Owners who had had their pet for two to five years were more likely to say their pet had had regular booster vaccinations (70%)** than those who had their pet up to one year (65%) or those that had them for six years or more (67%).

**Further insight:** Owners who've had their pet for over six years are more likely to say that the reason they haven't provided boosters is that their pet is **too old** (9% compared to 2% of owners who've had their pet for two to five years).

As would be expected for owners with recently acquired pets, who would generally either have been vaccinated by a rescue if rehomed or given a primary vaccination course if bought when young, owners who have had their pet for less than a year are more likely to say that a reason they haven't given booster vaccinations is because their pet's vaccinations are not due yet (45% compared to 5% of owners who've had their pet for two to five years or 3% of owners who've had their pet for six or more years).

## Region

**Owners living in Wales (59%)** are less likely to say that their pet has regular boosters than those in England (68%), East of England (72%), the Midlands (66%) and the South of England (73%).

## Employment

**Owners who are unemployed (52%)** are less likely to say that their pet has regular boosters than those who are retired (74%).

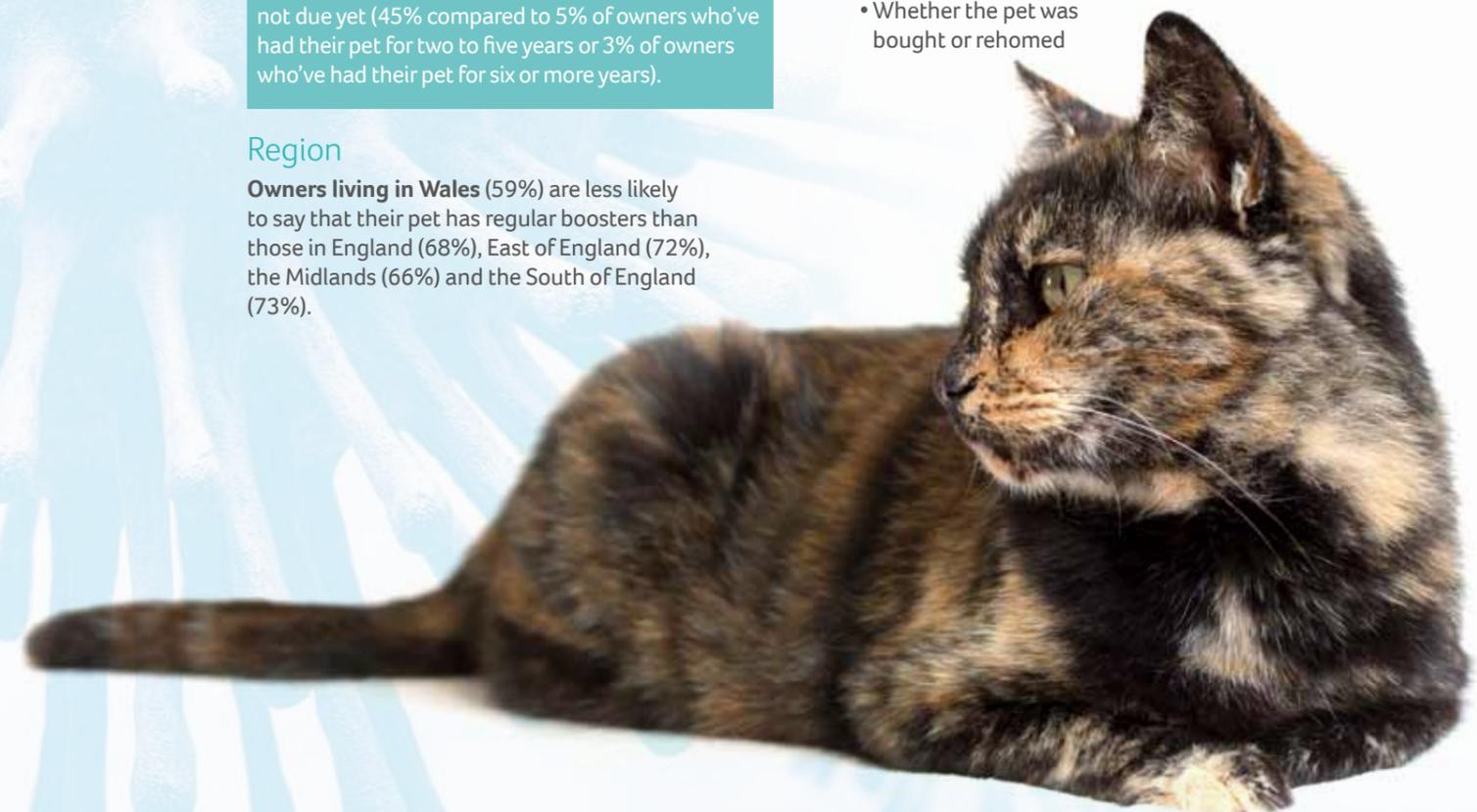
## Marital status

Owners who are married, living as married or in a civil partnership are more likely (71%) to have regular boosters than those who are separated or divorced (61%) or never married (60%).

## Not consistently associated

Our findings indicate that the following were **not consistently associated** with whether an owner had had given a booster vaccination to their pet:

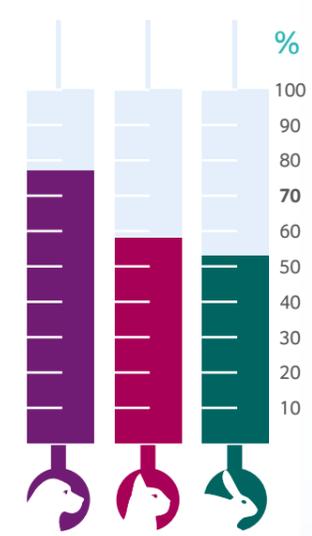
- Owner's gender
- Ethnicity
- Pet's age
- Whether the pet was bought or rehomed
- For rabbit owners: whether their rabbit was living indoors or out



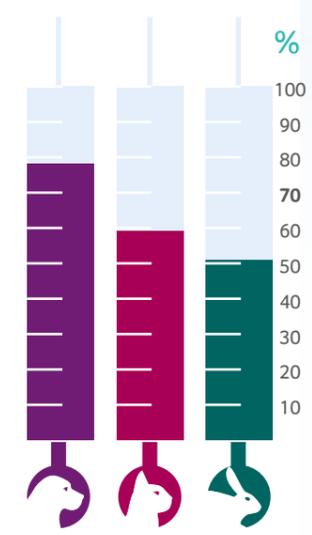
\* Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMDs) are a measure of deprivation at a local scale, based on weighted factors such as income, employment levels, education and skills training, health and disability, crime, access to services and/or housing, and physical environment. The indices rank areas in deciles, where decile 1 represents the most deprived 10% and decile 10 the least deprived 10%.



## Owners who vaccinated their pet in the last 12 months (%):



## Owners giving their pet regular boosters (%):



With dropping levels of primary vaccination and low levels of booster vaccination, particularly for cats and rabbits, herd immunity could be weakened.

“Vaccination is vital. Pets in the UK have been amazingly well-protected from many terrible diseases such as parvovirus, hepatitis, distemper and leptospirosis, all of which used to be endemic here, through the power of vaccination and ‘herd immunity’. But this system relies on owners and vets working together to make sure every animal has the right protection throughout their life.

As a vet, it is hugely concerning to consider the future for pets in this country if owners begin to move away from regularly vaccinating. We would encourage anyone with questions or concerns about vaccination to speak to their vet.”

*Daniella Dos Santos BSc BVetMed MRCVS  
Junior Vice President, British Veterinary Association*



Vaccination is a hot topic this year in the spheres of both human and pet health. ‘Vaccine hesitancy’ has been named one of the top ten health threats for 2019 by the World Health Organisation (WHO), 2019.

In the veterinary sector, the World Veterinary Association’s (WVA) theme for their 2019 World Veterinary Day was ‘the Value of Vaccinations’ (WVA, 2019).

The health of both humans and animals can suffer when they are not vaccinated, and negative messages about the vaccination of one may lead to hesitancy in vaccinating the other. **Increasing public confidence in vaccinations could improve health outcomes for both people and pets.**

**Our findings show a sustained reduction since 2016 in owners reporting that their dogs, cats and rabbits received a primary vaccination course when young.**

In UK children, coverage of the Measles-Mumps-Rubella (MMR) vaccine also decreased for the fourth year running, to 91.2%, which is below the level needed for herd immunity against measles (reported in The Lancet Child and Adolescent Health, 2019).

A survey by the European Commission on vaccine confidence showed that people in younger age brackets were more likely to agree that vaccines are important for children (particularly among the UK population), and also suggested that people who had levels of education higher than secondary were more likely to agree that vaccines were safe (Larson, et al., 2018).

**It’s interesting therefore that our research also found that younger pet owners, and those with lower education attainment were less likely to give booster vaccinations to their pets, though the age association was the opposite for primary vaccinations.**

**Key initiatives in both veterinary and human health aimed at promoting confidence and increasing vaccine uptake need to be understandable to a broad audience, and different communication approaches may be needed to change the behaviour of different age groups.**

**We have consistently identified that owners select ‘it’s too expensive’ as a top reason for not giving vaccinations.**

**Initiatives addressing cost and access for veterinary clients could be useful in increasing pet vaccine uptake.**

**Vaccine misinformation**

Reports in the human health sector point towards social media as one of the ways in which misinformation about vaccinations is spread. Parents were more likely to see negative messages on vaccination on social media than they were to see positive messages (Royal Society for Public Health, 2019).

These negative messages about vaccines can be projected onto pets in surprising ways – for example, the false link between the MMR vaccines and autism has also been applied to pet vaccines by sceptics, despite any link being thoroughly debunked in people and autism not being documented in pets (British Veterinary Association, 2018).

**Combatting negative messages and correcting myths about vaccination while engaging people with the benefits on social media may help with this issue.**

**Vet practice staff can help by using the trust placed in them to welcome questions, discussing the risks of side effects while being clear about the benefits of vaccines, as with any other medical procedure.** Reaching these owners will help to ease their reservations and ensure every pet gets the preventive care that’s right for them.

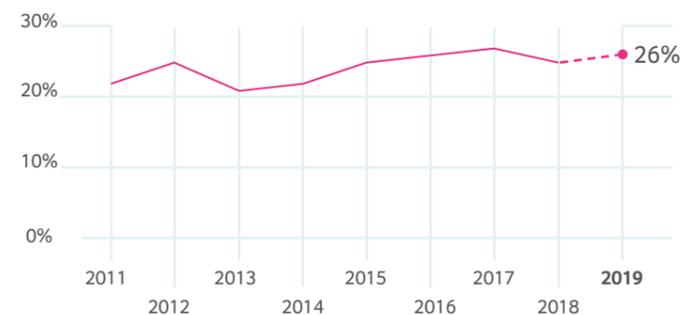
# Awareness of the Animal Welfare Acts and the 5 Welfare Needs

## Awareness of the Animal Welfare Acts\*

Over a quarter of owners (26%) are unaware of the Animal Welfare Acts.\*



## Owners who have never heard of the Animal Welfare Acts



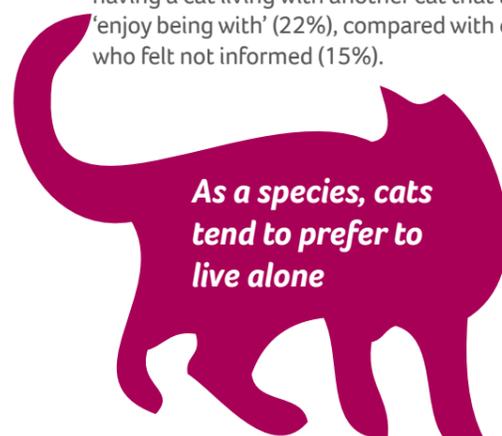
## Awareness of the 5 Welfare Needs

Understanding of the 5 Welfare Needs translates to real differences in how pets are kept. Our previous research has shown that owners who feel informed about the 5 Welfare Needs are more likely to provide preventive healthcare to their pets than owners who do not feel informed about them (PDSA, 2016) and owners who sought advice or researched before choosing their pet were more likely to feel informed about all 5 Welfare Needs than those who didn't (PDSA, 2018).

There has been a decrease in owners who feel informed about all of the 5 Welfare Needs, from 78% in 2017 to 72% this year when owners were given a list of the Welfare Needs and asked if they felt informed about them. When asked if they had heard that there were 5 Welfare Needs for pets before participating in our research, two thirds (66%) of owners said 'no'.

**Companionship** remains the least well-recognised welfare need with only 78% of owners feeling informed about it compared to 91% feeling informed about the need for a suitable diet.

Owners who felt informed about companionship as a Welfare Need were more likely to report having a cat living with another cat that they 'enjoy being with' (22%), compared with owners who felt not informed (15%).



Despite the general lack of understanding of the species-specific companionship needs of pets, people readily recognised that having a pet offered them valuable companionship, with 82% of owners reporting their pet made them feel less lonely.

This year, we looked at owners' awareness of Companionship, the least well-recognised welfare need, in more detail:



Dog owners who feel **informed** about companionship as a Welfare Need (18%) are less likely to be leaving their dog alone for 5 or more hours than those who feel **uninformed** (24%).



Cat owners who feel **informed** about companionship as a Welfare Need (46%) are more likely to have a cat who lives with another cat than those who feel **uninformed** (36%), despite cats, as a species, preferring to live alone.



Rabbit owners who feel **informed** about companionship as a Welfare Need (46%) are less likely to have a rabbit who lives alone than those who feel **uninformed** (71%).

## Percentage of owners who felt informed about each of the 5 Welfare Needs:



# The cost of pet ownership

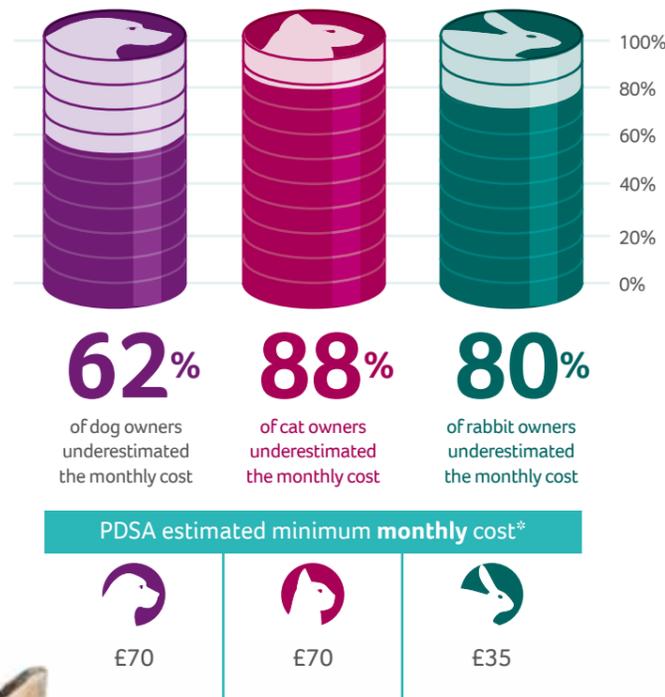
Budgeting for a pet is an important part of pet ownership but our research shows the majority of pet owners under-estimate the costs involved with providing for the 5 Welfare Needs of their pet.

Three-quarters (75%) of pet owners estimated a lower amount than the minimum monthly cost\* for their type of pet.

Approximately a quarter (24%) of owners told us that owning a pet is more expensive than they thought it would be. 16% of owners who agreed that their pet was more expensive than thought said that they got them because their children wanted a pet, compared with 11% who disagreed with this statement.

Owners who got their pet from a rescue centre were more likely to disagree that their pet was more expensive than they thought (42% of owners who got their pet from a rescue or rehoming centre / shelter disagreed, compared to 20% who agreed). **This could indicate that rehoming centres better prepare owners for the costs involved with owning a pet.** It could also be that set-up costs are lower, as rescue centres typically take a donation and rehome pets that have been neutered and vaccinated, compared to breeders and sellers, where purchase costs may be higher and these preventive treatments need to be budgeted for by the new owner.

## Percentage of owners who underestimated the minimum monthly cost of their pet:



## Pet ownership and socioeconomic factors

PDSA is among several animal welfare charities who offer veterinary services for those with a low income, to offer a lifeline where it's needed most.

Looking after a pet on a low income can be a real challenge. In our vaccination focus in this Report (pages 8-15), we noted that owners in lower deciles of Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMDs)\*\* were less likely to give their pet booster vaccinations.

Exploring this area more closely, we found that **owners in lower deciles were significantly less likely to provide every preventive healthcare option except flea treatment.** For example, owners in deciles 1-3 (82%) are less likely to have currently registered their pet with a vet compared with those in 4-7 (89%) or 8-10 (91%).

Despite their owners' best intentions, pets can become the silent victims of poverty. This is why our dedicated staff are on the frontline every day, providing veterinary care to the vulnerable pets who need us.



## Percentage of owners in each group of IMD deciles who report that their pet has had each type of preventive healthcare option:

	IMD deciles 1-3	IMD deciles 4-7	IMD deciles 8-10
Currently registered with a vet	82%	89%*	91%*
Neutered	76%	81%*	86%**
Vaccinated – primary course (when young)	63%	66%*	68%**
Vaccinated – regular boosters / injections	60%	67%*	74%**
Microchipped	75%	80%*	84%**
Insured	39%	47%*	51%**
Wormed	77%	79%	81%*
Treated for fleas	78%	79%	79%

Figures are not statistically significantly different unless where indicated:  
\* = significantly higher than IMD deciles 1-3 \*\* = significantly higher than IMD deciles 1-3 and 4-7

# The human-animal bond

We are a nation of animal lovers. 95% of dog owners, 93% of cat owners and 91% of rabbit owners told us that owning their pet makes them happy. In fact, 44% of owners selected this as one of the reasons they got their pet in the first place.

The formation of strong bonds between pets and people are well-documented and PDSA's internationally renowned Animal Awards Programme celebrates this connection. Previous research shows the benefits of having a pet: they provide companionship and can help improve mental health, facilitate additional contact with people and encourage exercise (see summary in Hall, et al., 2016).

**63% of owners agreed that having a pet makes them physically healthier**, with dog owners more likely to agree (85% agreeing, compared to just 45% of rabbit owners and 41% of cat owners).

Most strikingly, **84% of owners agreed that having a pet makes them mentally healthier**, although dog and cat owners were more likely to think so than rabbit owners (88% and 80% agreeing compared with 75%, respectively). When asked to state why, many owners referenced the non-judgmental nature of their pets, their playfulness, or physical contact as reasons.

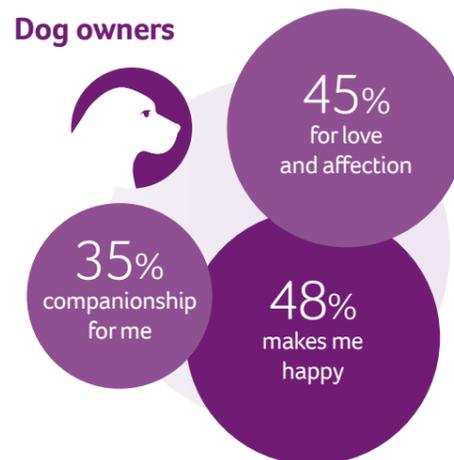
Many people also listed the responsibility of caring for their pet and meeting their needs as important when stating how pets made them mentally healthier.

*"I have to think about his needs, welfare etc., so I don't have as much time to dwell in my own head. This makes me have a more positive attitude to life."*

*The two-way relationship with our pets in the words of one surveyed dog owner.*

## We asked owners ... 'Why did you get your pet?'

### Dog owners



### Cat owners



### Rabbit owners



Sadly, the human-animal bond can also break down, leading to dissatisfaction and even pet relinquishment. Other work highlights various reasons for this breakdown, including unrealistic expectations, lifestyle changes and pet behavioural problems (Houpt, et al., 1996).

Our findings show that 21% of owners did no research before taking on a pet and 76%, 77% and 44% of dog, cat and rabbit owners respectively wanted to change one or more behaviours their pet displayed, which is a cause for concern.

Overall, 12% of owners told us their pet makes them stressed. Owners were more likely to agree that their pet makes them stressed if they had had less influence over the decision to get that pet. For example, 19% of owners who agreed with the statement that owning a pet made them stressed got their pet because their partner wanted a pet, and 16% because their children wanted a pet, compared to 13% of each who disagreed with the statement. **A quarter (24%) of owners agreed that owning a pet is harder work than they thought.**

A strong human-animal bond may mean that owners have a greater investment in improving animal welfare as long as they have a good understanding of their pet's needs (Wensley, 2008), so giving prospective and current owners the right information to help them understand their pets and rebuild their bond could help to improve pet wellbeing.

“Most owners benefit physically and mentally from their pets. However, it is sobering that over 40% of rabbit and 75% of cat and dog owners are unhappy with aspects of their pet's behaviour. Undesirable behaviour can be stressful to owners. Equally importantly, it frequently indicates the animal is stressed, potentially physically suffering, and needs help! Prevention of such welfare concerns starts with appropriate pet choice, based on realistic pre-purchase information on costs, lifespan and needs. Owners then must obtain good advice on care and training. It is essential to seek veterinary help as soon as any behaviour issue arises.”

*Dr Anne McBride Hon. Assoc. Mem. BSAVA, Hon. Assoc. Mem. BVNA  
Animal Behaviour and Training Council (ABTC)  
Registered Clinical Animal Behaviourist*

# Pre-purchase

One in five people (21%) did no research before taking on their pet. Encouragingly, this is slightly lower than last year's one in four owners (24%), though it remains to be seen whether this improvement will continue in subsequent years.

Appropriate pre-purchase research would equip owners with a better understanding of the commitment and costs of ownership and knowledge of appropriate places to buy their pet, as well as making sure they are aware of how to meet the 5 Welfare Needs of their desired pet.

“Lack of pre-purchase research is an important root-cause of many preventable pet welfare problems. PDSA has been working with the British Veterinary Association (BVA) and private veterinary practices to further develop the concept of pre-purchase veterinary consultations, including using PDSA's free *Which Pet?* resources for veterinary teams and clients. Encouragingly, the number of prospective owners taking advice from a veterinary professional has risen, from 4% in 2015 to 7% now. We expect this trend to continue, as the step of visiting your local vet practice for pre-purchase advice, which is typically offered free of charge, becomes increasingly normalised and valued.”

*Dr Sean Wensley BVSc MSc FRCVS*  
Senior Vet for Communication and Education, PDSA



*Which Pet?* consultations are designed to help vet professionals to guide potential owners through all the areas they need to consider before taking on a pet, including the 5 Welfare Needs and the time, cost and lifestyle implications that come with pet ownership.

## Sourcing a pet

7% of current pet owners took advice from a veterinary professional before getting their pet, an improvement from 4% in 2015.

Two thirds (67%) of dog owners whose dog was less than a year old saw their pet with the mum before taking them home, and half (49%) visited them on more than one occasion.

We asked all pet owners what they would do if they were going to buy a puppy in the future and 57% would look to see them with their mum.

15% of owners with dogs less than a year old said they took advice from a breeder before choosing their pet. While some breeders can be reliable sources of information, there could be a huge variation in the quality of advice given, as fewer than a quarter (23%) of these owners made sure the breeder was part of an assured breeding scheme. Encouraging breeder uptake in such schemes and raising awareness of these amongst owners could help ensure that high-quality advice is given.

Findings showed that of owners whose cat was less than a year old, 28% didn't do any of the suggested options, 41% saw their kitten with their mum and 30% visited them on more than one occasion.

Only 23% of owners with rabbits less than a year old saw their pets with the mum before taking them home.

A fifth (22%) did visit their future pet on more than one occasion, but 34% of this segment of more recent rabbit owners didn't do any of the suggested options before taking them home.

22% of rabbit owners got advice from a pet shop before taking their pet home. New point-of-sale information requirements brought into law as part of new Animal Activities Licensing (see opposite) should help future rabbit owners to understand their new pets' 5 Welfare Needs.



## Best practice for buying puppies and kittens

The Puppy Contract and Kitten Checklist, both developed in partnership with, and endorsed by PDSA and other animal welfare charities, help support owners to identify breeders who uphold high welfare standards. **There are no best practice guidelines aimed at rabbit buyers as yet, so this is an area for action.**

## Legislative changes

### Animal Activities Licensing

The recently enacted Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (England) Regulations 2018 aim to amalgamate and improve previous pieces of legislation to ensure that relevant animal related businesses meet a minimum standard for welfare. It also highlights establishments maintaining a higher standard, identifying these through a five-star rating system. More breeders must now be licensed and other pet businesses such as boarding establishments and pet day care facilities also fall under this new legislation.

Awareness, however, is low: **62% of pet owners were not aware of these new licensing regulations for breeders and pet boarders.** Dog owners were slightly more likely to be aware of them (29%) than cat owners (25%). If they were to buy a puppy in the future, around half (55%) of all pet owners would check if the premises or breeder was licensed.

“In spite of the long wait after the enabling legislation (Animal Welfare Act 2006) was passed, the new Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (England) Regulations were introduced quickly and without adequate preparation that could have avoided some enforcement issues.

The primary purpose is to improve animal welfare where commercial interests have the potential to result in poor welfare. The Regulations and guidance drafted by Canine and Feline Sector Group (CFSG) aim to enhance the already commonly-used standard approved by the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health, whose members generally enforce the law. The Regulations invoke a star rating system for licences and it is hoped that improved understanding of the system will encourage users to seek out the highest rated suppliers with a consequent improvement in welfare.”

*Chris Laurence MBE QVRM TD BVSc FRCVS*  
Chair of the Canine and Feline Sector Group (CFSG)

### Ban on Third Party Sales of Puppies and Kittens

A ban on third party sales of puppies and kittens in England is due to be implemented in spring 2020. ‘Lucy’s Law’ has been welcomed by animal welfare campaigners and organisations as a key milestone in the fight against puppy farming and puppy smuggling.

Encouragingly, two thirds (67%) of owners with dogs under the age of one say they saw their pet with the mum, compared with only half (49%) of all dog owners. Similarly, if buying a puppy in future, 64% of all dog owners said they would look to see the puppy’s mum in person.

These improved figures suggest that ongoing campaigning in this area has helped to drive this positive change.

# The wellbeing of dogs



## Key findings

1.3 million dogs  
(13%) aren't walked everyday.



31% of dog owners  
don't know the weight or body  
condition score of their dog.



55% of owners  
rely on past experience to train  
their dogs. 12% of dogs have had  
no training at all.



1.9 million dogs  
(19%) are left alone for five or  
more hours every day.



Only 72% of dogs  
have had a primary vaccination  
when young.



26% OF UK ADULTS  
OWN A DOG



9.9m PET DOGS ARE  
LIVING IN THE UK

1.3 million dogs (13%) aren't walked every day

## Environment

### Exercise

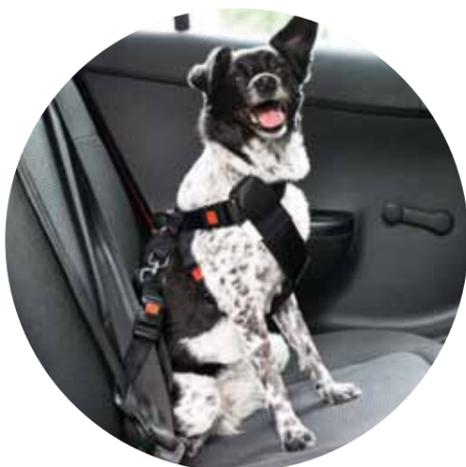
**Dogs need daily outdoor exercise to ensure good physical and mental health.** Even though 81% of dog owners do walk their dog every day, 44% of owners walk their dog for less than 30 minutes at a time and 13% of dogs aren't walked every day.

99,000 dogs (1%) are never walked.

Previous research shows that overweight dogs are typically exercised less frequently and for shorter lengths of time than those in ideal body condition (German, et al., 2017). This lack of exercise will impact the physical and mental health of UK dogs and is a major contributing factor to the national canine obesity problem.

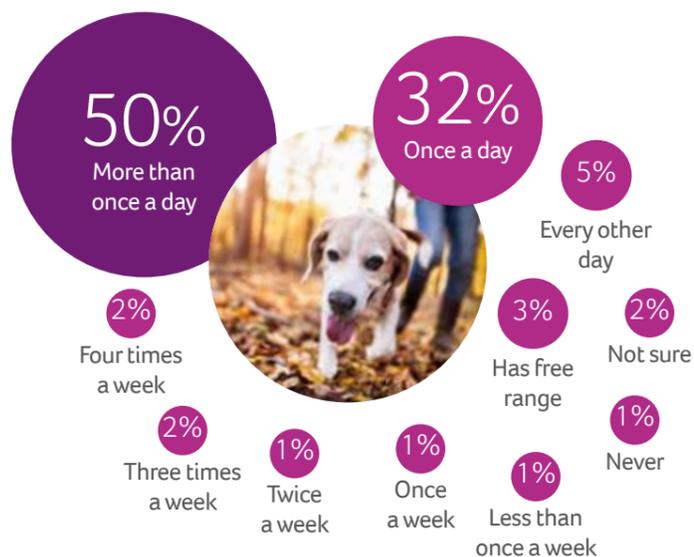
### Car travel for dogs

4 million dogs in the UK (40%) travel in the car unsecured, either in the front or back seat without a dog seat belt, in the boot without a dog guard or on the floor of the front or back seat. Among owners securing their dogs appropriately, dog seatbelts are the most popular, with 30% of owners using a dog seat belt in either the front or back seat when their pet travels in a vehicle. 6% of owners report their dog never travels in a vehicle.

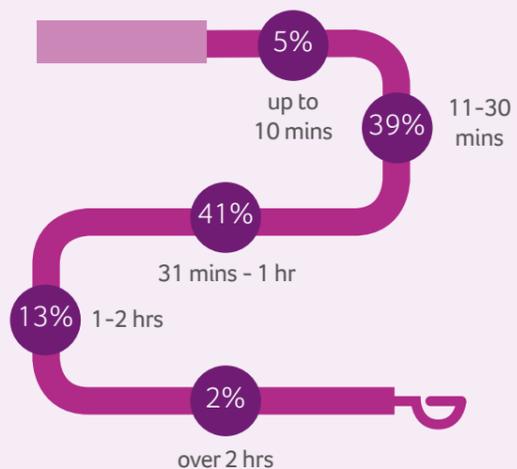


When travelling in a vehicle, dogs should be secured for their own, the driver's, and other passengers' safety (Department for Transport, 2019).

### Owners typically take their dog for a walk ...



### How long owners typically walk their dog:



Of those who walk their dog for less than half an hour, 19% (830,000) of dog owners cite time restrictions as the reason.

Only 15% of owners described their dogs as overweight and none said their pet was very overweight or obese

## Diet

### Obesity

**Obesity in dogs is consistently identified as a key issue by veterinary professionals.**

The 2018 PAW Report included a survey of vets and vet nurses conducted in conjunction with the British Veterinary Association (BVA) and the British Veterinary Nursing Association (BVNA). **In this research, veterinary professionals estimated that 46% of dogs they saw in practice each week are overweight or obese.** However, only 15% of owners described their dogs as overweight in our research this year, and none selected the option of 'very overweight' or 'obese' when asked to describe the shape of their pet.

In fact, 81% of dog owners described their dog as being an ideal weight. **However, nearly a third (31%) of owners knew neither the current weight nor body condition score of their dog,** indicating there is more work to be done in this area to raise awareness of a healthy body shape via body condition scoring.

Our Pet Fit Club campaign, now in its 13th year, highlights cases of successful management of pets suffering with obesity in the national press. This combats normalisation of an overweight body condition and raises awareness of the issues surrounding pet obesity to the general public, helping owners to recognise and act to prevent and treat overweight pets.



Dog owners use a variety of ways to decide whether their dog is the correct weight. A majority (58%) use a vet or vet nurse for advice. This emphasises the importance of weighing a pet and mentioning body condition scoring during clinical consultations, so discussions about weight management can take place, maximising opportunities to educate in this area. PDSA's PetWise MOT framework facilitates this, as it encourages consistent discussion of weight and allows opportunities for discussing diet and exercise programmes.



PDSA PetWise MOTs are dedicated appointments with a vet or vet nurse where the five welfare needs of the pet are discussed, assessed on a traffic light scale and an action plan produced with the owner to help improve the wellbeing of the pet.

There was an increase from 2017 in the number of people who said they looked at their dog's body to decide if they were the right weight (from 45% in 2017 to 49% in 2019), which is a step in the right direction. However, owners who used 'common sense' to decide if their pet was the right weight increased too (from 35% to 40%), and this judgement can be biased or misinformed, as detailed above.

## 15% of owners feed scraps as one of their dog's main types of food



The value of the UK pet food market is at an all-time high (Pet Food Manufacturers' Association, 2018) and the pet food industry is rapidly adapting to new consumer demands. Various trends have emerged recently and their impact on pet wellbeing will be seen over the coming years.

### A balanced diet

A large proportion of dog owners are feeding their pet a complete diet as one of the main types of food. Complete dry food is the most popular, with approximately three-quarters of owners (74%) feeding it. Nearly half (47%) feed a complete wet food with or without a mixer.

### Feeding scraps

15% of owners feed scraps as one of their dog's main types of food, which is unlikely to be a balanced diet. One in twelve owners (8%) feed their dog a homemade diet as one of their main types of food. Homemade diets risk creating health problems if not carefully planned and nutritionally balanced.

### Raw feeding

One in twenty (5%) dogs are fed a raw diet as one of their main types of food, made up of 4% of owners feeding a commercially prepared raw diet and 1% feeding a homemade raw diet. Public Health England have recently issued advice warning pet owners about the possible health risks to people associated with raw feeding, including food-borne infections (UK Government, 2018). This zoonotic risk is also a consideration for clinical teams caring for hospitalised pets fed a raw diet.

### Dangerous treats

18% of dog owners say that they regularly give their dog bones. Bones can break teeth, cause blockages or splinter in the digestive tract.

Despite the risks of toxicity, 1% of owners, equating to 99,000 dogs, said they give human chocolate regularly to their dog.

### Top 3 treats:



Our long-running Pet Fit Club campaign combats normalisation of overweight pets, raising awareness of the growing problem of pet obesity.

Recent participant Sasha (pictured), lost 9% of her bodyweight (2.6kg). We worked closely with Sasha's owner to help get her back on a healthy diet and exercise routine as part of this programme.

## 99,000 dogs have been subjected to an electric shock collar



## Behaviour

### Training

Training helps provide consistency and mental stimulation for dogs.

However, one in eight dog owners (12%) did nothing to train their dogs.

Only two-in-five owners (41%) went to or completed organised training classes or courses.

A kind, evidence-based approach to training is essential; best practice in light of the lack of regulation is to use an accredited dog trainer (Animal Behaviour and Training Council, 2018). However, a majority of owners (55%) rely on past experience to train their dogs. Their knowledge may not be up-to-date or utilise the most kind, effective techniques.

A quarter of owners (25%) are still using aversive training methods and our findings indicate that 99,000 dogs (1%) have been subjected to an electric shock collar.

### Socialisation

Early socialisation, where a puppy is exposed to a variety of positive experiences, is essential to preventing behavioural issues developing as a dog matures.

Only two-in-five dog owners (40%) said if they were buying a puppy in the future, they would look for the breeder to have already provided them with a good variety of positive experiences with pets and people.

### Unwanted behaviours

The owners of 7.5 million dogs (76%) wanted to change one or more behaviours that their dog displayed. Other work shows dogs with undesirable behaviours can have reduced wellbeing (either due to primary anxiety, or stress caused by inappropriate correction methods). This could be the tip of the iceberg because undesirable behaviours such as aggression have been shown to be associated with a higher risk of death in dogs under the age of three (Boyd, et al., 2018).

Owners who didn't want to change any behaviours (3%) were more likely to have got their dog to help at work (e.g. farm or gundog) than those who did want to change one or more behaviours (1%).

As well as training, the motivating factor in getting a dog appeared to play a role in whether respondents told us they wanted to change their dog's behaviour:

- Where their partner wanted a pet:** 17% wanted to change one or more of their dog's behaviours, compared to 9% who didn't want to change any.
- Where their children wanted a pet:** 13% wanted to change one or more behaviours, compared to 9% who didn't want to change any.
- Where they got their dog 'for love or affection':** 47% wanted to change one or more behaviours, compared to 39% who didn't want to change any.

### Aggression

3% of dog owners wanted to change their dog's aggression towards people, 5% wanted to change aggression towards other pets and 2% wanted to stop their dog from biting other dogs.

### Top five behaviours dog owners would like to change:





1.9 million dogs (19%) are left alone for longer than the recommended maximum four hours

## Companionship

Dogs are a social species who need companionship and they are negatively affected by being left alone for long periods (Rehn and Keeling, 2011).

One in five dog owners (19%) leave their dogs alone longer than the recommended maximum four hours, which equates to 1.9 million dogs not having this essential aspect of their wellbeing provided for.

Of these dogs, 40% are left alone the entire time, without someone popping in to check on them. Separation anxiety can be a severe reaction to being alone.

7% of owners want to change their dog's behaviour when left alone as they show signs of distress (like scratching, destructive behaviour, barking or howling more than five minutes, or toileting in the house).

Separation anxiety has previously been shown to be the second-most common reason for dogs to be referred for behavioural intervention (Bamberger and Houpt, 2006) and behavioural issues are a common reason for relinquishment of pets (Salman, et al., 2000). **Therefore, it's critical to address this issue by helping owners train dogs to feel comfortable on their own for moderate periods from an early age.**

### Holidaying

14% of owners use a 'doggie day care' facility at least annually, with 400,000 dogs (4%) using one at least once a week. Two thirds (67%) of owners who use them check that the day care facility is licensed, but 16% don't and 17% aren't sure. The new licensing legislation\* in England should make it easier for owners to select an establishment which provides a high standard of care for dogs.

When owners go on holiday, a third (33%) of dogs stay with friends or family. A quarter (26%) bring their dog with them, and one in nine (11%) use a boarding kennel. Of those using boarding kennels, 87% say that they check if the facility is licensed.

### Owners who leave their dog alone for 5 hours or more say this about the circumstances:

40% (750,000 dogs) of dogs are alone for all of this time, without another animal

31% (580,000 dogs) are alone for all of this time with another animal they are friendly with

16% (300,000 dogs) someone pops in to check on them

10% (190,000 dogs) dog walker takes them out for exercise

1% (19,000 dogs) are alone for all this time with another animal(s) they are not friendly with



72% of owners reported that their dog had a primary vaccination course when young

## Health

### Preventive health

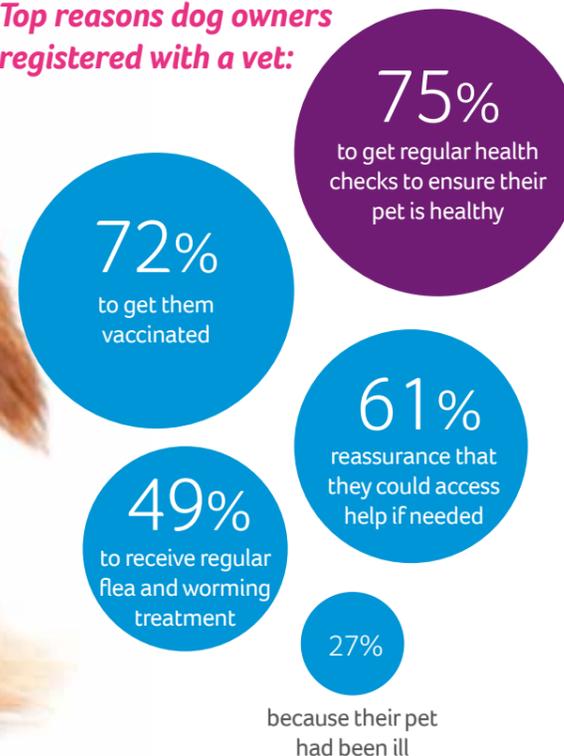
Previous research has shown that pet owners' shortfalls in meeting preventive health needs may be due to concerns about their price, safety, necessity and efficacy (Belshaw, et al., 2018).

### Registering with a vet

9.1 million dogs (92%) are currently registered with a vet, and this proportion has been relatively stable since the first PAW Report in 2011.

Nearly half (47%) of dog owners who weren't registered felt **it wasn't necessary** (because, for example, their dog is fine, or they can just turn up at a vet practice). Many owners appear to choose a vet practice primarily due to **convenience**, with 46% of dog owners telling us they chose the vet practice because it was **nearest to them**. Still, 37% chose the practice they felt had the **best reputation** and 31% cited **great customer service**.

### Top reasons dog owners registered with a vet:



### Vaccinations

There has been a concerning and sustained drop in the number of dogs vaccinated with a primary course when they are young. This year's research found that only 72% of dog owners reported that their dog had received this protection, down from 75% last year and 88% in 2016 (see page 8). This is a major concern as younger animals are at most risk from preventable diseases like parvovirus (Schultz, et al., 2010).

Of owners whose dog had had a primary vaccination when young, 19% reported that their dog had not had regular booster vaccinations.

Over one-in-five (22%) of these owners said they hadn't vaccinated their dog since the primary course because they felt **it wasn't necessary**, indicating a need for education around the importance of regular vaccination in line with advised schedules after pets are given their initial course.

Many of the owners who hadn't provided regular boosters also reported being **worried about side effects** (13%), felt that there were **more risks than benefits** to vaccinations (13%), or simply **didn't agree with it** (13%).

Our research shows that 77% of owners reported their dog had been vaccinated in the last 12 months.

This is in line with the number of owners who reported giving their dog regular boosters (78%), indicating that where owners are vaccinating, they are following best practice guidelines.

This still leaves nearly one in five dogs (19%) that haven't been vaccinated in the last 12 months, and 5% of owners who reported that they didn't know if their dog had been vaccinated in the last 12 months or not.

Nonetheless, a higher proportion of dog owners have ensured that their pet has been vaccinated in the last 12 months (77%) than cat (58%) and rabbit (53%) owners.

## Three quarters of dogs (74%) are neutered



### Microchipping

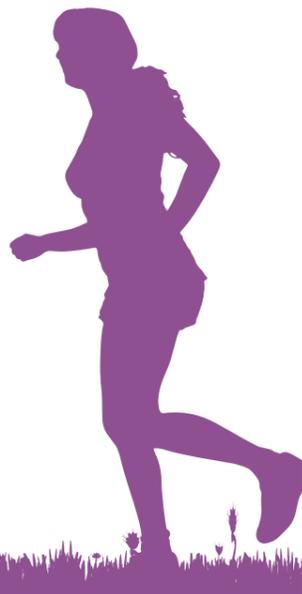
Even though microchipping of dogs has been a legal requirement since April 2016, 16% of dog owners do not know it's the law that all dogs must be microchipped. Despite this there are high levels of compliance, with 92% of owners reporting that their dog has been microchipped.

86% say that their contact details are up to date on the microchipping database.

However, one in twenty owners (5%) state that their details have changed but they have not updated the microchipping database.

This equates to half a million dogs who, despite being chipped, may not be reunited with their owners if they become lost or stolen. A further 6% believe that their veterinary practice would have updated their details for them. 3% of owners aren't sure if their details on the database are up-to-date.

**16% of dog owners don't know it's the law that all dogs must be microchipped**



### Neutering

Three-quarters (74%) of dogs are neutered which is higher than 2018 findings (71%). Our findings show that many owners haven't thought about it (13%), so for owners of unneutered dogs it's vital for vet teams to have a conversation about the potential benefits of neutering.

### Costs

Owners who thought that owning a dog was more expensive than they expected were less likely to have their dog microchipped, registered with a vet, or wormed.

11% of dog owners who haven't had their pet vaccinated at all stated 'it's too expensive' as a reason, as did 12% whose dog had a primary vaccination course when young but not regular booster vaccinations.

### Clinical health

The Veterinary Companion Animal Surveillance System (VetCompass™) collects data from participating UK general practices to facilitate research into pet health.

At the time of writing, VetCompass™ data includes nearly 10 million animals from over 20% of all UK veterinary practices. Data from the VetCompass™ project has been used to glean an understanding of the diseases that UK dogs most commonly suffer from.

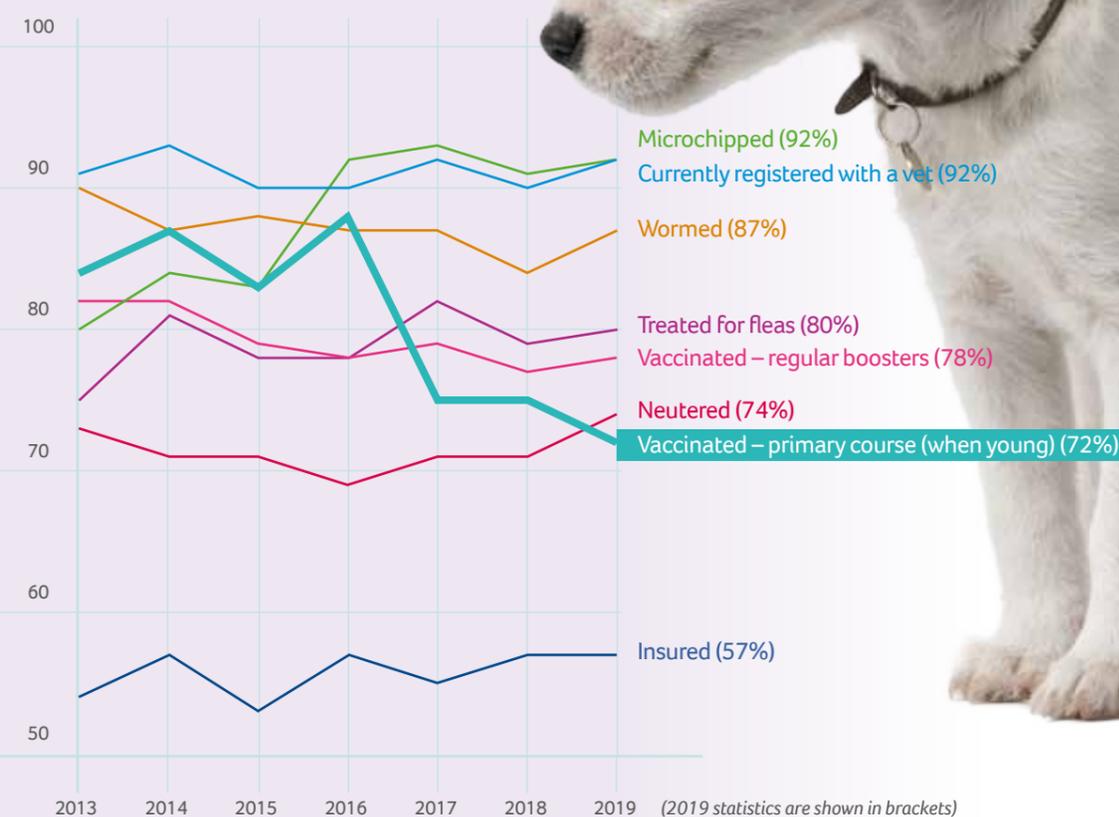
### Top 10 conditions seen in general practice

(O'Neill, et al., 2014)

1	Otitis externa	10.2%
2	Periodontal disease	9.3%
3	Anal sac impaction	7.1%
4	Overgrown nails	7.1%
5	Arthritis	6.6%
6	Diarrhoea	6.4%
7	Obesity	6.1%
8	Traumatic injury	5.5%
9	Conjunctivitis	4.9%
10	Vomiting	4.1%



### % Preventive health uptake in dogs



### Top reasons for not vaccinating at all

1	Not necessary	13%
2	Too expensive	11%
3	Pet finds going to the vets very stressful	10%
4	Not got around to it yet	10%

### Top reasons for not registering with a vet

1	Not necessary, can just turn up at vets	29%
2	Not necessary, pet is fine	15%
3	Not got around to it yet	10%

### Top reasons for not neutering

1	Don't think there is any benefit	19%
2	Don't believe in it	13%
3	Haven't thought about it	13%
4	Too young	13%
5	Not got around to it yet	11%

### Top reasons for not worming

1	Not necessary	31%
2	Haven't thought about it	15%
3	Not got around to it yet	14%

### Top reasons for not microchipping

1	Not out unsupervised	16%
2	Not necessary	13%
3	Has ID tag	13%

### Top reasons for not treating for fleas

1	Not necessary	51%
2	Other reason	20%
3	Haven't thought about it	9%

# The wellbeing of cats



## Key findings

67% of cat owners with two or more cats provide only one or no litter trays.



56% of cat owners don't know the weight or body condition score of their cat.



77% of owners want to change one or more of their cat's behaviours.



43% of cats live in a multi-cat household.



Only 3 in 5 owners report that their cat has had a primary vaccination when young.



24% OF UK ADULTS OWN A CAT

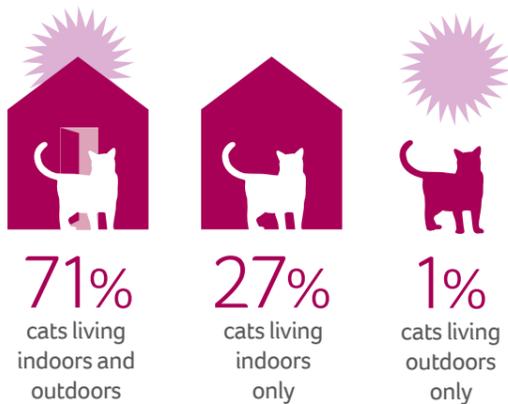


10.9m PET CATS ARE LIVING IN THE UK



## A majority of multi-cat households have too few litter trays

### Environment



#### Indoor versus outdoor

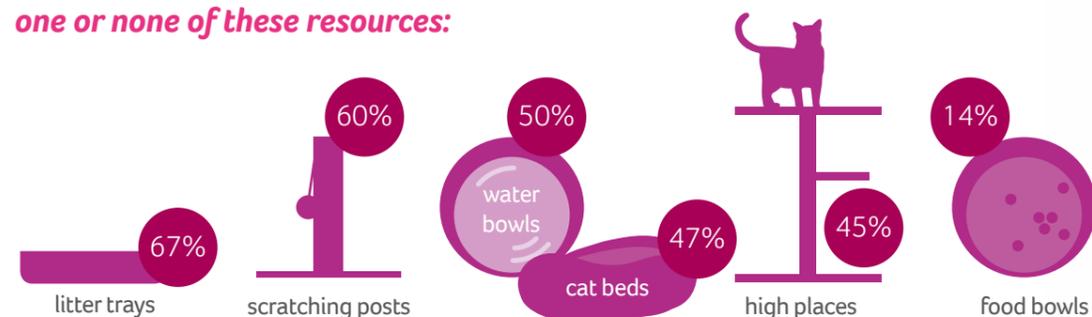
Our findings show that the majority of cats were given outdoor access (73% live either indoors and outdoors or outdoors only), but 2.9 million cats (27%) in the UK live indoors only. Whether owners choose an indoor or an outdoor lifestyle for their cat, it's important that they take steps to ensure their wellbeing.

#### Resources

In multi-cat households, it's especially important to provide enough resources to avoid tension or stress between cats (Ellis, et al., 2013).

Best practice is to provide one of each resource per cat plus one extra, spread out around the home, giving each cat choice and the opportunity to avoid other cats (Bowen and Heath, 2005; International Cat Care, 2019).

#### Percentage of owners of two or more cats who are providing only one or none of these resources:



When we looked at results for owners with two or more cats, the figures showed that a majority of multi-cat households have too few litter trays, water bowls and scratching posts and many have too few cat beds and access to high places.

Litter tray provision was lowest, with two-thirds (67%) of owners in homes with two or more cats providing only one or no litter trays.

“Whether we have one cat or more in our homes we should ensure that the environment contains everything they require to thrive and lead stress-free and content lives, including food and water bowls, litter trays, beds, high perches, hiding places and scratching posts. If we share our home with multiple cats, we should always remember a simple formula and provide ‘one of everything for each cat, plus a spare one’, which reduces the need for the cats to compete and minimises the risk of stressful conflict.”

Vicky Halls RVN Dip Couns

Cat Behaviour Counsellor  
Animal Behaviour and Training Council (ABTC)  
Registered Clinical Animal Behaviourist

## Over half (56%) of cat owners don't know the current weight nor body condition score of their cat

We also found that on average, owners with two or more cats are not even providing one each of most resources per cat, let alone offering one extra.

Food bowls were the only resource provided for each cat (the average number of food bowls (2.6) is the same as the average number of cats (2.6) in households of two or more cats) – though 14% of owners of two or more cats offered only one or no food bowls, which is too few in a multi-cat household. Limited or shared access to these resources can cause chronic stress.

Despite the shortage in resource provisions, three quarters of all cat owners (75%) disagreed that their cat is stressed.

This is possibly because signs of stress in cats can be difficult to spot, rather than an indication that cats are coping well in these conditions.

“Each year, the PAW Report emphasises how prevalent obesity is in our companion animals, and the time has come for veterinary professionals to work in partnership with owners to address this important disease. Veterinary professionals should record bodyweight and body condition at every consultation, and use this information as the basis for discussion with owners about the weight status of their pet. Where a pet has obesity, conversations should be supportive and non-stigmatising, with the aim of defining suitable individual targets and options for weight management.”

Prof Alex German BVSc PhD CertSAM

DipECVIM-CA SFHEA FRCVS

Royal Canin Professor of Small Animal Medicine, University of Liverpool

### Diet

50% of cat owners feed a mix of wet and dry food, 48% feed complete dry food and 39% complete wet food as one of the main types of foods fed to their cat.

One in seven owners (13%) feed fish, prawns or tuna as part of their cat's main diet, one in ten (10%) feed cooked meat and 9% feed scraps and leftovers as part of the main diet. This is concerning, as none of these constitute a balanced diet, and could pose a risk to cats' health either directly (due to toxic ingredients like onions in scraps or human foods) or indirectly (due to micronutrient deficiencies).

#### Alternative diets

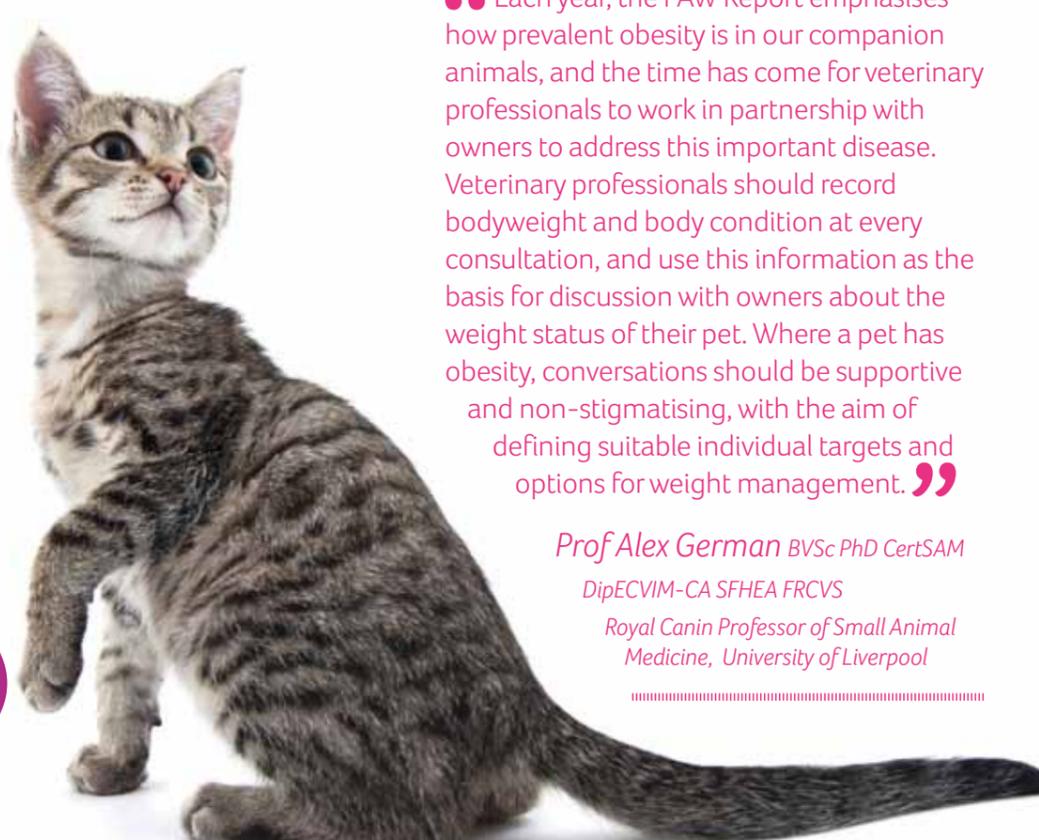
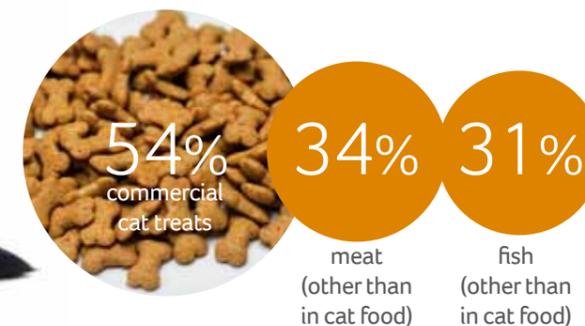
220,000 cats (2%) were fed a raw diet as part of their main food, comprised of 1% who are fed a commercially prepared raw meat diet and 1% who are fed a home prepared one.

As with dogs, the possible zoonotic risk of this would need to be considered by owners, as well as clinical teams nursing these pets.

#### Treats

Over three quarters (78%) of owners regularly fed other foods in addition to their cat's main food. 54% of cats are regularly given commercial cat treats, and around a third (34%) are given either meat (other than in cat food) and fish (other than in cat food, 31%). One in five (20%) owners feed dental treats. Milk is a common treat, with 1.4 million (13%) cats getting milk specially formulated for cats and a further 980,000 (9%) getting other milks.

#### Top 3 treats regularly given to cats:



Over three quarters (78%) of owners regularly feed other foods in addition to their cat's main food



### Obesity

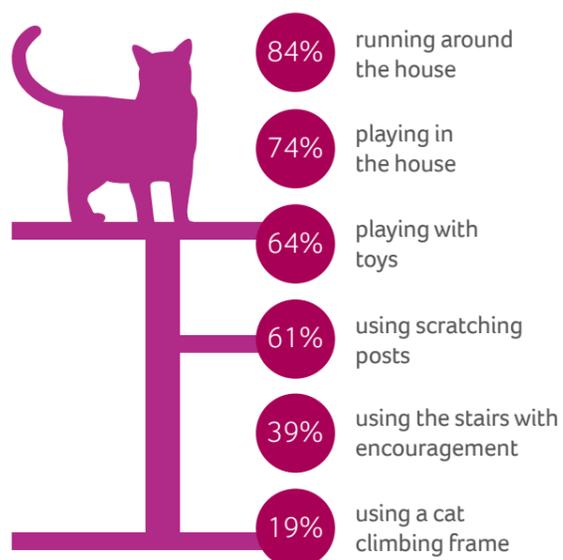
Three-quarters (76%) of owners say that their cat is the ideal weight, however in last year's PAW Report, vets and vet nurses estimated that 34% of the cats they see in their practice each week are overweight or have obesity.

Over half (56%) of cat owners know neither the current weight nor body condition score of their cat. 42% of owners reported they used common sense as a way to decide if their cat was the right weight. 45% of cat owners look at their cat's body to decide if they are the correct weight, compared with just 33% who feel their cat's body.

Only 16% of owners weigh their cat to decide that they are the right weight. Around half (52%) of cat owners say they use veterinary advice as one of the ways to decide if their cat is the right weight. Experts in pet obesity advise regular weighing and advice from a veterinary professional as best practice in determining whether a cat is the ideal weight.

### Exercise

We know overweight cats spend less time playing, both alone and with their owners (Kienzle and Berlger, 2006). However, cat owners told us their pet had the following exercise opportunities every day:



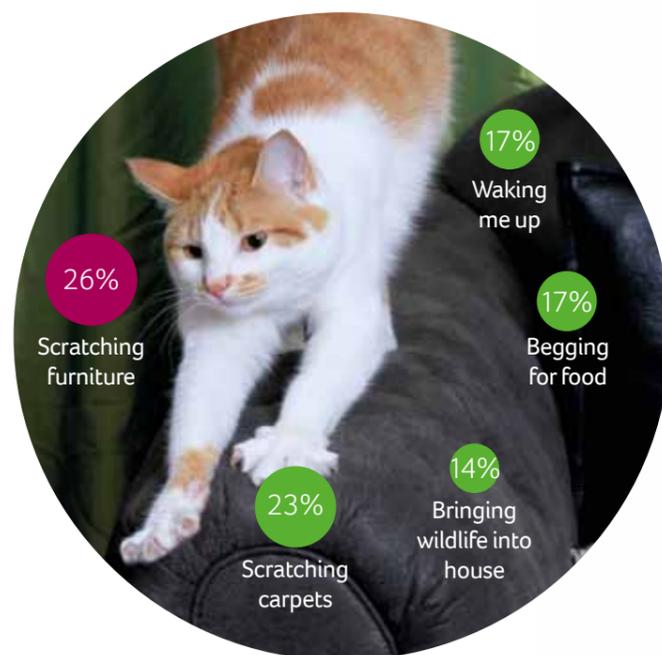
## Behaviour

Over three-quarters of owners (77%) would like to change at least one of their cat's behaviours.

The types of behaviours that owners reported wanting to change are largely natural behaviours for domestic cats (see below). Providing appropriate outlets for these behaviours could be a way to reduce issues, further emphasising the importance of providing enough resources for the number of cats in the household.

Owners who didn't have a role in deciding to get their cat were more likely to say they didn't want to change any of their pet's behaviours (42%) compared with all cat owners (23%).

### Top five behaviours owners wanted to change:



Despite the fact they are naturally solitary animals, 650,000 owners (6%) think that their cat is lonely



## Companionship

Cats tend to prefer to live apart from other cats, except for littermates they've grown up with, and need to have their own space.

However, 43% of cats (4.7 million) live with at least one other cat. Of these, 2 million cats (18% of all cats) live with another cat/cats and their owners report they don't always get along or some aren't keen on each other.

Ensuring adequate resources as detailed in the Environment section can help cats in conflict get along, easing stress and the resultant health and welfare concerns (Crowell-Davis, et al., 2004).

99% of cat owners agreed that their cat is loved. That may not be a one-way bond, as other research has shown cats display attachment behaviours towards their owners indicative of a strong bond (Edwards, et al., 2007). Further research suggests that humans can offer a valuable source of companionship for cats as, despite individual variation, most cats seek out human company (Vitale Shreve, et al., 2017). And this relationship is reciprocal: our findings show that cats often provide a source of companionship for the people who own them.

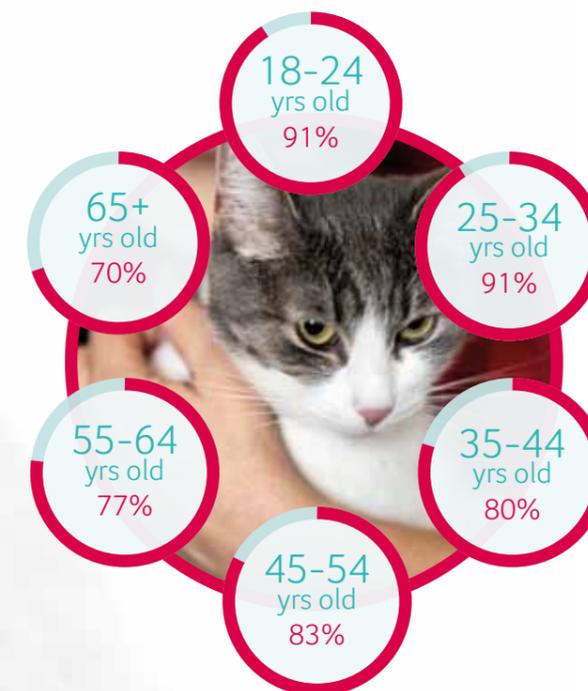
### Holidaying

1.7 million cats (16%) stay in a cattery when their owners go on holiday. Of owners who use a cattery, 90% of owners check it's licensed.

9% of owners report their cat goes to stay with their owner's friends or family while they are away. One in eight (12%) owners haven't been on holiday since having a cat.

More than half (56%) of owners let their cat stay in the house and someone comes to feed, exercise and/or stay with them while the owner is away.

### % who agree that owning cat makes them feel less lonely (by age group):



*"A pet is part of the family and when you have family around you feel less lonely"*

The two-way relationship with our pets in the words of one surveyed pet owner.

81% of cat owners told us that their cat makes them feel less lonely.

Younger cat owners are more likely to agree that owning a cat makes them less lonely, with 91% of owners in the 18-24 and 25-34 age groups compared to 70% in the 65+ age group.

A higher proportion of owners in IMD deciles\* 1-3 (84%) agree that owning a cat makes them feel less lonely than those in deciles 4-7 and 8-10 (80% and 79% respectively).

\* Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMDs) are a measure of deprivation at a local scale, based on weighted factors such as income, employment levels, education and skills training, health and disability, crime, access to services and/or housing, and physical environment. The indices rank areas in deciles, where decile 1 represents the most deprived 10% and decile 10 the least deprived 10%.

Crowell-Davis, S. L., Curtis, T. M. and Knowles, R. J., 2004. Social organization in the cat: a modern understanding. *Journal of Feline Medicine and Surgery*, 6(1), pp. 19-28.  
 Edwards, C., Heiblum, M., Tejada, A. and Galindo, F., 2007. Experimental evaluation of attachment behaviors in owned cats. *Journal of Veterinary Behaviour*, 2(4), pp. 119-125.  
 Vitale Shreve, K. R., Mehrkam, L. R. and Udell, M. A. R., 2017. Social interaction, food, scent or toys? A formal assessment of domestic pet and shelter cat (*Felis silvestris catus*) preferences. *Behavioural Processes*, 121(3), pp. 322-328.



## Only 3 in 5 cats (61%) are getting a primary vaccination course when young

### Health

#### Registering with a vet

84% of cat owners have currently registered their cat with a vet. This leaves 1.7 million owned cats (16%) not registered.

Over half (54%) of owners who haven't currently registered their cat think it's not necessary to register at a vet, either because their 'pet is fine' or they feel that they 'can just turn up' at the vets. 62% of owners who are registered say it's so that they can **get regular health checks to ensure that their pet is healthy**, 60% say to **get their pet vaccinated** and 43% say to **get regular flea and worming treatments**. Over half (56%) cited **reassurance that they can access help if needed** as their reason for being currently registered, and around a quarter (24%) said they registered because **their pet had been ill**.

Cat owners were more likely than dog or rabbit owners to have chosen their veterinary practice because it was **nearest to them** (57% of cat owners compared to 46% of dog owners and 46% of rabbit owners), and less likely than dog and rabbit owners to choose it because it had the **best reputation** (30% of cat owners compared to 37% dog owners and 41% rabbit owners). 29% of cat owners also chose **great customer service** as a reason why they'd picked their practice.

#### Vaccination

As with dogs, this year we've found another fall in the percentage of cat owners reporting that their cat has been vaccinated with a primary vaccination course when young. Current levels mean only around three in five cats are getting a primary course when young (61%) and only 59% are getting regular booster vaccinations.

Top reasons given by owners of cats who had received a primary vaccination course when young but not regular boosters were: their cat finds going to the vets very stressful (22%), it is too expensive (21%), or that their cat doesn't come into contact with other animals (18%).

Of owners who said that their pet hadn't received vaccinations, more cat owners than dog or rabbit owners selected **vaccinations were too expensive** as a top reason for not vaccinating (21% of cat owners compared with 11% of dog and 13% of rabbit owners).

#### Microchipping

Despite previously increasing year-on-year from 46% in 2011 and also jumping up since mandatory chipping was introduced for dogs, microchipping in cats seems to be levelling off, as this year's figure is statistically similar to 2018 at 71% (68% in 2018).

As with dogs, 5% of owners believe their vet practice has updated the microchip database with their details. Over one in twelve cat owners (8%) say that their details have changed but they have not updated them, so for 870,000 microchipped cats, scanning will give incorrect contact information.

#### Neutering

92% of owned cats are neutered, but despite being potentially prolific breeders, 8% of cats still aren't. As well as avoiding unwanted litters, there can be some health benefits, but those owners who told us their cat wasn't neutered because the cat **doesn't go outside (18%)**, may not be aware of this. The other top reasons, that they **haven't thought about it (14%)** or **haven't got round to it (12%)**, also suggest that more education on the benefits of neutering could help increase uptake.

#### Clinical health

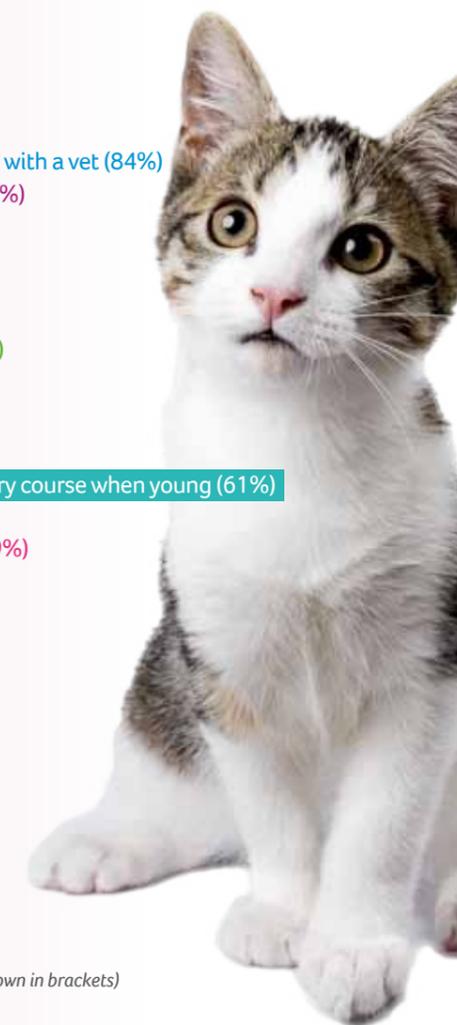
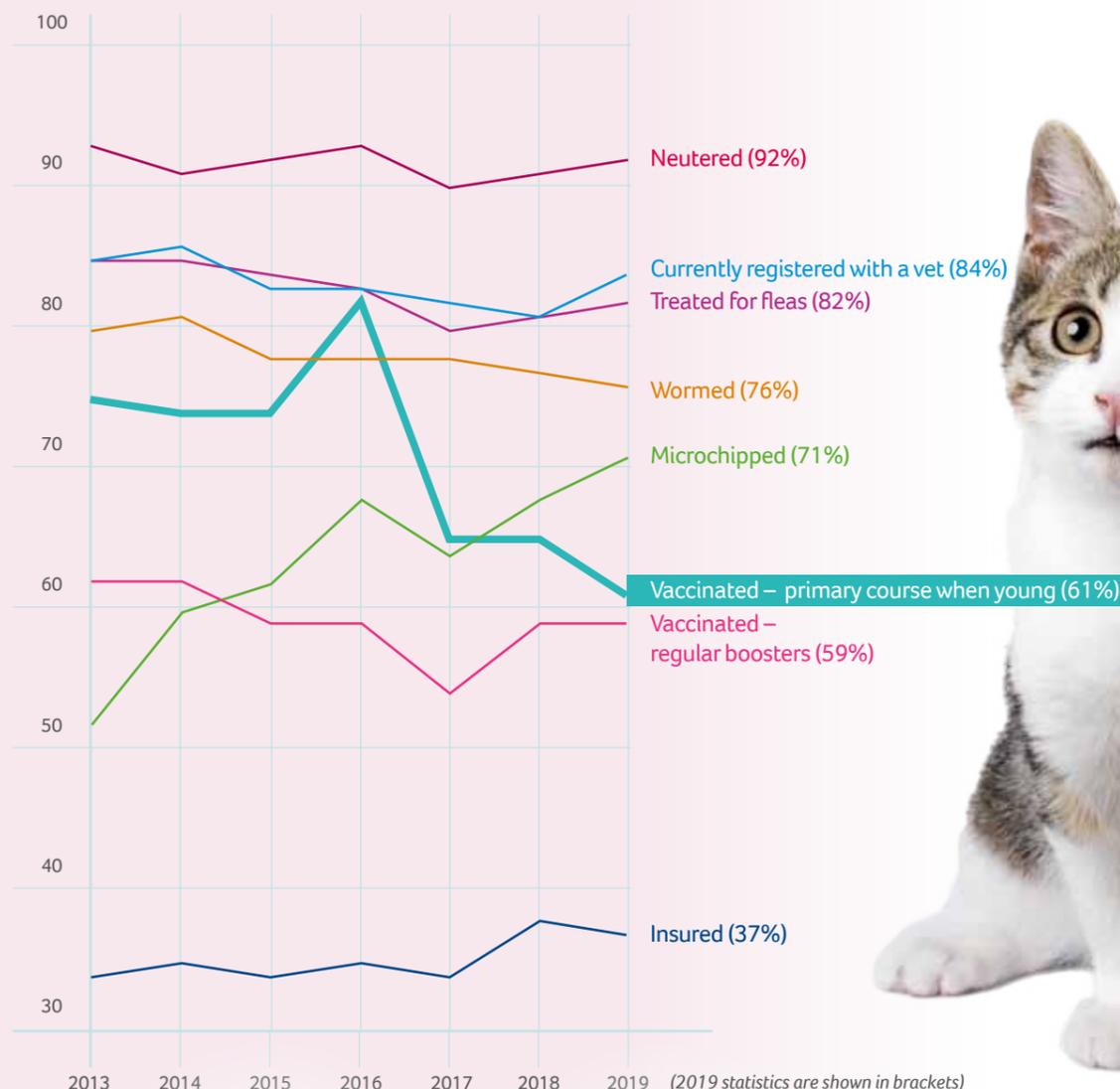
As with dogs, VetCompass™ data provides an overview of the most commonly-seen conditions in cats in UK veterinary practice.

#### Top 10 conditions seen in general practice (O'Neill, et al., 2014)

1	Periodontal disease	13.9%
2	Flea infestation	8.0%
3	Obesity	6.7%
4	Heart murmur	5.0%
5	Traumatic injury	4.6%
6	Overgrown nails	3.7%
7	Chronic kidney failure	3.6%
8	Cat bite injury	3.6%
9	Abscess (excluding cat bite abscess)	3.2%
10	Cat bite abscess	3.2%



#### % Preventive health uptake in cats



#### Top reasons for not vaccinating at all

- 1 Too expensive 21%
- 2 Doesn't come into contact with other animals 19%
- 3 Not necessary 18%

#### Top reasons for not registering with a vet

- 1 Not necessary, can just turn up at vets 33%
- 2 Not necessary, pet is fine 22%
- 3 Too expensive 11%

#### Top reasons for not neutering

- 1 Doesn't go outside 18%
- 2 Haven't thought about it 14%
- 3 Not got around to it yet 12%

#### Top reasons for not worming

- 1 Not necessary 38%
- 2 Haven't thought about it\* 23%
- 3 Not got around to it yet 13%

#### Top reasons for not microchipping

- 1 Unlikely to stray 24%
- 2 Pet does not go outdoors 20%
- 3 Not necessary 17%

#### Top reasons for not treating for fleas

- 1 Not necessary 52%
- 2 Other reason 19%
- 3 Not got around to it yet 10%

# The wellbeing of rabbits



## Key findings

25% of rabbits are kept in inadequate housing conditions.



26% of owners didn't provide any hay as one of the main foods for their rabbit and 21% fed muesli as part of their rabbit's main diet.



44% of owners want to change at least one of their rabbits' behaviours.



49% of rabbits live alone.



13% of rabbits get no preventive healthcare.



2% OF UK ADULTS OWN A RABBIT



900K PET RABBITS ARE LIVING IN THE UK



## One in ten rabbits (10%) don't have a run and just live in a hutch

### Environment

#### Indoor versus outdoor

Rabbits can be kept both indoors or outdoors; the main challenge is providing sufficient stimulation and space in either environment.

400,000 rabbits (44%) live predominantly inside and 500,000 (56%) live predominantly outside.

#### Living conditions

There has been a reduction in the number of rabbits kept in inadequate conditions.

We found that 25% of owners kept their rabbits in inadequate housing provision, compared with 35% in 2017.

Although it's encouraging to see such an improvement, this still leaves a quarter of UK rabbits living in inadequate housing.

“Historically, it has been widely believed that hutches and indoor cages are sufficient for pet rabbits to spend most, if not all of their life in. Unfortunately, this notion is reinforced with some retailers still offering such accommodation today. It is great to see the PAW Report indicating signs of improvement in this area, which leads us to believe more empathetic pet owner mind-sets are leading to better choices in pet accommodation. However, with an average of 11 hours a day spent in the hutch, educational guidance is still needed to empower pet owners to make better choices for their rabbits.”

**Marie Pavaday-Pillay**

Small Pets Behaviour and Training Specialist  
Wood Green The Animals Charity

#### Exercise

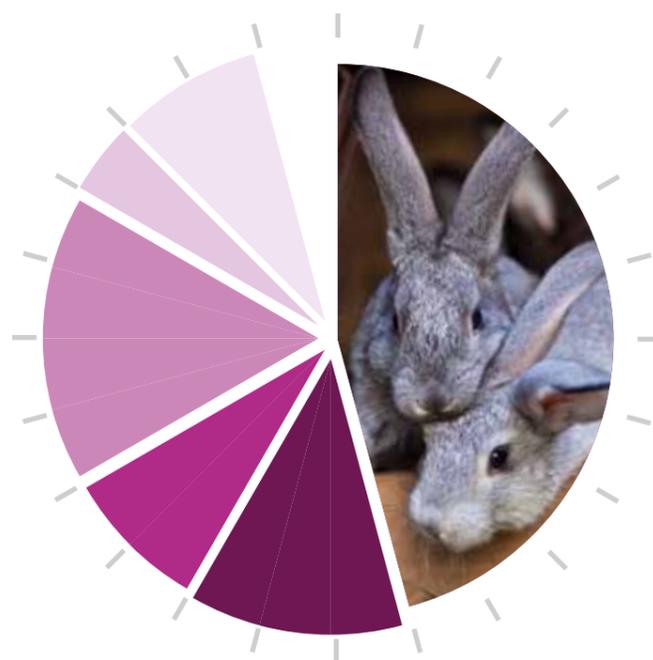
A lack of space for exercise was one of the top concerns for rabbits in last year's PAW Report, when we asked veterinary professionals what they thought the most important issues needing to be addressed were. This year's findings show that roughly one in ten rabbits (10%) don't have a run and just live in a hutch.

A further one in ten (11%) can only do between zero and four hops in the widest part of their run. Encouragingly, 28% of rabbits are free-roaming, meaning they should have plenty of room to run around, and 45% can do 5 or more hops in their runs.

#### In a 24-hour period, rabbits spend on average:



'Not stated' accounted for 1 hour



## A quarter (26%) of owners don't provide hay as part of the main diet for their rabbits

### Diet

A rabbit's daily diet should be comprised of at least their own body size in feeding hay, a handful of suitable fresh greens morning and evening, and just a tablespoon of commercial rabbit nuggets.

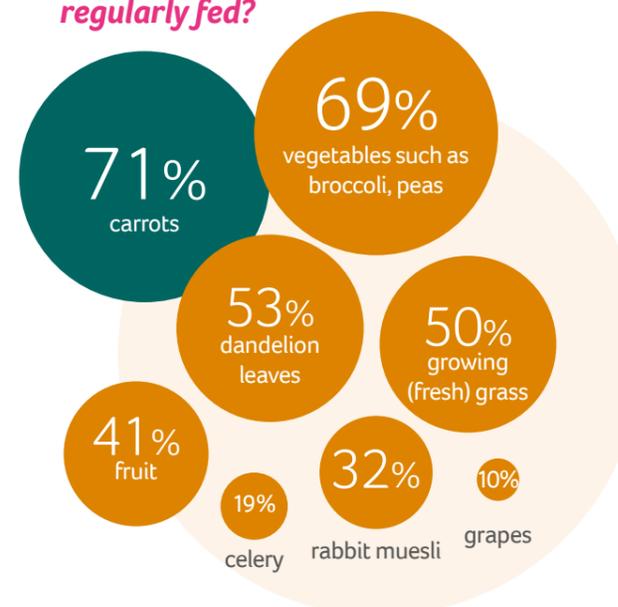
A quarter (26%) of owners don't provide hay as part of the main diet for their rabbit, and 30% of rabbit owners are not feeding enough hay.

Hay is an important source of fibre, can prevent health problems and provides stimulation. Rabbits provided with hay spend more time eating and without it they spend more time inactive and show more stereotypic behaviours (Prebble, et al., 2015).

Feeding rabbits 'muesli-style' mixes has been associated with dental disease (Meredith, et al., 2015), gut disease (Meredith and Prebble, 2017) and obesity (Prebble, et al., 2015).

Despite welcome improvements in numbers over the years, our results show that one in five rabbits (21%) are still fed rabbit muesli as part of their main diet.

#### Which treats are rabbits regularly fed?



#### Weight in rabbits

88% of owners describe their rabbit as the ideal weight – higher than for both cat and dog owners (76% and 81% respectively). 7% describe their rabbit as overweight and no owners described their rabbit as obese. This reflects published clinical data gathered across PDSA Pet Hospitals, where 7.6% of rabbits were classed as overweight and none obese based on body condition scoring by veterinary professionals (Courcier, et al., 2012).

Despite more rabbit owners feeling that their rabbit is the ideal weight compared to dog and cat owners, fewer know what weight their rabbit actually is. 65% of rabbit owners knew neither the weight nor body condition score of their pet compared to 56% of cat owners and 31% of dog owners. When asked about how they decide if their pet is the right weight, a higher proportion of rabbit owners than cat or dog owners (7% compared to 4% and 2% respectively) said they don't think about their rabbit's weight, or that they were never sure what the right weight for their rabbit is (5% compared to 2% of cat owners and 1% of dog owners).

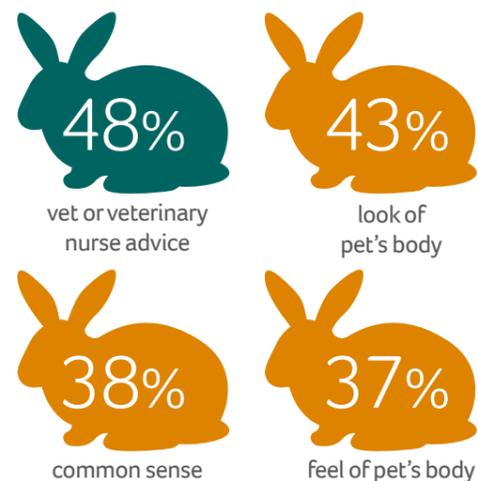
Obesity in rabbits may be less prevalent than in cats and dogs currently, but other evidence suggests that it's an emerging issue in pet rabbits (Meredith, 2012), and in the 2018 PAW Report, vets and vet nurses estimated that 30% of the rabbits they see in their practices every week are overweight or have obesity.

As more rabbits are kept as closer companions living in people's homes, this problem could become more prevalent.

Being underweight can also be a problem for rabbits and is typically a sign of inadequate husbandry or a sign of illness, for example dental disease. Published clinical data suggests 15% of rabbits presented at veterinary clinics were underweight (Courcier, et al., 2012). However, only 1% of owners in our research identified their rabbits as underweight. A larger proportion of sick rabbits seen at veterinary clinics might contribute to this difference, but it may also suggest that some owners aren't accurately recognising poor body condition score in their rabbits.

Owners who got their rabbit to 'complete the family' were more likely to want to change one or more of their rabbit's behaviours

**How do owners decide that their rabbit is the right weight?**



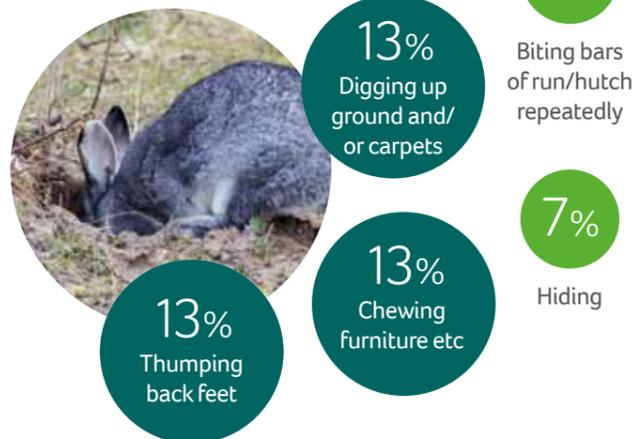
“Caring for pet rabbits is rewarding but challenging, as it is essential to know all about their 5 Welfare Needs - including understanding their natural behaviour, their dietary requirements and their likely healthcare investment, both in time and cost. Most notable are their specific dietary needs, based on a mainly grass/hay diet, and their social needs, as rabbits seldom live alone in the wild. New guidelines for the pet industry and the veterinary profession are in place to help improve the advice given to all new and current rabbit owners, with an emphasis on meeting all their welfare needs, and the requirement for rabbits to live in pairs or groups. Prospective owners should take this into account when considering acquiring pet rabbits.”

*Dr Fieke Molenaar DVM MSc DZooMed MRCVS  
RCVS Recognised Specialist in Zoo and Wildlife Medicine  
President, British Veterinary Zoological Society (BVZS)*

**Behaviour**

44% of rabbit owners want to change one or more of their rabbit's behaviours.

**Top five behaviours owners wanted to change:**



Chewing and digging are natural behaviours. When toys are available to chew, rabbits spend less time gnawing on inappropriate objects like bars (Poggiagliomi, et al., 2011). Providing an ideal environment, including suitable stimulation such as places to hide, objects to chew and an area in which to dig, could redirect the behaviours owners want to change to more acceptable activities, whilst simultaneously enhancing the rabbits' welfare.

Despite the prevalence of unwanted behaviours and the many welfare issues rabbits face across their 5 Welfare Needs, more rabbit owners disagree that their pet is stressed (83%) compared with dog owners (79%) and cat owners (75%).

We found that owners who got a rabbit to 'complete the family' were more likely to want to change their rabbit's behaviours (15% wanted to change one or more compared to 7% who didn't want to change any).

Owners who got their rabbit for 'love or affection' were also more likely to want to change one or more behaviours (33% wanted to change compared to 21% who didn't want to change any).

Half (49%) of UK rabbits live on their own, but only 18% of owners thought that their rabbit was lonely

**Companionship Health**

Our findings show a gradual reduction in the number of rabbits kept alone, but the proportion is still sadly very high. Half (49%) of UK pet rabbits live on their own, a reduction from 54% in 2018, continuing a gradual decline from 65% in 2012.

A further 7% of rabbits live with other animals (e.g. a guinea pig or other pet), which is not ideal as there are health concerns, differences in dietary needs and in communication, resulting in potential bullying and injury. Despite these figures, only 18% of owners thought that their rabbit was lonely.

Rabbits need companionship from their own kind to thrive. Data from other work shows us that rabbits kept alone are strongly motivated to seek out social contact (Seaman, et al., 2008) and solitary pet rabbits live shorter lives (Schepers, et al., 2009). Acquiring rabbits in neutered pairs, or, where feasible, 'bonding' a compatible rabbit under careful supervision with a lone rabbit (Stapleton, 2016), is therefore a positive way to improve rabbit wellbeing.

“Whilst veterinary surgeons are committed to providing exceptional levels of patient care twenty four hours of every day, an owner's first visit to the vet should not be when things go wrong and their pet needs emergency treatment. One of the greatest strengths of the veterinary team is their ability to give advice to help in disease prevention. Registering with a veterinary practice gives any owner access to professional, evidence based advice on preventative health care; whether that is the best lungworm protection for their dog; when to vaccinate their rabbits or the optimum age to neuter their cat. An owner's first port of call for all aspects of their pet's wellbeing should be their vet.”

*Dr Sue Paterson MA VetMB DVD DipECVD FRCVS  
President, British Small Animal Veterinary Association (BSAVA)*

Of the three species included in our research, rabbit owners were much less likely to provide preventive healthcare for their pets. One in seven (13%) rabbit owners didn't provide any preventive healthcare at all, compared to 1% of cat owners and 1% of dog owners.

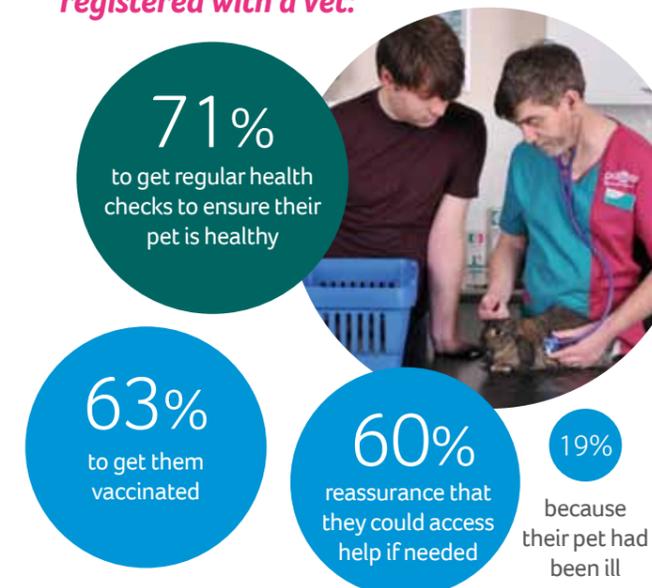
**Registered with a vet**

71% of rabbits are currently registered with a vet, representing a lower rate of registration than cat and dog owners (84% and 92% respectively).

The top reasons that rabbit owners gave for choosing their veterinary practice included it being their nearest practice (46%) and the practice with the best reputation (41%). The proportion of rabbit owners who chose based on good customer service were on a par with cat and dog owners at 28% (compared to 31% of dog owners and 29% of cat owners).

14% chose their practice because it was located in their local pet shop – higher than for dogs and cats (7% for both) and 13% selected good parking as a top reason.

**Top reasons rabbit owners registered with a vet:**



## 13% of rabbit owners didn't provide any preventive healthcare at all



### Vaccination

Overall levels of vaccination in rabbits are lower than in cats and dogs. **Only around half (49%) of owners reported that their rabbit had received a primary course when young and 51% said that their rabbit received regular booster vaccinations.**

Almost a third (30%) of owners who hadn't provided their rabbit with regular booster vaccinations said they didn't vaccinate their rabbit after their primary course (when young) because **they don't come into contact with other animals**. 16% said it was because they felt that **it wasn't necessary**, and nearly one in five (18%) said that it was because **the vet didn't recommend annual vaccination**.

This reveals a lack of owner understanding of disease risk and appropriate vaccination schedules, but also highlights the opportunity vets may have to give advice to improve vaccination uptake in rabbit owners.

Another reason that 14% of owners gave for not giving boosters after giving a primary vaccination (when young) was that their rabbit **finds vet visits very stressful**. Offering home visits, telephone wellbeing assessments and follow-ups and becoming recognised on the **Rabbit Friendly Vet List**<sup>\*</sup> can all help to mitigate this concern and encourage rabbit owners into relationships with practices.

### Insurance

The number of owners insuring their rabbits has been on a gradual increase since we started tracking it in 2011, and this year **19% of rabbit owners have insured their rabbits**, in contrast to 6% in 2011.

### Neutering

Around half (54%) of rabbits are neutered. Sadly, the top reason given by owners for not neutering is that their rabbit **lives alone**.

Neutering rabbits is advantageous not only for their health but also to prevent unwanted litters and encourage compatibility when bonding rabbits, however 15% of owners who didn't neuter stated they **didn't think there was any benefit**.

Among the other reasons that owners gave for not neutering were that they were **worried about anaesthetic** (11%) which is higher than for dog (5%) and cat (3%) owners.

The overall risk for a healthy rabbit undergoing a neutering procedure is low and increasing drug availability and veterinary familiarity and skill with rabbit anaesthetic protocols is likely to reduce the risk further.

### Microchipping

There has been a year-on-year increase in the proportion of rabbit owners reporting that their rabbit has been microchipped to 25% this year from 19% last year and just 3% in 2011.

### Clinical health

**Unlike in dogs and cats, a representative UK study on the prevalence of diseases in rabbits is not available.** A study of rabbits presenting to an exotic pet practice in Germany gives an indication of the most commonly seen clinical conditions in rabbits in that country.

These conditions will be familiar to UK vets and vet nurses seeing rabbits. Clinical coding data from PDSA's 48 Pet Hospitals also reflects the high frequency of these conditions in pet rabbits.

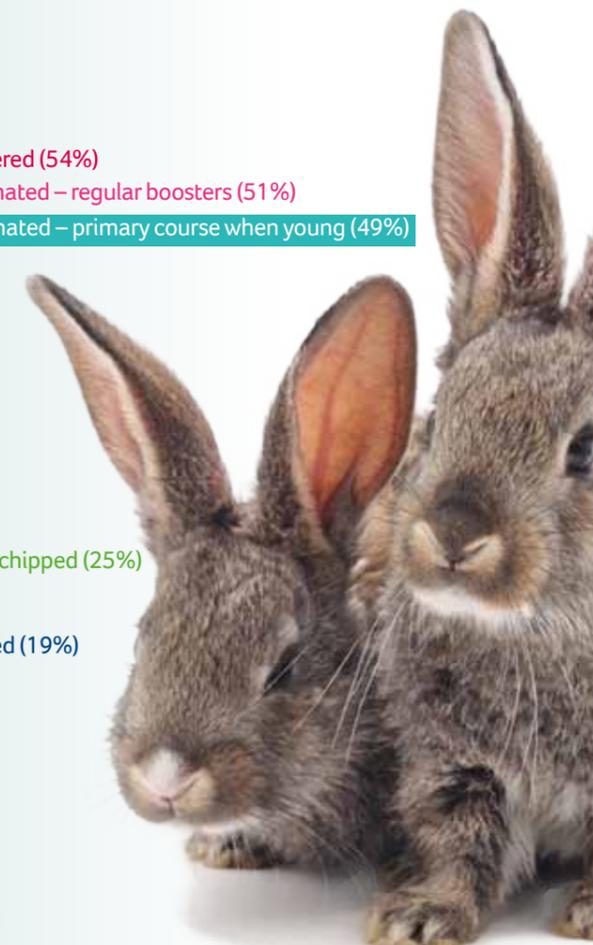
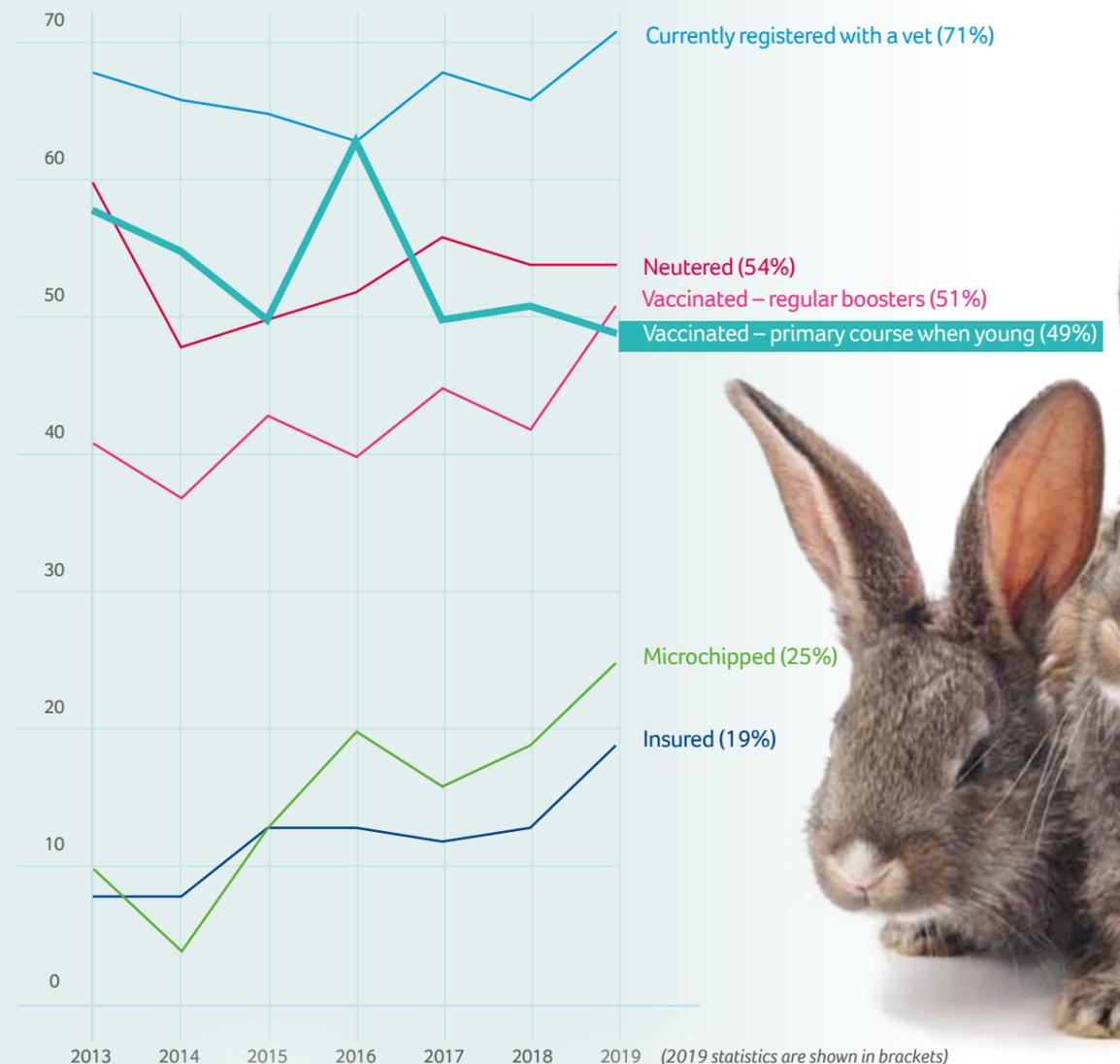


### Top 10 reasons for presentation to an exotic pet practice

(Langenecker, et al., 2009)

1	Dental disease	14%
2	Castration	13%
3	Neurological signs (suspected E. cuniculi)	11%
4	Trauma	8%
5	Abscesses	8%
6	Eye disease	7%
7	Tumours	5%
8	Fractures	5%
9	Bladder stones or cystitis	3%
10	Snuffles or rhinitis	3%

### % Preventive health uptake in rabbits



### Top reasons for not vaccinating at all

- 1 Doesn't come into contact with other animals 30%
- 2 Not necessary 15%
- 3 Too expensive 13%

### Top reasons for not registering with a vet

- 1 Not necessary, pet is fine\* 35%
- 2 Not necessary, can just turn up at vets 33%
- 3 Haven't thought about it 12%

### Top reasons for not neutering

- 1 Lives alone 37%
- 2 Don't think there is any benefit 15%
- 3 Haven't thought about it 15%

### Top reasons for not microchipping

- 1 Not necessary\* 37%
- 2 Unlikely to stray 26%
- 3 Not out unsupervised\* 26%

**Only around half (49%) of owners reported that their rabbit had received a primary vaccination course when they are young**

# The regional picture

This year, we have drilled down deeper into our headline data and pulled out any significantly different results in any one geographical area.

While it's not possible to draw causative conclusions, we hope these will highlight areas for extra regional focus. Despite geography, most regions show similar trends in pet wellbeing, which are discussed in the rest of this Report.



**Owners not knowing their cat's weight or body condition score:**

56%  
UK

49%  
South of England

69%  
Northern Ireland

**Dogs microchipped:**

86%  
Northern Ireland

92%  
UK

95%  
South of England

**Not heard of Animal Welfare Act:**

33%  
London

26%  
UK

20%  
Scotland

**Northern Ireland**

More dogs are left alone longer than recommended, fewer dogs are microchipped, and fewer cat owners know the weight or body condition score of their pet. More dogs weren't walked once a day.

**Underestimated cost of ownership:**

75%  
UK

65%  
London

**Dogs walked less than once a day:**

12%  
UK

18%  
Northern Ireland

5%  
Scotland

18%  
Midlands

7%  
South of England

**Wales**

Fewer owners wanted to change their dog's behaviour.

**South of England**

More dogs were walked once a day or more, and more dogs were microchipped. More cat owners knew the weight or body condition score of their pet.

**Owners wanting to change at least one dog behaviour:**

76%  
UK

66%  
Wales

**Scotland**

More owners had heard of the Animal Welfare Acts, and fewer owners walked their dogs less than once a day.

**North of England**

More dogs are left on their own for longer than recommended, and more owners wanted to change their rabbit's behaviour.

**Midlands**

More dogs weren't walked once a day.

**East of England**

Fewer owners wanted to change their rabbit's behaviour.

**Dogs left alone for 5 or more hours:**

19%  
UK

28%  
London

30%  
Northern Ireland

23%  
North of England

**London**

Fewer owners had heard of the Animal Welfare Acts, and more left their dogs alone for longer than recommended. Owners were more accurate at estimating the cost of their pets.



**Owners wanting to change at least one rabbit behaviour:**

44%  
UK

33%  
East of England

55%  
North of England

# Improving pet wellbeing

Across the Sector, many campaigns and initiatives have benefitted from utilising PAW Report findings; from identifying key issues and audience mapping, to measuring impacts and longer-term changes in owner behaviour and pet wellbeing.

## Campaigns

PDSA is an active partner in Burgess' 'Rabbit Awareness Week' initiative, alongside other leading veterinary and rabbit welfare organisations. The 2019 collaborative campaigning effort to improve uptake of the vaccination against Rabbit Viral Haemorrhagic Disease 2 was informed by PAW Report findings. These data provided an evidence-base around numbers of pet rabbits being vaccinated, as well as audience insight into the actions of rabbit owners of different demographics, from which relevant messaging was developed.



PAW Report data has also been used to help provide an evidence-base, and impact measurement, for other recent collaborations such as the Cat Population Control Group (CPCG), the Brachycephalic Working Group, the Pet Advertising Advisory Group (PAAG), The Cat Group development of the Kitten Checklist and the launch of the Companion Animal Welfare Group for Wales (CAWGW).

## Academia

Our findings continue to be regularly cited in academic literature. In addition, we also contribute extra unpublished data to academics to assist with their research (e.g. Gosling, et al., 2018).



This year, PDSA has also collaborated with academics to participate in work being undertaken by the University of Edinburgh, and funded by the Animal Welfare Foundation, to prioritise animal welfare issues across different species. We've used insight gleaned through multiple years of the PAW Report plus expert opinion to contribute to this important study. Their findings align with insight from the PAW Report, with issues such as **social behaviour issues** and **obesity** in cats, **lack of dog welfare knowledge by owner or carer** and **obesity** in dogs, and **failure to vaccinate, inadequacy of diet and inadequacy of housing or environment** in rabbits appearing in the top ten issues identified for each of these species.\*

## Policy

PDSA works extensively as part of several Sector Councils and campaign groups, using data contained in our Report, as well as further in-depth analysis, to guide policy-makers and inform campaign planning and impact measurement. Over the past nine years, our findings have also been widely cited and utilised as evidence for government consultations and debates, including those on the use of electronic training aids, regulation of fireworks, mandatory scanning of cats involved in road traffic accidents, a ban on third party sales of puppies and kittens, the Dangerous Dogs Act, the Control of Dogs Act (Scotland) and the Licensing of Dog, Cat and Rabbit Breeding Activities in Scotland.



Across our hospital network, in schools and communities throughout the UK, we tirelessly strive to achieve our vision of a lifetime of wellbeing for every pet.



## Education

Over the last five years we've engaged over 300,000 children with learning about the 5 Welfare Needs of pets through our national PetWise for Schools programme.

We've also campaigned for the Welfare Needs to be included on the school curriculum linked to relevant subjects. This was supported by findings from our 2016 PAW Report\*\*, which showed that 94% of the veterinary profession agreed that 'learning about the 5 Welfare Needs should be a compulsory part of the curriculum taught in UK schools'.

## Additional PAW Report data

As part of our mission to improve pet wellbeing, we welcome collaborations with institutions or individuals, especially those who are interested in using our data in animal welfare campaigning or policy contexts.

We also have additional data that are not included in the Report. From time to time we use and publish this additional data as required. Much of it could benefit from further analysis, and we welcome collaboration from the academic sector.

To discuss how our data can help you please email [paw@pdsa.org.uk](mailto:paw@pdsa.org.uk)

**ANIMALS BOUGHT ON A WHIM MAY BE FUELLING ANIMAL WELFARE CRISIS**

CountryLiving

**BUYING PETS WITH NO RESEARCH COULD BE CAUSING THEM MENTAL AND PHYSICAL MISERY**

Shropshire Star

**OBESITY ISSUES IN PET RABBITS**

vet times

**DOG AND CAT OWNERS REFUSE TO INNOCULATE THEIR PETS**

The Daily Telegraph

# Concluding thoughts



Our nation's pets are profoundly loved, that much is clear. But how can we reconcile this with some of the more common pet welfare issues we see? For many pets, their basic needs are not being met, and education is vital in improving the picture for years to come.

The PAW Report has been a vital barometer for pet wellbeing, identifying and tracking issues to help the sector drive change over the last nine years.

Of particular concern this year has been a further drop in the proportion of owners giving their pet a primary vaccination course when young.

It's vital that the veterinary profession is at the forefront of a drive to improve these figures to protect the wellbeing of the UK's pets.

Communicating the benefits of vaccination and discussing the concerns of any worried pet owners can ensure fewer pets suffer from entirely preventable, potentially devastating, diseases. We'll be doing exactly that as part of our national #Vaccination campaign. We're launching a vaccination amnesty in our hospitals to help owners who may find cost a barrier, and we'll be utilising these PAW Report findings as well as human behaviour change methods to engage pet owners on social media channels to challenge vaccine hesitancy in a positive way.



We'll also continue to drive a wide range of improvements to pet wellbeing through our mission to Prevent, Educate and Treat in the communities which need us the most.

Almost a century on from our first PDSA horse-drawn mobile caravan, our PetWise vehicles are still carrying out our Founder's original vision: helping pets in need up and down the country. In autumn 2018, we expanded our original fleet of two PetWise vans to include our **PetWise Mobile Unit**, thanks entirely to generous support from players of People's Postcode Lottery.



This larger truck has enabled us to help even more pets at the heart of communities where we're needed most. It's also helped us have a real impact at larger public events, such as Crufts, where we used it to engage over 900 dog lovers with learning vital, lifesaving pet first aid skills.

One community where we know we need to be increasingly innovative is the online community, and one of the ways we're doing this is via our **Pet Health Hub**. This is our new, evidence-based, online resource which uses easy-to-understand language, diagrams and videos to help owners learn about clinical conditions and how to best care for their pet's health. Helping pets and people is at the heart of what we do, and we'll continue to build this resource to support owners and have the greatest impact we can on pet wellbeing.

In all, our 2019 PAW Report represents another milestone on the long road to a lifetime of wellbeing for every pet



Our intention is that, in time, our Pet Health Hub will become as beneficial to pet wellbeing as NHS Choices is for human health.

Last year also saw the introduction of the new Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (England) Regulations 2018, which replaced several outdated pieces of pet legislation, including the Pet Animals Act 1951 and the Breeding of Dogs Act 1963.

PAW Report data was used by many stakeholders to inform the development of this legislation, and we have introduced tracking questions to monitor awareness of it. When asked this year, 62% of pet owners were not aware of the new licensing regulations for breeders and pet boarders.

In addition to this activity, with Brexit on the horizon, the collaborative #BetterDealForAnimals campaign is an important overarching initiative. We're working with 35 other animal welfare organisations to urge the Government to enshrine animal sentience in legislation, as well as making further recommendations to improve animal welfare once the UK has left the EU.

In all, our 2019 PAW Report represents another milestone on the long road to a lifetime of wellbeing for every pet. We hope reading it will encourage all working in this field, both by showcasing the positive impacts made possible when stakeholders collaborate with a common goal, and by providing clarity and insight around issues which need urgent action to improve the lives of our beloved pets.

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PDSA Director of Veterinary Services



\*Our brand new Pet Health Hub was made possible thanks to the fantastic ongoing support of the players of the People's Postcode Lottery: [pdsa.org/phh](http://pdsa.org/phh)

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Thank you to everyone who is already working alongside us to improve pet wellbeing. We can't do it alone.

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