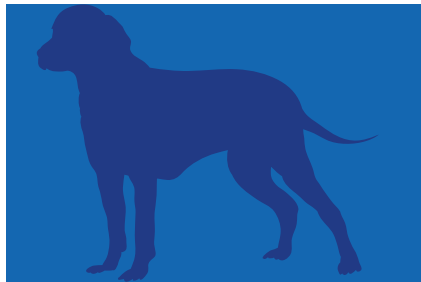




The state of our **pet nation**





pdsa

for pets in need of vets

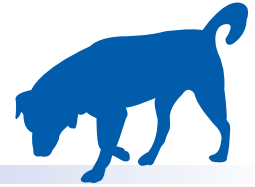
PDSA's work goes beyond just treating 400,000 pets in its 51 PetAid hospitals UK-wide every year.

The charity is a leading authority on pet wellbeing and is committed to providing education on all aspects of responsible pet ownership through a variety of initiatives. Working collaboratively with our partners, supporters and pet lovers we hope to make a better life for all pets.

YouGov[®]
What the world thinks

YouGov is one of the UK's leading research companies, providing accurate insights into what people are thinking and doing all over the world, all of the time. The most quoted research agency in the UK, YouGov has an established track record of consistently accurate and high-quality survey data, representing all ages, socio-economic groups and other demographic types. YouGov is delighted to be involved in the third *PDSA PAW Report*, monitoring changes in pet welfare issues across the UK.

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The *PAW Report* provides us with fantastic insight into people's awareness of their pets' needs. By tracking trends year-on-year the *PAW Report* is also helping the veterinary profession to see where our initiatives have made an impact. For example, by working together the veterinary profession, PDSA and other charities have helped raise awareness of the importance of microchipping in a short space of time. But across a range of health and welfare issues there is a huge amount more to do.

The British Veterinary Association (BVA) will continue to work with PDSA and others to support and educate the owners of dogs, cats and rabbits and make sure they understand the needs of their pets.

Robin Hargreaves, BVSc MRCVS, President of the British Veterinary Association (BVA)



The state of our pet nation 2013



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

Welcome to the third *PDSA Animal Wellbeing (PAW) Report*.

Our vision in producing the *PAW Report* is to provide an annual tracker of pet wellbeing in order to identify what needs to be done to improve the health and overall welfare of the UK's pets. This year's results reveal there is still much work to be done to improve levels of pet wellbeing since millions of pets still suffer in silence because their five key welfare needs are not being met.

It has been nearly seven years since the Animal Welfare Act 2006 came into force in England and Wales and owner awareness of how to provide for their pets' welfare is still worryingly low. So many problems that are seen by animal welfare organisations across the UK are entirely preventable. People continue to make misinformed choices at every stage of their pet ownership journey, and consequently pet welfare is being compromised.

Reassuringly, almost all pet owners love their pets and treat them as valued family members. But love is not always enough. Pets deserve a life where all their physical and emotional needs are provided for, so that they can live healthy and happy lives.

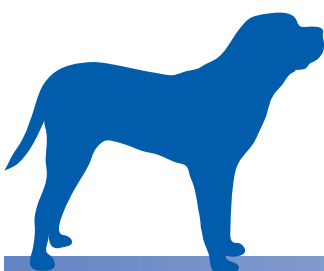
Since the first Report we have surveyed more than 17,000 pet owners, veterinary professionals

and children. This year we revisit all of the welfare needs for dogs, cats and rabbits to see if anything is changing. We look at some of the newer issues threatening pet welfare such as online sales of pets as well as public opinion on national initiatives, like compulsory microchipping for dogs. We have also asked the people on the frontline – vets and veterinary nurses – which issues concern them the most and we take a look back on the first *PAW Report* to reflect on key trends as well.

Undoubtedly, nothing will change unless organisations and individuals commit themselves to making a difference in whichever areas they can; collaboration, focus and belief that change is possible are all key. Areas that concern us the most are highlighted throughout the Report with a red 'Action needed' stamp.



We invite you to join us and protect the physical and mental wellbeing of those that make such a difference to all our lives: the UK pet nation.



Vital statistics



This year we have surveyed 2,149 pet owners, 555 children and 459 vets and vet nurses.

Pet population statistics



23% of the UK population have a dog – an estimated population of around 7.8 million dogs.

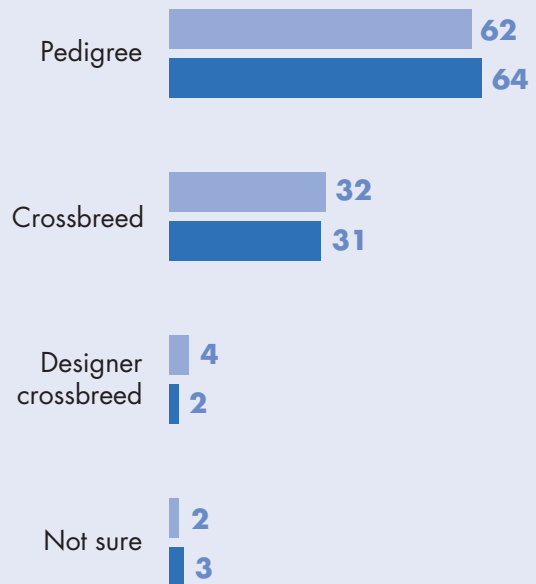
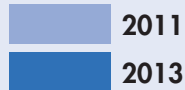


23% of the UK population have a cat – an estimated population of around 9.5 million cats.

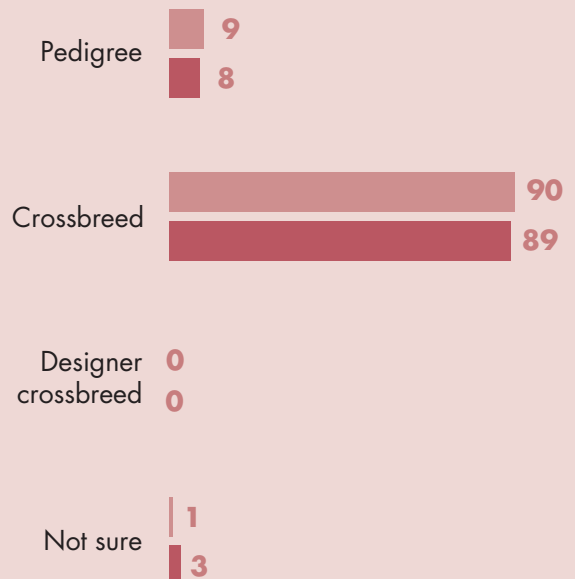
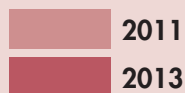


3% of the UK population have a rabbit – an estimated population of around 1 million rabbits.

Dogs %



Cats %



What are the five welfare needs and why do they matter?

The Animal Welfare Act 2006* introduced a 'duty of care' for all pet owners to meet the welfare needs of their pets. These requirements were split into five areas, which act as a simple framework to help owners meet their pets' needs and ensure that their pets are both physically and mentally healthy and happy.

The five welfare needs are:



Environment – the need for a suitable environment (place to live)



Diet – the need for a suitable diet



Behaviour – the need to be able to express normal behaviour



Companionship – the need to live with, or apart from, other animals









Health – the need to be protected from pain, suffering, injury and disease

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

Headlines

Thumbs up = Good Thumbs down = Bad







-  Only 38% of owners are familiar with the Animal Welfare Act and the five welfare needs contained within it, a decrease from 45% in 2011.
-  Only 7% of children have heard about the five animal welfare needs.
-  91% of pet owners think it is important to monitor pet wellbeing in the UK regularly.
-  88% of pet owners think the UK is a nation of animal lovers.
-  6% of owners have reduced the amount they spend on preventive healthcare due to the current economic climate, potentially affecting nearly 1 million pets.
-  Only 5% of pet owners took advice from their veterinary practice before choosing their pet.

Method

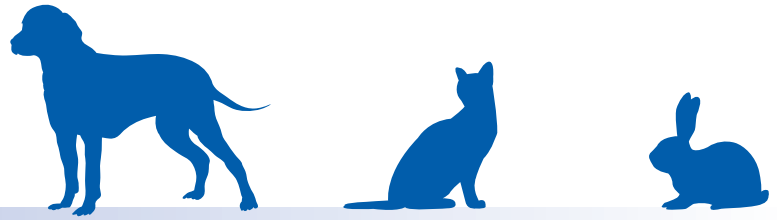
Research was carried out online through the YouGov panel. Pet owners' data is representative of the population by pet species, the owner's gender, social grade, age and geographical region.

Respondents were surveyed about each of the five welfare needs, in direct relation to their pet and their level of knowledge in each area. Their answers were then scored against ideal care scenarios based on professional advice from PDSA and using information from published Government Codes of Practice for companion animal species. Respondents have been scored against these ideal scenarios to give an overall score out of 100.







-  The number of dogs having daily off-the-lead exercise has decreased to 66% (73% in 2011).
-  Only 17% of dog owners look at body condition score (body shape) and weight before deciding how much to feed.
-  58% of dogs have never been to training classes when they were young (an increase from 50% in 2011).
-  The proportion of dogs left alone for five hours or more on a regular basis has increased significantly from 18% to 25%.
-  The percentage of dogs microchipped has increased from 70% in 2011 to 80% this year.
-  22% of owners would consider getting a pet from a puppy farm.

Index scores	Dog	
	2011	2013
Environment	71	84
Diet	64	62
Behaviour	55	59
Companionship	49	30
Health	71	71
Ownership	62	76







Cat headlines

-  In 57% of cat-owning households the number of litter trays is fewer than the number of cats. This is a significant increase from 2011 where the figure was 34%.
-  Only 5% of cat owners look at body condition score (body shape) and weight before deciding how much to feed.
-  90% of cat owners report their cat is afraid of something.
-  41% of cats live in multi-cat households (little change from 42% in 2011).

Index scores	Cat	
	2011	2013
Environment	64	60
Diet	63	39
Behaviour	66	81
Companionship	70	69
Health	64	64
Ownership	60	72



Rabbit headlines

-  There has been a significant decrease in the amount of rabbit muesli mix fed as a main type of food (34% from 44% in 2011) and an increase in the feeding of pellet food (68% from 55% in 2011).
-  18% of rabbits have no opportunity for exercise on a daily basis, significantly more than the 4% in 2011.
-  65% of rabbits continue to live alone even though they are a highly social species.
-  There has been a significant improvement in numbers of rabbits neutered and those that have had initial vaccinations.

Index scores	Rabbit	
	2011	2013
Environment	58	- *
Diet	55	46
Behaviour	75	89
Companionship	32	26
Health	47	55
Ownership	65	74

* The data gathered during this wave of research did not cover all aspects of rabbit environment.

“

Dogs are not our whole life, but they make our lives whole.

Roger Caras (photographer and writer)

”



The 2011 *PAW Report* highlighted areas of concern across all five welfare needs within our canine nation – dogs left alone for long periods of time, millions being fed scraps and leftovers as their main food type, high levels of aggression towards people and pets, and across the UK a significant number of dogs that are not receiving lifesaving preventive care. This year we look at some of the key indicators in each of these areas in more depth.

Disappointingly, there is very little change and many of our canine companions continue to miss out on their fundamental welfare needs.



Environment



To ensure a dog has a comfortable environment it is important for them to have their own dog bed where they can rest undisturbed. Poisonous or hazardous items in the home or garden should be kept safely out of reach. Safety when travelling in a vehicle is also important and ideally dogs should travel behind a dog guard or on the back seat with a seatbelt. It is also vital that all dogs get the opportunity to exercise on a daily basis.

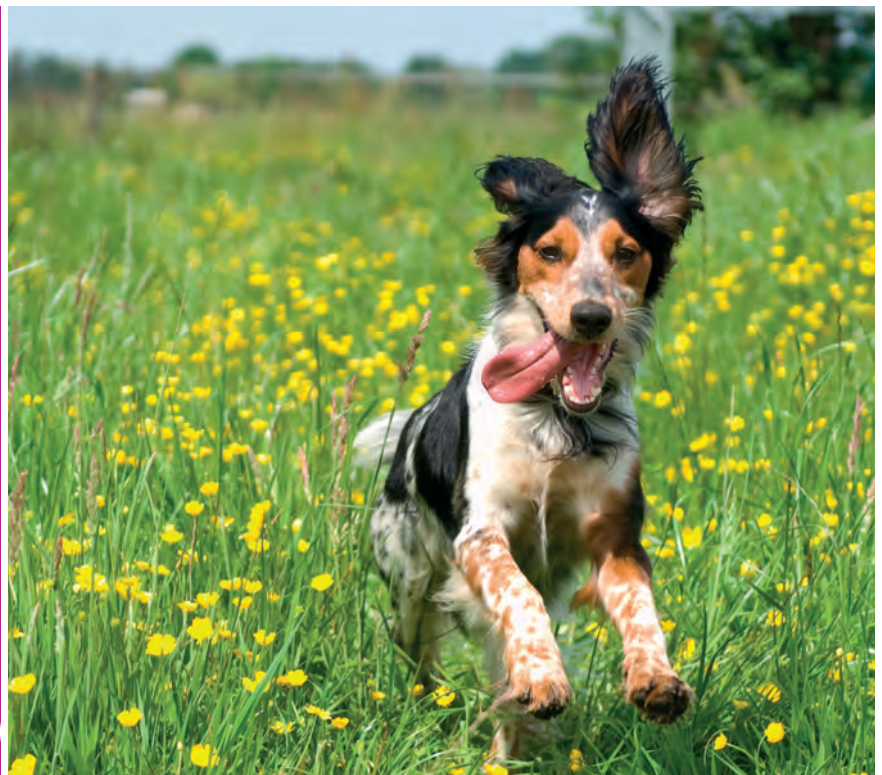
Index score

2011	71
2013	84



I had never really thought about the impact of Patch's environment on his wellbeing before but I now make every effort to see things through his eyes. For example I had never really thought about the risk to him and others when travelling with him unrestrained in the car but he's quite happy in his seat-belt now and most importantly we can all travel safely together.

*Sara, dog owner,
West Midlands*

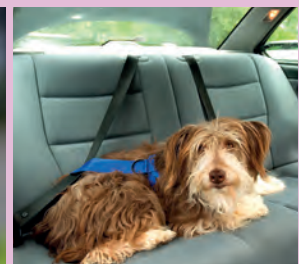


Key findings

In 2011 the environment welfare need for dogs was the highest-scoring, alongside health. There has been some improvement since then, but, worryingly, there has been a decrease in the number of dogs having daily off-the-lead exercise, reducing from 73% down to 66%.

66% of pet owners feel that all dogs should be kept on a lead in public places, significantly different to the views of vets and vet nurses where only 44% agree.

94% of dog owners feel informed about the environmental needs of their dog and of these 59% feel very well informed.



Diet



PDSA advises that feeding a complete, commercial dog food is preferable to a homemade diet. It is not easy to achieve the correct balance of nutrients if you make a dog's diet yourself. Treats should only be given for training purposes or on a very occasional basis, and, on days when a treat is fed, the amount of food given in the dog's main meal should be reduced. Lifestage (i.e. whether puppy, junior, adult or senior) and packet guidelines as well as weight and body shape should be taken into account when choosing what and how much to feed a dog.

Index score

2011	64
2013	62

Key findings

Significantly fewer dog owners are giving their dog a daily treat – 35% reduced from 42% in 2011.

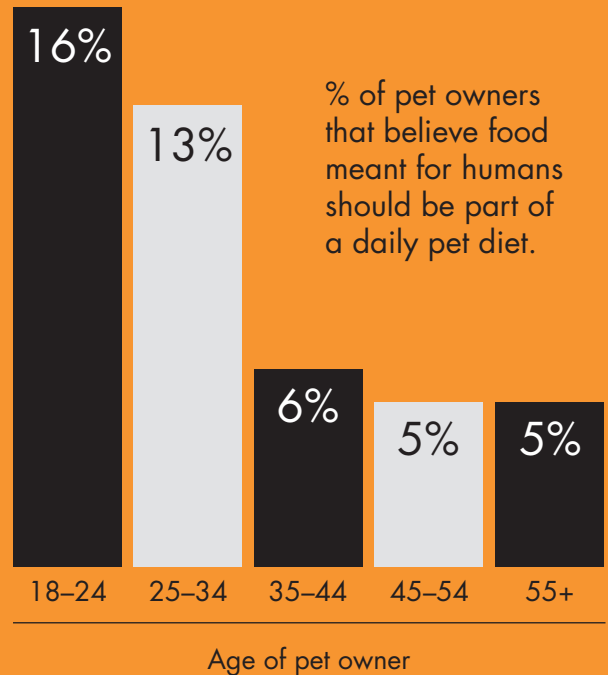
However, the majority of dogs are still given a treat at least once a week. The type of treats given show an increase in dog-specific treats, such as dental chews and dog chocolate and a decrease in food meant for humans, such as chips, toast and bones meant for humans. However, more than 53% of dogs are still given human food leftovers as a treat.

The top two reasons for giving dogs a treat are still:

- It makes them happy (45%).
- They are a daily part of their diet (45%).

9% of dog owners believe that food meant for humans should be a daily part of their dog's diet.

This varies significantly depending on the age of the owner.



18% of owners are still reporting that their dogs are overweight. However studies indicate that the true figure for dog obesity is actually much higher.

When considering how much to feed their dog, owners continue to rely on common sense and past experience. There has been a small increase in those approaching a veterinary professional for

advice and a small decrease in those using packet guidelines to determine the right amount.

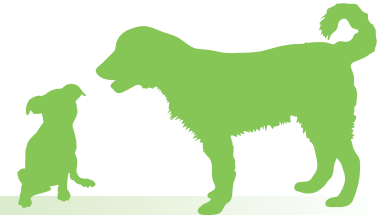
Only 17% of pet owners look at body shape and weight before deciding how much to feed.

85% of vets and vet nurses believe that the majority of owners have no understanding of what a healthy body shape looks like for their pet.



Raising awareness of a healthy weight and body shape is a vital part of tackling the pet obesity crisis.

Behaviour



Owners and breeders should pay special attention to socialising puppies from a young age. Socialisation is one of the most important things a puppy needs. It's all about letting them meet people and other animals, and letting them experience many different everyday sights and sounds, especially in their first few weeks of life. Training is also very important. Training, using kind and effective methods, is a great way of keeping a dog's mind active and helps to make sure owner and dog properly understand each other, while helping prevent inappropriate or aggressive behaviour.

Index score

2011	55
2013	59

ACTION NEEDED

85% of vets and vet nurses feel socialisation and basic training classes should be compulsory for all dogs, yet only 56% of pet owners agree with this.



PDSA Head of Pet Health and Welfare, Nicola Martin, says:

There remains a serious level of concern with regard to dog behaviour. Little has changed which means that there are currently millions of un-socialised and un-trained dogs in the UK; the potential impact of this can sometimes have devastating consequences.

PDSA vets say:

Socialisation is one of the most important things you can do for a puppy.



Looking at some of the key indicators:	2011	2013	up/down
Dogs that never attended training classes in their first 6 months of life	50%	58%	↑
Dogs showing aggression towards people	3%	2%	-
Dogs showing aggression towards other pets	5%	5%	-
Pet owners who think people should face tougher penalties if their dog attacks another person or animal	87%	85%	↓
Pet owners who have been frightened or concerned by another dog's behaviour	64%	63%	↓

Companionship



Dogs are very social animals, so they do not like to be left alone. Dogs need plenty of company and it is important that they are not routinely left on their own for more than four hours a day. Adequate care and provision should be provided for a pet dog when the owner goes on holiday.

Index score

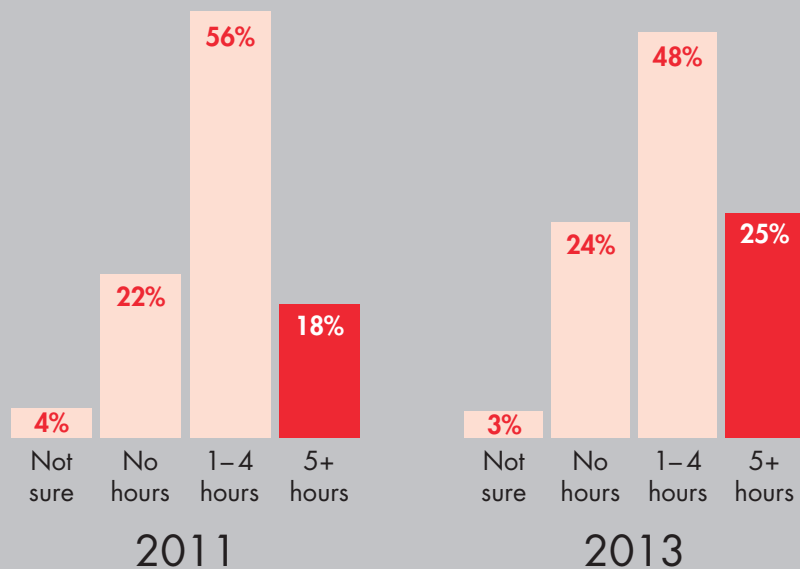
2011	49
2013	30

“ Leaving dogs alone for long periods of time can result in serious behavioural problems ”



The number of hours dogs are left alone

The proportion of dog owners who leave their pet alone in the house for five hours or more during a weekday has increased significantly from 18% in 2011 to 25% now.

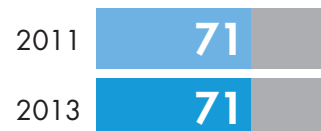


Health



PDSA recommends that dogs are neutered, vaccinated, microchipped and insured. Owners who wish to breed from their pet should take appropriate actions (such as health testing) in advance and do lots of research before making a decision. Furthermore, the pet should be registered with a vet and receive regular, safe and effective preventive treatments for fleas and worms. Regular grooming and dental care are also important and a dog must be checked daily for signs of ill health.

Index score



The overall index score for dog health has not changed at all since 2011. However there has been an increase in the percentage of dogs microchipped and neutered in our canine population.



- The most popular reason why owners have not had their dog neutered is now because they 'don't believe in it' (22%, up from 16% in 2011).
- A similar proportion as in 2011 have not thought about having their dog neutered (20% in 2013, 23% in 2011), or are worried about personality changes (18%, up from 15% in 2011). The expense of this procedure is now an issue for significantly more dog owners (14%, up from 8% in 2011).
- A common factor for their pet not having had other preventive treatments include the dog

being 'too old', or a belief that it is 'not necessary' (particularly regarding vaccinations (47% in 2013, from 13% in 2010). While microchipping levels have broadly increased, a higher proportion of people currently don't feel it is necessary (47% in 2013) because their pet does not go out unsupervised, compared to 32% in 2010.

There is also an increase in the proportion of dog owners who have not registered their pet with a vet believing they don't feel there is a need to since they can 'just turn up' (48%, up from 35% in 2011).

Looking at some of the key indicators:	2011	2013	up/down
Currently registered with a vet	90%	91%	↑
Vaccinated (primary course)	82%	84%	↑
Microchipped	70%	80%	↑
Neutered	66%	73%	↑
Insured	52%	54%	↑
Treated for fleas	72%	75%	↑
Wormed	90%	90%	-

“

What greater gift than
the love of a cat.

Charles Dickens

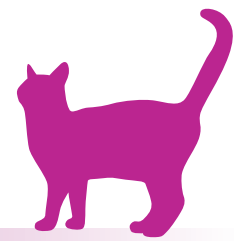
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Cats

Cat diet is still the biggest concern in relation to feline wellbeing. Inappropriate treats continue to be fed and owner awareness of body shape and how to feed the correct amounts needs to improve to help reduce the high levels of cat obesity. There are still large numbers of cats living in multicat households and awareness of the need for multiple resources in these situations is still low. Encouragingly, levels of preventive care continue to increase, improving the physical health of our feline companions.



Environment



Cats need somewhere comfortable to sleep and rest undisturbed, as well as constant access to safe hiding places. Cats often feel most secure when they are high up, so they should be given safe access to resting places on top of furniture, such as cupboards or shelves.

If cats are living together in the same household they must be provided with enough of the things they need (e.g. food and water bowls, litter trays, cat beds etc.). If not it can lead to stress and anxiety. A general rule is that owners should provide as many of these items as the number of cats, plus one (so two cats should have three litter trays). They should be positioned around the house so that the cats do not have to come into contact with each other if they do not want to.

Index score

2011	64
2013	60

In 57% of cat owning households the number of litter trays is fewer than the number of cats. This is a significant increase from 2011 where the figure was 34%.

10% of owners have fewer food bowls than the number of cats and 30% have fewer water bowls than the number of cats.

Only 55% of owners said they have one or more cat beds per cat; the remainder provide fewer cat beds than the number of cats.

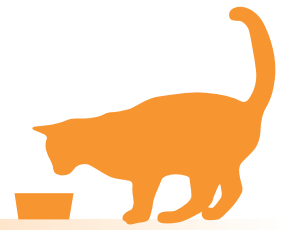
Providing cats with enough resources is vital in maintaining positive mental and physical wellbeing.



Cats need more resources: These findings indicate that more cats than ever don't have access to enough of the creature comforts they need in order to maintain a good sense of wellbeing.

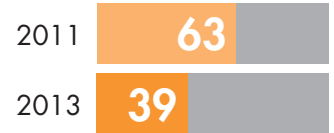


Diet



Cats are true carnivores, meaning they have to eat certain nutrients that are only found in meat or commercial cat food. It is preferable to feed a complete commercial cat food to achieve the correct balance of nutrients. Cats do not need treats and should only be given healthy treats occasionally, if at all, to prevent obesity. A cat's age, weight and shape, alongside packet feeding guidelines and veterinary advice, should all be taken into account when deciding how much to feed a cat.

Index score

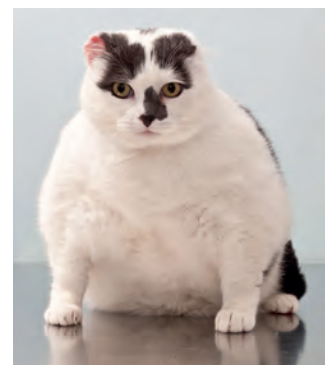
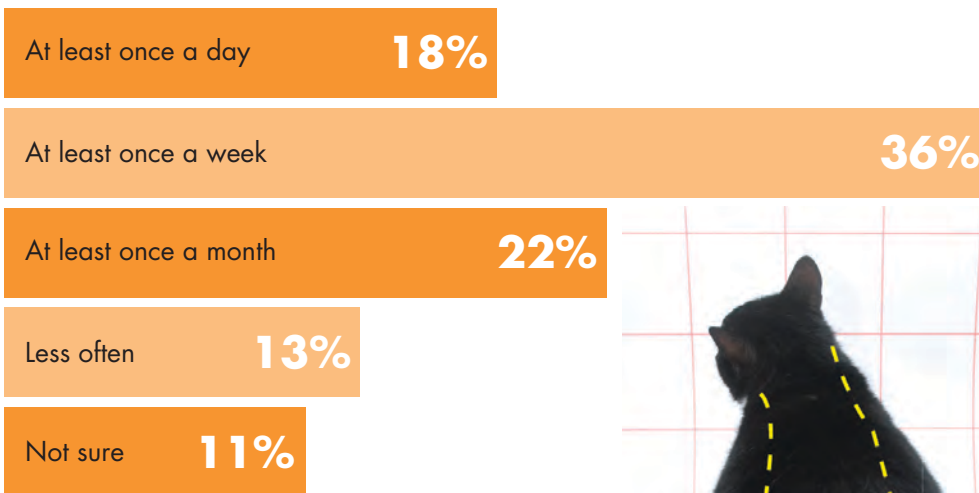


There has been a small decrease in the number of owners identifying their cats as being overweight or obese, reducing from 59% to 55%.

Over half of cat owners give their pet a treat at least once a week (54%).

The most popular cat treats are fish and meat (other than in cat food) (53% and 51% respectively). There has been a significant increase in the proportion of owners giving their felines a cat biscuit (49%, up from 39% in 2010) and a commercial cat treat (45%, up from 31% in 2010).

How often does your cat have a treat?



13% of cat owners report that they never give their cat a treat; significantly more than the 3% of dog owners who never give treats.

When asked to identify a healthy body shape for a cat from a range of images, over one-third (36%) of cat owners picked an image that was either overweight or obese.

Cat owners still rely mainly on common sense or past experience to determine how much to feed their pet.

How do you decide how much to feed your cat?

- Common sense – 27%
- Past experience – 21%
- Eats as much as he or she likes – 12%
- Seek veterinary advice – 11%
- Packet guidelines – 5%
- Cat's weight or body shape – 5%



With only 5% of cat owners looking at body shape and weight before deciding how much to feed, more education is needed to reduce obesity problems.

Behaviour



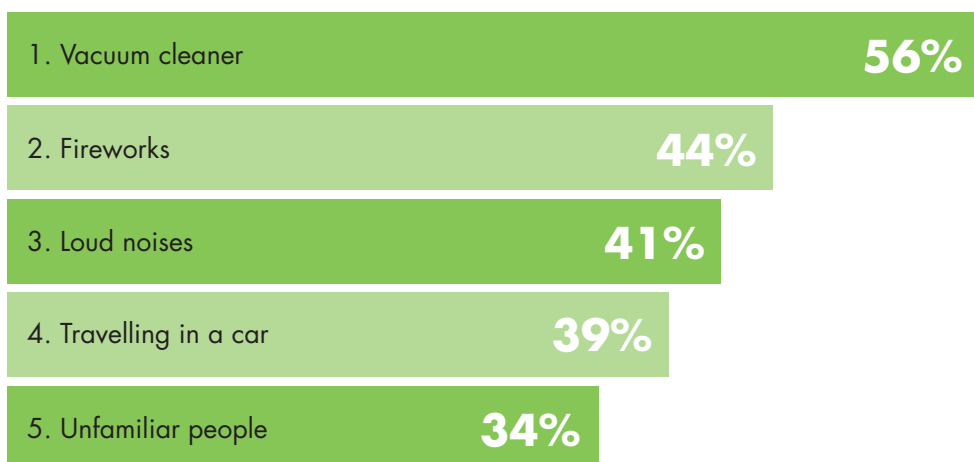
Kittens have a socialisation period (the first 8–10 weeks of life), which is when they get used to things around them. During this time, kittens gradually need to get used to people, other animals and everyday sights and sounds. Without this socialisation, some cats can display aggressive or destructive behaviour.

Even as adults many cats enjoy playing, which provides good exercise and allows them to express their normal behaviour.



90% of cat owners report that their cat is afraid of something (91% in 2011).

What is your cat afraid of?



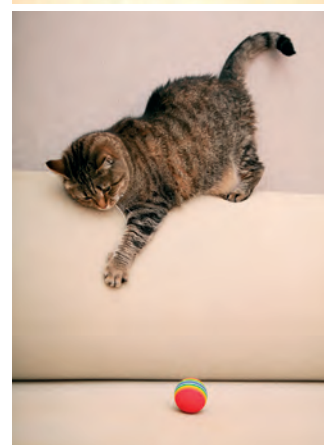
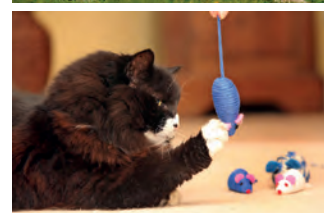
There has been a small decrease (to 42%) in the number of owners who do not know what socialisation their cat has had, but no change in where owners are acquiring their cats from, with rescue centres still top of the list at 36%.

Index score



Overall there has been a decrease in the amount of problem behaviours shown. However, there has been little change to the levels of aggression shown by cats, with 5% showing aggression towards people and 10% showing aggression towards other pets on a weekly basis.

In households with two cats aggression towards other pets increases to 16%.



Companionship



Cats usually prefer their own company and should generally be kept on their own. Living with other cats is a common cause of chronic stress, especially if they live with cats they are not related to. Cats are most likely to be friendly with other cats if they have grown up together as littermates.

Adequate care and provision should be provided for a pet cat when the owner goes on holiday. It is best if a trusted friend or neighbour can look after the cat in the cat's own home while the owner is away. If this is not possible, the cat should be boarded at a reputable cattery.

Index score

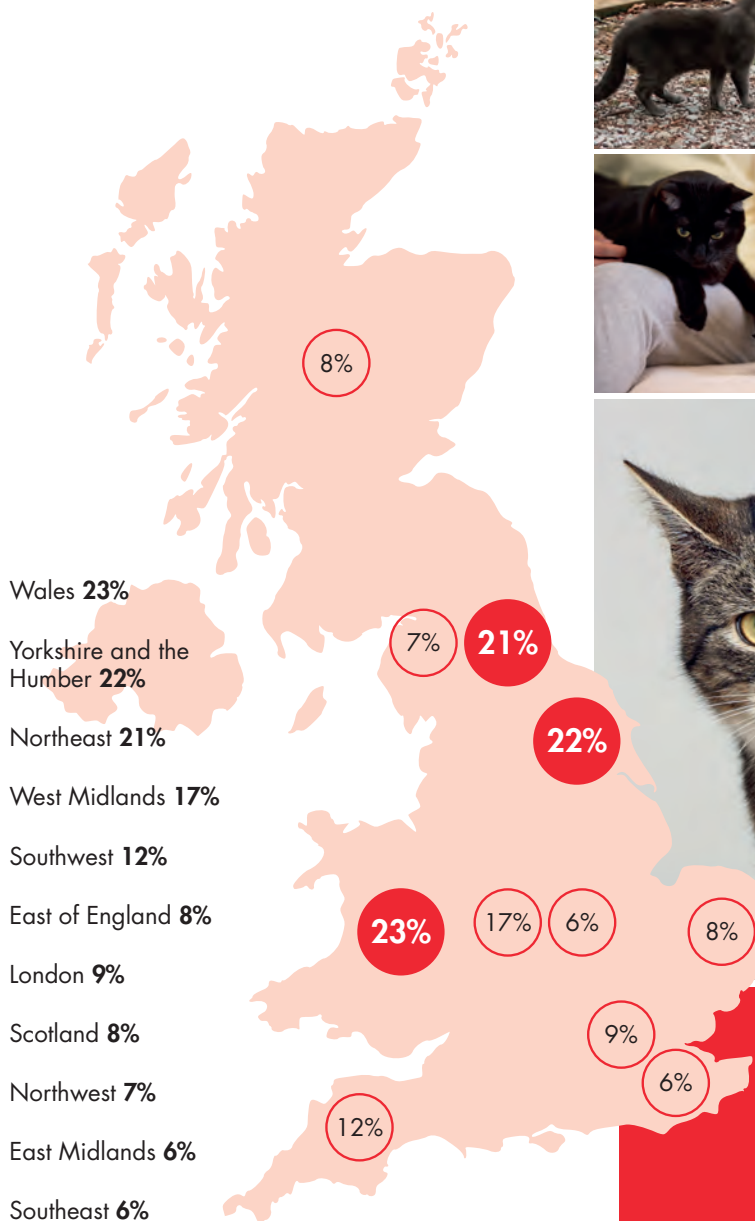
2011	70
2013	69

41% of cats live in multicat households; little change on 2011 when 44% of cats lived with other cats

Cat owners in the Northeast, Yorkshire and the Humber, and Wales are the most likely to have households with three or more cats. Nearly a quarter of cat owners in Wales have three or more cats.

Cat owners in the Southeast are most likely to have just one cat, with 63% of cat-owning households having just one cat.

% of households with three or more cats



“Cats are most likely to be friendly with other cats if they have grown up together as littermates.”

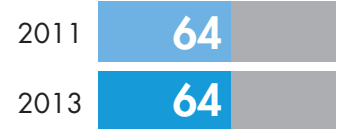
Health



It is recommended that cats are neutered at a young age to prevent them from having unwanted kittens and to prevent certain serious illnesses. It is also recommended that they are vaccinated against potentially fatal diseases and that they receive regular preventive treatments for parasites, such as fleas and worms. Owners should buy treatments that are safe and effective. Pet cats should be microchipped to increase their chances of being reunited with their owner should they stray, and they should be registered with a vet. Cats should be regularly groomed and checked for signs of illness daily.

There has been a small improvement across most areas of preventive healthcare in cats. None of these changes are significant enough to improve the overall index score but the most significant improvement is in the number of cats treated for fleas.

Index score



The most common reasons why owners have not had their cat neutered is because they 'don't believe in it' (16%, up from 8% in 2011) or that they 'haven't thought about it' (15% up from 6% in 2011).

The top reason given for not vaccinating is expense, with 23% of owners worried about the cost.

36% of cat owners who haven't microchipped their cat state it is because they believe they are unlikely to stray.

Nearly half (42%) of cat owners who haven't insured their cat state it is due to the expense of insurance.

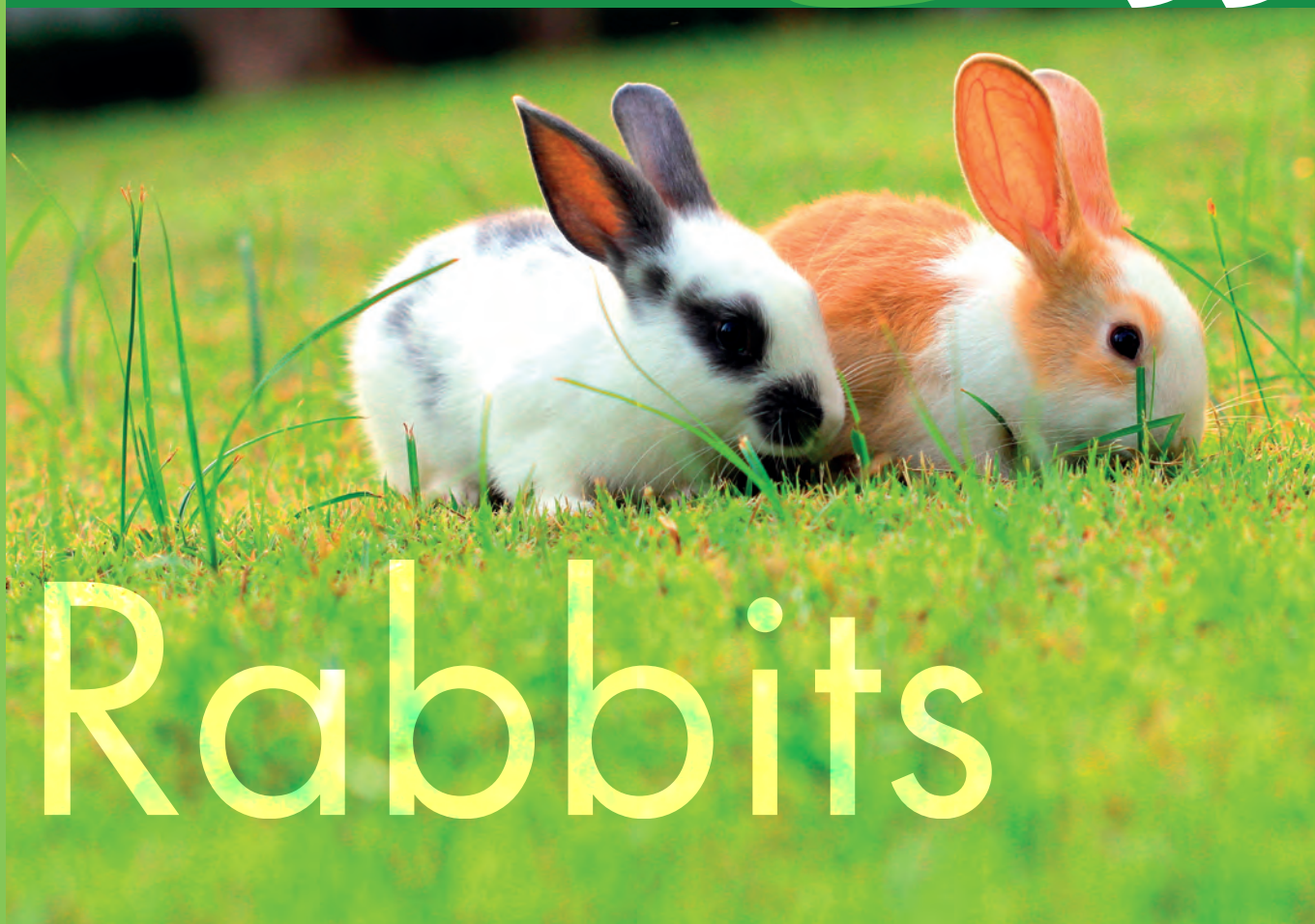


Healthcare	2011	2013	up/down
Currently registered with a vet	83%	85%	↑
Vaccinated (primary course)	72%	75%	↑
Microchipped	46%	52%	↑
Neutered	89%	93%	↑
Insured	31%	34%	↑
Treated for fleas	78%	85%	↑
Wormed	79%	80%	↑



The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated.

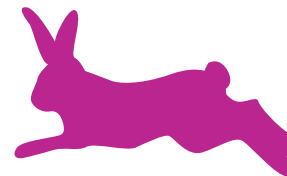
Mahatma Gandhi



Rabbits continue to score poorly in many areas of their wellbeing. A significant number still live alone with no company from other rabbits, which is really important as they are highly sociable and need the company of other rabbits. Encouragingly, levels of preventive care are increasing and there has been an improvement in rabbit diets with an increase in amounts of hay and grass being eaten alongside pellet food and a decrease in the feeding of muesli mix-type foods.



Environment



If rabbits are kept in a hutch it should be big enough to allow them to lie down and stretch out comfortably in all directions, tall enough for them to stand up on their back legs without their ears touching the top, and long enough to allow at least three hops from one end to the other. To get enough exercise, pet rabbits should have as much space as possible.

A large run on a grassy area will help ensure they get enough exercise and ideally, their run should be attached to the hutch so that the rabbits can exercise whenever they want to. A run should be tall enough to allow the rabbits to stretch up to full height and they should be able to run, rather than just hop.

The biggest concern when it comes to rabbit environment is the significant increase in the number of rabbits that have no opportunity for exercise, which is now at 18% – a jump of 14% since 2011.



“ Rabbits need a large secure run to get as much exercise as possible, ideally this should be attached to their hutch. ”



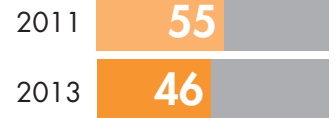
Diet



Vets recommend the following diet for rabbits

1. At least their own body size in good quality hay each day (it is best to allow constant access to clean, good quality hay that is not part of their bedding).
2. A handful of suitable fresh greens morning and evening.
3. Just a tablespoon of commercial rabbit nuggets once daily (or twice daily if the rabbit weighs more than 3.5kg).

Index score



Rabbit muesli (a mix of seeds and flakes) should not be fed as it is linked to painful dental disease.

Owners should aim to vary the greens they feed their rabbits. Fruit should only be fed occasionally and in small quantities because it is high in sugar. Sugary treats should also be avoided. Packet guidelines and body weight and shape should be taken into account, coupled with veterinary advice, when deciding what and how much to feed rabbits.

Happily, there has been a significant increase in the number of rabbits being fed rabbit pellet food and a decrease in the number being fed rabbit muesli as one of their main types of food.



There has also been a significant improvement in the amount of hay being eaten. In 2011 42% of rabbits ate less than their body size in hay or grass each day; this has just decreased to 26%.



	2011	2013	up/down
Rabbit pellet food	54%	68%	↑
Rabbit muesli mix	49%	34%	↓



Despite these improvements there has been a decrease in fresh greens given and an increase in inappropriate treats given. 41% of rabbit owners feel there is not enough information available to help owners understand their rabbits' dietary requirements.

Behaviour



As well as lots of space, rabbits need things to do so they don't get bored. Within their living space they should have opportunities to dig, run and play on a daily basis; this can be achieved by ensuring they have the company of another rabbit (see Rabbit Companionship section of Report) and by providing items and objects they can interact with, e.g. planters filled with potting compost, large diameter tubes and cardboard boxes. Rabbits should be handled regularly when young (especially during the first three to four weeks of age) so that they are used to being handled as adults. They are capable of learning and can, for example, be trained to understand commands and to use a litter tray.

Index score

2011	75
2013	89

There has been a significant decrease in the level of problem behaviours displayed by rabbits.



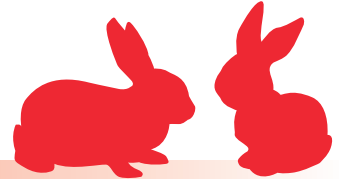
“ Rabbits should be handled regularly when young so that they are used to being handled as adults. ”



Significantly more rabbits (18% from 4% in 2011) have no opportunity for exercise on a daily basis.

Which of these do your rabbits do on a daily basis?	2011	2013	up/down
Exercise in a run	58%	40%	↓
Play/exercise in the garden (outside of the run)	44%	34%	↓
Dig in the garden	33%	23%	↓
Play with toys	42%	39%	↓

Companionship



Rabbits are highly social animals and need the company of other rabbits. The best combination is usually a neutered male with a neutered female. Rabbits should not be kept with guinea pigs because rabbits can bully and injure guinea pigs, and they both need company from their own species. Adequate care and provision should be provided for pet rabbits when the owner goes on holiday.

Index score

2011 **32**

2013 **26**

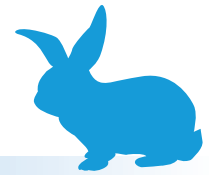
There is no improvement when it comes to companionship for rabbits; 65% continue to live alone (67% in 2011). As a highly social animal that needs the company of its own species, this is a significant failing. Rabbits, like other social animals, can suffer chronic loneliness and boredom when housed alone.



Rabbits are highly social animals and need the company of other rabbits.



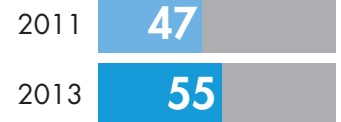
Health



All rabbits should be registered with a vet, vaccinated and neutered. It is advisable that they are regularly brushed to keep their coats healthy. It is also important that rabbits are checked daily for any signs of illness. In warmer weather they should also be checked under the tail at least daily for signs of maggots.

There has been a significant increase of 14% in the number of rabbits neutered and also those that have had initial vaccinations. Insurance levels remain low due to the expense and 'not getting my money's worth' and around a third are not registered with a vet with half of those believing it is not necessary as they can 'just turn up when I need to'.

Index score



62% of owners still check their rabbits' teeth at least monthly, which is encouraging due to the high occurrence of painful dental disease in UK rabbits.

7% of rabbit owners never check their rabbits for maggots on the skin; a significant improvement from the 12% reporting this in 2011.



“ Rabbits are checked daily for any signs of illness. ”

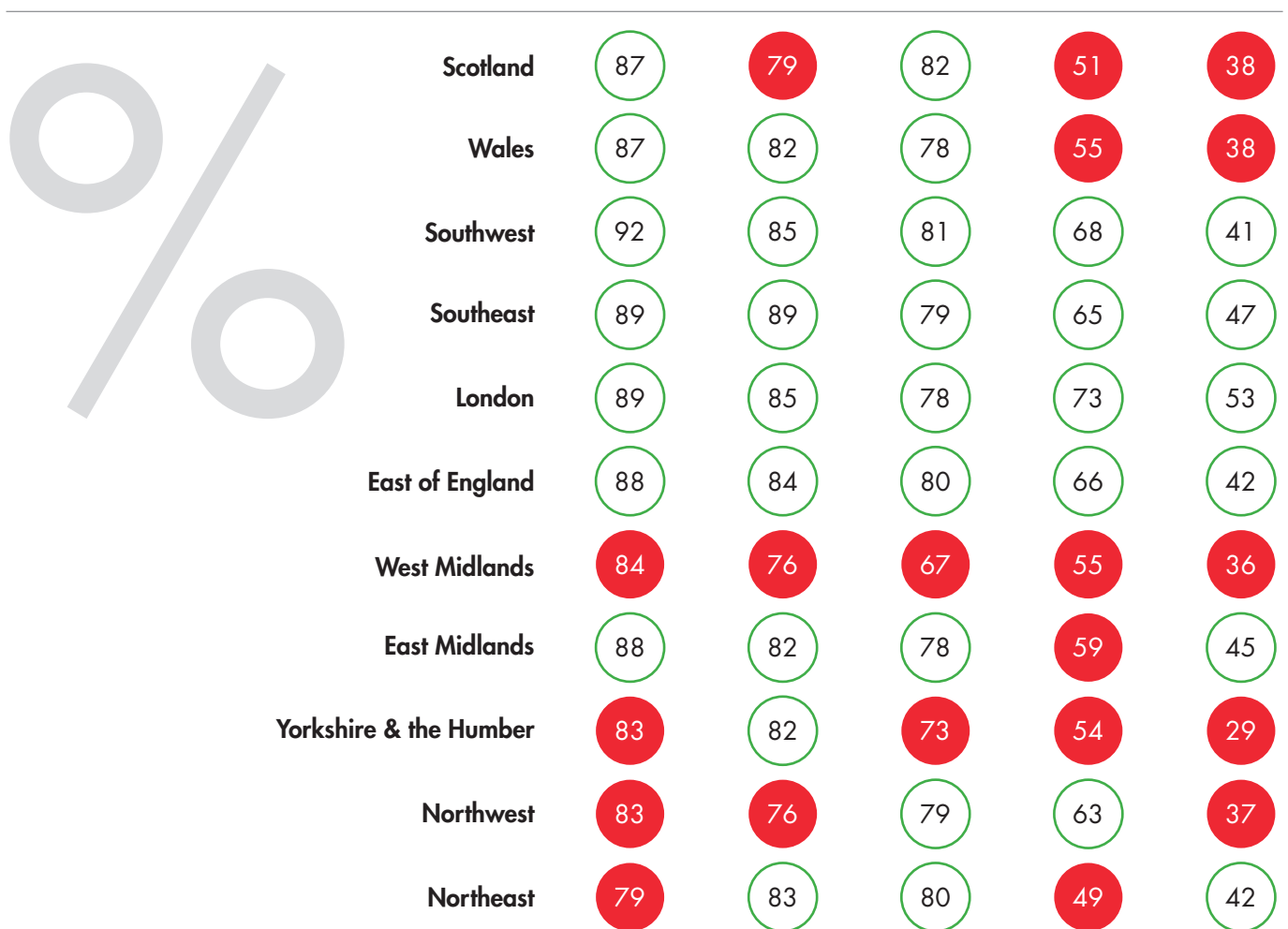
	2011	2013	up/down
Currently registered with a vet	56%	68%	↑
Vaccinated (primary course)	46%	58%	↑
Microchipped	3%	10%	↑
Neutered	37%	60%	↑
Insured	6%	8%	↑

Health treatments by region for dogs, cats and rabbits



Millions of pets each year die needlessly from preventable disease. Simple treatments such as vaccinations and neutering can help reduce the number of pets falling victim to illnesses and diseases that are entirely avoidable. The following index gives an insight into the uptake of health treatments by region.

The West Midlands, Yorkshire and the Humber, Scotland and the Northwest score the lowest.



Key:

National average

86

82

78

61

40

Proportion is the same or HIGHER than overall sample

Proportion is LOWER than overall sample

Currently registered with a vet

Neutered

Vaccinated primary course

Microchipped

Insured

Pet ownership in the UK

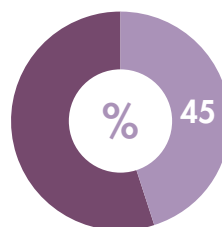


The Animal Welfare Act and the five welfare needs contained within it provide a simple framework to help owners understand their responsibilities.

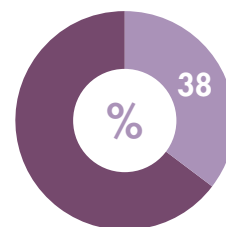


Sadly only 38% of owners are familiar with the Animal Welfare Act and the five welfare needs contained within it, a decrease from 45% in 2011.

% of owners familiar with the Animal Welfare Act



2011



2013



Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.

Nelson Mandela



Pet ownership in the UK



Pet care advice

79% of pet owners think all five welfare needs are equally important, but while 66% of veterinary professionals think owners should take a test before getting a pet, only 45% of pet owners agree with this.

From where do pet owners get advice on pet care?

Vet or veterinary professional	76%
Internet	50%
Friends and family	23%
Book	17%
Animal charity	14%
Rescue/Rehoming centre	13%
Pet shop	12%
Social media or online forums	11%
Breeder	6%
I am not likely to take pet care advice	4%
Groomer	4%
Other	3%

Veterinary professionals are the most common source of advice. Overall 14% of owners would seek pet care advice from an animal charity, rising to 24% in London and 19% in the Southwest.



Pre-purchase advice

Over a quarter (26%) of owners do no research at all before taking on a pet, an increase from 24% in 2011.

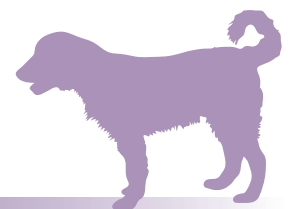
Cat owners do the least research with 33% doing nothing and rabbit owners the most with only 11% doing no research.

Nearly half (44%) of over 55-year-olds rely on past experience to help them with choosing the right pet and the group that are most likely to use the internet for advice are 25–34-year-olds with over a quarter of them (27%) looking there.

Only 5% of owners go to their vet for pre-purchase advice.






78% of pet owners would not consider getting a pet from the internet before visiting the pet. Worryingly, 26% would consider getting a dog from a puppy farm.





Cost of pet ownership

In 2012 the *PAW Report* highlighted the lack of awareness of the cost of pet ownership; the number one concern of vets and vet nurses relating to pet care in general. This is still the top concern but 88% of pet owners feel the current economic climate has not changed the way that they care for their pets. **However, 6% have reduced the amount they spend on preventive healthcare, potentially affecting nearly 1 million pets.**

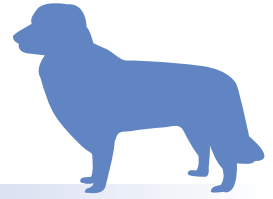
Actual likely lifetime cost	Owner-estimated lifetime cost		
	2011	2013	
 <p>£16–31k</p> <p>Size of dog affects cost</p>	£1k	10%	21%
	£1k–5k	59%	47%
	£5k–10k	23%	21%
	£10k+	8%	10%
 <p>£17k</p>	£1k	32%	34%
	£1k–5k	51%	47%
	£5k–10k	13%	15%
	£10k+	3%	4%
 <p>£9k</p>	£1k	81%	86%
	£1k–5k	18%	14%
	£5k–10k	1%	0%
	£10k+	0%	0%

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



63% of owners feel preventive healthcare could extend their pet's life.

The voice of the veterinary profession



This year 459 vets and vet nurses were surveyed.

38% work in small animal private practice, 28% in charity practice, and 12% in mixed practice with the remaining in academia and industry.



The top three concerns of the profession relating to pet care and ownership in general remain the same:

Lack of understanding of cost of pet ownership	51%
Awareness of the 5 welfare needs	33%
Lack of pre-purchase education	33%

And which issue will have the biggest impact in ten years if not resolved?

2011

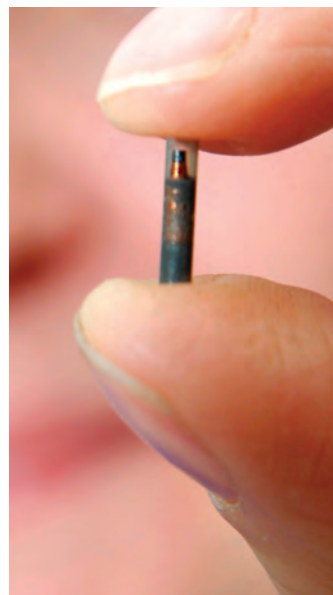
Health issues relating to unsuitable breeding

2012

Understanding the cost of owning a pet

2013

- = Health issues relating to unsuitable breeding
- = Owner awareness of five welfare needs



Compulsory microchipping

The strength of agreement towards compulsory microchipping among pet owners has increased considerably to just over four in five in favour.

Furthermore 95% of veterinary professionals surveyed support the change in law to make microchipping in dogs compulsory (1% oppose it and 4% neither support nor oppose).

Topical issues



Every year we ask the veterinary profession and pet owners their views on a number of topical issues.	Vets and vet nurses			Pet owners		
	2011	2013	up/down	2011	2013	up/down
Pet insurance should be compulsory for all owners.	55%	64%	↑	36%	38%	↑
It is acceptable to leave a child unattended with a dog.	20%	18%	↓	20%	17%	↓
I have been frightened or concerned by a dog's behaviour.	92%	91%	↓	67%	63%	↓
Children's play areas should be dog-free zones.	77%	78%	↑	82%	80%	↓
The UK is a nation of animal lovers.	83%	84%	↑	87%	88%	↑
Owners must take full responsibility for their dog's behaviour.	99%	98%	↓	95%	93%	↓
Microchipping should be made compulsory for all dogs.	96%	95%	↓	79%	83%	↑
Dog licences should be reintroduced.	78%	80%	↑	67%	67%	↔
Anyone breeding puppies should be licensed and regulated to meet certain standards.	97%	97%	↔	93%	91%	↓
HM Government should take the issue of dangerous dogs more seriously.	86%	82%	↓	81%	81%	↔
Owners should face tougher penalties if their dog attacks another person or animal.	85%	87%	↑	87%	85%	↓
Prospective owners should pass a test before taking on a pet.	65%	66%	↑	47%	45%	↓
Online sales of pets should be regulated.	-	92%		-	85%	

Children have their say



For this year's *PAW Report* we have surveyed 555 young people (aged 10–16) to see if attitudes and awareness of pet wellbeing are changing. Unfortunately there has been no change at all to most of the figures.

One positive increase is that 70% of children think people should take a test before taking on a pet; an increase from 65% last year.



Other findings from young people

- 77% of children think people in the UK love animals.
- 68% of children have been scared or frightened by the way a dog has behaved (an increase from 65% in 2012).
- Only 26% of children have been taught at school about caring for pets yet 79% think they should learn how to care for pets at school.
- 53% of children believe animals are protected by the law.



Only 7% of children have heard about the five animal welfare needs.

90% of vets and vet nurses and 65% of pet owners believe that the five welfare needs should be part of the National Primary Curriculum.

Making a better life for pets ...

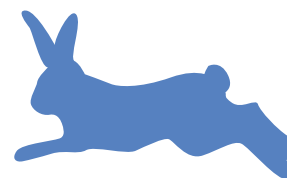
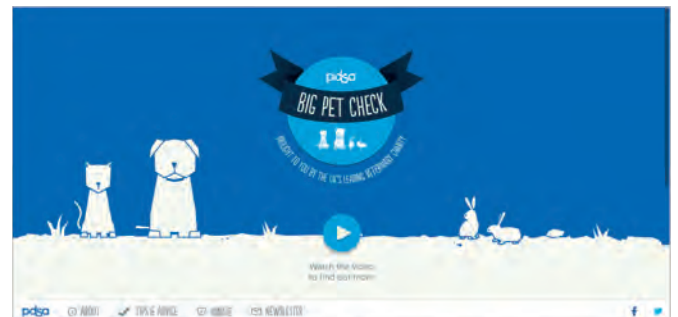


The results of the 2013 *PAW Report* highlight just how much work there is still to do to safeguard the health and happiness of the UK's pets.



PDSA is committed to making a difference to pets' lives ...

- Through our network of 51 PetAid hospitals we are able to reach out to over 400,000 pets every year to safeguard their health and happiness.
- Through our community and education work where we engage with more than 5,000 pet owners and 45,000 children annually to provide advice and guidance on all aspects of pet wellbeing.
- Through ongoing collaborative work with other animal welfare organisations and the media to drive forward positive behaviour change.
- Through our highly successful PR campaigns, which feature in national and regional media to raise awareness about all aspects of pet wellbeing.
- Through digital engagement via social media networks and our digital engagement tools such as Your Right Pet www.yourrightpet.co.uk and the PDSA Big Pet Check www.abetterlifeformpets.org.uk



PDSA's PetCheck vehicles, kindly donated by generous benefactors Julie and Robert Breckman.



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

pdsa

for pets in need of vets

www.pdsa.org.uk

Registered charity nos.
208217 & SC037585

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What the world thinks

The state of our pet nation



References

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

DEFRA – Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Code of Practice for the Welfare of Cats

Code of Practice for the Welfare of Dogs

www.defra.gov.uk

WAG – Welsh Assembly Government

Code of Practice for the Welfare of Cats

Code of Practice for the Welfare of Dogs

Code of Practice for the Welfare of Rabbits

www.wales.gov.uk

DARDNI – Department of Agriculture and Rural Development Northern Ireland

Code of Practice for the Welfare of Cats

Code of Practice for the Welfare of Dogs

Code of Practice for the Welfare of Rabbits

www.dardni.gov.uk

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