



## INTRODUCTION GENERIC INDICATORS

The animal welfare indicators in the generic chapter differ from the farm animal, pet animal, research animal and wildlife chapters because they don't focus on the number of animals involved, how animal welfare is/can be compromised or direct animal suffering. Instead, the issues that make up this chapter look at a range of indirect impacts on the welfare of animals. These include how often animal welfare is taught in schools, future government policy, the work of local authorities and also the views of the general public.

In 2008, as with previous years, an array of animal welfare stories was reported in the media. These reports were a mixture of news that highlighted positive developments for animals and those that provoked concern and disappointment. News headlines and media stories can provide an overview of what is happening in the UK and demonstrates the interest of the public with animal-related news. The following list is a short selection of animal welfare issues that received some level of media attention in 2008.

- In January, Channel Four aired a number of programmes featuring chefs Jamie Oliver and Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall that looked at how meat chickens are reared<sup>1</sup>. In 2008, the number of chickens reared to higher welfare standards increased by 40 million compared to the previous year.
- The Welsh Assembly Government proposed that electric-shock dog collars would be banned<sup>2</sup>.
- The Scottish Government announced that animal snares would not be banned, despite a high-profile campaign by a number of animal welfare organisations<sup>3</sup>.
- Scientific evidence was published which further strengthened the case against keeping elephants in zoos<sup>4</sup>.
- A cull of badgers was announced, in principle, by the Welsh Assembly Government to tackle bovine TB in cattle<sup>4</sup>. In the UK, the government committed funds to develop cattle and badger vaccines<sup>5</sup>.
- The revision of European Directive 86/609, which regulates laboratory animal care and use across the European Union, continued<sup>6</sup>.
- Flooding in parts of Staffordshire saw RSPCA's field staff work alongside the emergency services in rescuing animals and their owners<sup>7</sup>.
- The first dog fighting related prosecution was brought under the Animal Welfare Act 2006. A man was sentenced to 18 weeks in prison after pleading guilty to four charges<sup>8</sup>.
- A 17-point action plan was agreed by the Dairy Calf Welfare Forum, which was established by the RSPCA and Compassion in World Farming<sup>9</sup>. The plan will work towards reducing the number of male calves either killed shortly after birth or exported to veal farms in Europe. Currently about 482,000 surplus calves are produced each year.

### FOOTNOTES AND REFERENCES

- 1 [www.channel4.com/food/on-tv/river-cottage/hughs-chicken-run](http://www.channel4.com/food/on-tv/river-cottage/hughs-chicken-run)
- 2 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/scotland/7252665.stm>
- 3 Harris M, Shenwin C and Harris S. 2008. The Welfare, Housing and Husbandry of Elephants in UK Zoos. Final report. 10 November 2008. Available online: <http://randd.defra.gov.uk>
- 4 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/wales/7335855.stm>
- 5 [www.defra.gov.uk/news/2008/080707b.htm](http://www.defra.gov.uk/news/2008/080707b.htm)
- 6 [http://ec.europa.eu/environment/chemicals/lab\\_animals/proposal\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/chemicals/lab_animals/proposal_en.htm)
- 7 [www.thisisichfield.co.uk/news/sheep-rescued-flood-horror/article-319904-detail/article.html](http://www.thisisichfield.co.uk/news/sheep-rescued-flood-horror/article-319904-detail/article.html)
- 8 [www.birminghammail.net/news/black-country/2008/04/16/walsall-man-clayton-beard-jailed-for-18-weeks-for-new-dog-fighting-offences-97319-20770225](http://www.birminghammail.net/news/black-country/2008/04/16/walsall-man-clayton-beard-jailed-for-18-weeks-for-new-dog-fighting-offences-97319-20770225)
- 9 [www.calfforum.org.uk](http://www.calfforum.org.uk)

## **WELFARE INDICATOR:** The proportion of FTSE 100 companies with animal welfare improvements in their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)<sup>1 2</sup> policies

### RSPCA concern

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)<sup>2</sup> is the consideration of many aspects of a company's performance and risks associated with issues such as employment, the environment, human rights, communities and business relationships. It is a way in which organisations can take more responsibility for how they impact on a variety of issues, is a measure of good business over and above compliance with minimum legal requirements, and goes beyond the more typical philanthropy of donating money to good causes.

Currently, animal welfare is not seen as or considered an integral part of CSR, yet many organisations, including those from the public, private and third sectors have some impact on and involvement with animals and their welfare. The links to animal welfare could be obvious such as using animals in medical research or in the production of food. They could also be subtler, such as company food procurement policies or the destruction of animal habitats due to mining or construction, or the effect on animals by pollution of water, land or air.

The RSPCA believes that animal welfare should be a consideration when organisations, across all sectors, are developing and implementing policies and encourages the acknowledgement that animal welfare has a crossover with the more conventional aspects of CSR.

### Background

CSR is an important part of business with an ever-growing number of companies implementing policies, producing reports and even devoting whole departments to ensure the company has effective and worthy CSR policies.

The UK government has: "An ambitious vision for Corporate Social Responsibility"<sup>3</sup> and would like: "to see UK businesses taking account of their economic, social and environmental impacts, and acting to address the key sustainable development challenges based on their core competencies wherever they operate – locally, regionally and internationally". However, it is not just the UK government that is encouraging the ethos of CSR. The European Commission launched the European Alliance on CSR described as: "An umbrella network for discussion and debate on new and existing CSR initiatives by large companies, SMEs (small and medium-sized enterprises) and their stakeholders<sup>4</sup>." More recently, efforts have been made to encourage the voluntary sector to consider issues such as the environment and community and for them to become more accountable. The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs has funded 'Every Action Counts', a major initiative on social and environmental responsibility by community and voluntary groups<sup>5</sup>.

Business in the Community (BITC)<sup>6</sup> and FTSE4Good<sup>7</sup> both index and benchmark businesses on various aspects of CSR. The BITC is a business-led charity that is encouraging companies to have a more positive impact on society. BITC has developed the Corporate Responsibility Index, which is used as a benchmarking tool and covers four impact areas – community, environment, workplace and marketplace. The FTSE4Good Index Series measures the performance of FTSE companies that meet globally recognised corporate responsibility standards. The selection criteria focus on three areas – environment sustainability, stakeholder relations and human rights. Neither BITC nor FTSE4Good make any provision for animal welfare nor use it as the basis of indices for benchmarking even though many of the companies that are listed will have some link to the welfare of animals.

This animal welfare indicator has been developed to identify which of the largest UK-registered companies that form the FTSE 100<sup>8</sup> have a policy on animal welfare, and which are taking steps to improve, protect and promote animal welfare. Some of the FTSE companies, for example pharmaceutical, food and retail, initially seem more predisposed to having either a policy or an acknowledgement that one is required, however all the companies could and possibly do have an impact on the welfare of animals. The RSPCA accepts that, for many reasons, animal welfare is perhaps not an obvious consideration when organisations are developing CSR policy and



**THERE IS LITTLE CHANGE FROM THE PREVIOUS YEAR.**

strategy, for example animal welfare is unlikely to be at the core of the business model. However the Society believes the incorporation of animal welfare into policy can not only benefit animals but also complement the social, economic and environmental aspects of CSR and, of course, add value to business and their bottom line. As this report itself highlights, measuring animal welfare objectively and successfully is challenging, however it should not be a barrier for organisations incorporating animal welfare into their policy.

The RSPCA believes that animal welfare as a concept of CSR potentially fits in with environmental, economic and social impacts and has crossover with all three (using the triple bottom line model). Animal welfare fits across all the CSR areas and could be considered alongside the better established areas of CSR. It is, of course, vital that if animal welfare is to be viewed as a serious, measurable part of a company's CSR strategy, then there must be some benefit for the business, beyond good public relations.

Marks & Spencer and the National Trust are two very different organisations that have incorporated animal welfare into their business strategies. 'Plan A' from Marks & Spencer<sup>9</sup> looks at a number of issues, including animal welfare. The National Trust<sup>10</sup> launched its food policy in 2006 by stating that it wants to play a role in "connecting producers to consumers in the food chain". One part of this is by aiming to "procure food produced to high animal welfare standards". This had led the Trust to ensure that the 500,000 plus eggs it uses each year in its restaurants and tearooms are free-range, and it has received awards for such efforts<sup>11</sup>. Both organisations have recognised not only the importance of CSR but also acknowledged the role of animal welfare within their business.

### The indicator figures

All 100 FTSE companies were contacted and a copy of their CSR, sustainability or equivalent reports was requested along with any details of policy related to animal welfare. Of those that didn't respond, reports, policies and information were obtained via websites. The majority of the companies have some form of CSR or sustainability policy and produce documentation about this area of their work – either in a report, annual review or via dedicated web pages. Companies may have statements or policy concerning animal welfare but are separate from their overarching, formal CSR policy. For example, a company might stipulate that it has an anti-fur policy or makes every effort to promote and implement the 3Rs<sup>12</sup>, but has not formally incorporated them into their CSR work per se. Or in some cases, policies and good practice are not written down or acknowledged as CSR. The indicator takes account of this and has not disregarded references to animal welfare just because it doesn't form part of the organisation's CSR policy. The policies are of varying levels and differ greatly with regard to depth, content and reporting. Initially, the literature and websites were used to identify whether the companies had a policy or made any reference to animal welfare or protection.

At the time of collating information about the FTSE 100<sup>8</sup> companies, 18 have some form of policy that concerns animal welfare which is one less than the previous year (19), but two more than in 2006 (16). As seen in other years, companies specifically focus on two key aspects of animal welfare – animal experiments and farm animals. Of these 18 companies, 11 aim to improve animal welfare, which is the same as last year.

**Table 1: Number of FTSE 100 companies that had an animal welfare component, March 2009**

Category/type of company	Animal welfare reference	Aim to improve animal welfare
Energy/mining	1	1
Food and drink	1	0
Healthcare	1	1
Pharmaceutical	6	3
Retail	6	6
Tobacco	1	0
Travel	2	0

Data source: FTSE 100.

Table 1 identifies which category of company already has an animal welfare policy or statement, and which of these companies state an aim to improve animal welfare. The three pharmaceutical companies within the FTSE 100 that have a policy on animal testing and research, state an aim to minimise animal use and ensure the humane treatment of those animals used. All of the food retail companies had a policy or statement referring to farm animals and other aspects of animal welfare. Of the remaining 82 FTSE 100 companies, some made a reference to animals, conservation and biodiversity, however there was nothing concrete in their policies to indicate any real commitment to acknowledging animal welfare and their responsibility to it as a business. While it is encouraging that nearly 20 per cent of FTSE 100 companies mention animal welfare, it is equally disappointing that, as seen for the last two years, the number that plan to make improvements has remained at 11.

There is still little sign of animal welfare being put forward as an important CSR issue by either the government or the business world. However, it is hoped that over time companies will begin to measure animal welfare and view it as an important issue within environmental, social and economic impacts.

**FOOTNOTES AND REFERENCES**

- 1 CSR comes under many guises and is also referred to as corporate responsibility, sustainability, corporate citizenship, and environment and social responsibility.
- 2 There is no universal definition of CSR, for the purpose of this report the UK government definition will be used. CSR is: "...the business contribution to our sustainable goals. Essentially it is about how business take account of its economic, social and environmental impacts in the way it operates – maximising the benefits and minimising the downsides... specifically we see CSR as the voluntary actions that business can take, over and above compliance with minimum legal requirements..."
- 3 Department of Trade and Industry. Corporate Social Responsibility – a government update. 2004. [www.csr.gov.uk](http://www.csr.gov.uk)
- 4 [www.ec.europa.eu/enterprise/csr/policy.htm](http://www.ec.europa.eu/enterprise/csr/policy.htm)
- 5 [www.everyactioncounts.org.uk](http://www.everyactioncounts.org.uk)
- 6 Business in the Community. [www.bitc.org.uk](http://www.bitc.org.uk)
- 7 FTSE4Good. [www.ftse.com](http://www.ftse.com)
- 8 FTSE 100 companies identified as of March 2009.
- 9 Marks & Spencer. [www.marksandspencer.com/gp/node/n/56223031/026-4943074-5263648?ie=UTF8&mnSBrand=core](http://www.marksandspencer.com/gp/node/n/56223031/026-4943074-5263648?ie=UTF8&mnSBrand=core)
- 10 [www.nationaltrust.org.uk/main/w-food\\_policy.pdf](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/main/w-food_policy.pdf)
- 11 [www.nationaltrust.org.uk/main/w-global/w-news/w-news-further\\_news/w-news-good\\_egg.htm](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/main/w-global/w-news/w-news-further_news/w-news-good_egg.htm)
- 12 The 3Rs are the Replacement of animals with humane alternatives; a Reduction in numbers used; and Refinement of procedures and husbandry to reduce suffering and improve animal welfare.

## **WELFARE INDICATOR:** The number of relevant government advisory non-departmental public bodies (NDPBs) on which an animal welfare specialist is represented

### RSPCA concern

Government departments have a number of advisory NDPBs which are established by ministers, or by officials working on behalf of ministers, to: "provide independent expert advice to ministers on a wide range of issues"<sup>1</sup>.

Those appointed to the advisory NDPBs are independent of government and are drawn from outside the public sector. With regard to animal welfare, a number of advisory NDPBs exist to provide independent and expert advice on particular topics of interest, such as the Farm Animal Welfare Council (FAWC) and the Animal Procedures Committee (APC). Both have obvious links to animal welfare and it is expected that a specialist in this field would be a member of the public body. There are a number of other advisory NDPBs that are not overtly linked to animals but are likely to have an impact on animal welfare. It is hoped that an animal welfare representative would be appointed to be a member of such an NDPB.

The RSPCA believes that when issues affecting animals are being discussed by advisory NDPBs, with a view to developing policy and ultimately legislation that impacts on animals' well-being, it is essential that independent animal welfare specialists are involved in such discussions and are represented on the relevant advisory NDPBs.

### Background

An NDPB is defined as: "a body which has a role in the processes of national government, but is not a government department or part of one, and which accordingly operates to a greater or lesser extent at arm's length from ministers"<sup>1</sup>. There are four types of NDPB, however it is the advisory NDPBs that can have a real impact on the welfare of animals and hence the focus of this indicator.

In 2008, there were 440 advisory NDPBs in the UK that have been sponsored by UK government departments<sup>1</sup>. Both the Scottish Government<sup>2</sup> and the Northern Ireland Executive<sup>3</sup> are responsible for a number of advisory NDPBs as demonstrated in Table 2. In Wales, Assembly Government Sponsored Bodies (AGSB)<sup>4</sup> are similar to NDPBs and funded by the Welsh Assembly Government. The number of advisory NDPBs that have links to animal health and/or welfare are also identified.

The indicator has been constructed to identify who sits on which advisory NDPB in the UK. This will help to give an insight into whether animal welfare decisions and policy are developed with the assistance of necessary specialists. For the purpose of this indicator an animal welfare specialist is 'a person with the primary purpose of representing animal welfare', including both physical and behavioural aspects. It would seem to be beneficial, if not expected, that an animal welfare specialist be appointed in a personal capacity (rather than representing an organisation) to sit on an advisory NDPB to contribute expert advice and input into the policy-making process about the welfare of animals.

Certain government departments, such as the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), are likely to have more NDPBs that concern the welfare of animals and therefore have more specialists in animal welfare. However, it is also expected that other government departments, such as the Home Office, will have animal welfare specialists sitting on NDPBs that may either directly or indirectly impact on animals.



**THERE IS A SLIGHT CHANGE FROM THE PREVIOUS YEAR.**

**Table 2: The number of advisory NDPBs/AGSBs that have an animal welfare specialist represented, 2007–2008**

Country	Number of advisory NDPBs/AGSBs		Animal welfare link		Animal welfare specialist represented	
	2007	2008	2007	2008	2007	2008
UK Government	441	410	15	14	5	7
Northern Ireland Executive	16	13	0	0	N/A	N/A
Scottish Government	14	13	1	1	0	0
Welsh Assembly Government	14	14	0	0	N/A	N/A

### The indicator figures

This is the second year that the indicator has focused on the UK government and those bodies created by the devolved institutions in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. For 2007 and 2008, information and figures concerning the three devolved institutions have been included along with the national UK government. Parliamentary questions were tabled in the past to identify the animal welfare linked advisory NDPBs. They were targeted at just four government departments and didn't consider the sub-national governments of the UK. For the past two years, to find out about advisory NDPBs in 2008, reports and websites produced by the respective governments have been utilised.

Previously, the Secretary of State for each department – Department for International Development (DFID), the Home Office, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform – was asked: "...which of his department's advisory non-departmental public bodies are directly or indirectly connected with animal health and welfare; whether an animal welfare specialist is represented on each...".

In the response to the parliamentary question in 2006, Defra confirmed that it is: "...the department with the lead responsibility for animal health and welfare. Partnership working with animal owners, the farming industry and others is the heart of the approach set out in the government's Animal Health and Welfare Strategy"<sup>5</sup>. This demonstrates that the UK government very much sees animal welfare sitting in the folds of one department. While Defra is the only department that has the welfare and health of animals as part of its remit, other departments have an indirect or direct impact on animal welfare as demonstrated by looking at the advisory NDPBs.

All four departments responded to the parliamentary question, however to gain a more holistic overview of the UK, research was carried out via the appropriate websites and other publications, and all departments were considered.

**THERE ARE FOUR TYPES OF NDPB, HOWEVER IT IS THE ADVISORY NDPBS THAT CAN HAVE A REAL IMPACT ON THE WELFARE OF ANIMALS.**

In 2008, 14 advisory NDPBs that had an animal welfare or/and health link were identified across four UK government departments and one from the Scottish Executive (Table 2). Unsurprisingly, Defra had the most (11) animal health and welfare related advisory NDPBs. The following five had at least one member who is an animal welfare specialist:

- Animal Health and Welfare Strategy England Implementation Group (EIG)<sup>6</sup>
- Farm Animal Welfare Council (FAWC)
- Spongiform Encephalopathy Advisory Committee (SEAC)
- Veterinary Residues Committee (VRC)
- Zoos Forum.

Two other government departments, the Home Office and the Food Standards Agency also have an animal welfare specialist on the Animal Procedures Committee (APC) and the Advisory Committee on Animal Foodstuffs. The other two NDPBs that were likely to

have an animal welfare specialist as a member were identified in Scotland and at the Ministry of Defence, however there was insufficient data available to determine who was a member of each of the respective bodies. In particular, it is hoped that the Ministry of Defence's Animal Welfare Advisory Committee (AWAC) has at least one of its four members as an animal welfare specialist, as the purpose of the committee is '...to review the care and welfare arrangements of animals used for defence research purposes in the UK'<sup>7</sup>.

It is encouraging that five Defra advisory NDPBs have at least one member that represents the welfare of animals – this is an increase of one compared to the previous year. It is positive that half of the relevant advisory NDPBs have an animal welfare specialist as a member – this is two more than in 2007. It is hoped that next year and in subsequent years, more government departments encourage the membership of recognised animal welfare specialists on their advisory NDPBs.

**IT IS ENCOURAGING THAT FIVE DEFRA ADVISORY NDPBS HAVE AT LEAST ONE MEMBER THAT REPRESENTS THE WELFARE OF ANIMALS.**

**FOOTNOTES AND REFERENCES**

- 1 Public bodies (2008). Cabinet Office. [www.civilservice.gov.uk/Assets/PublicBodies2008\\_tcm6-6429.pdf](http://www.civilservice.gov.uk/Assets/PublicBodies2008_tcm6-6429.pdf)
- 2 [www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Government/public-bodies/advisory-ndpbs](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Government/public-bodies/advisory-ndpbs)
- 3 [www.dfpni.gov.uk/public\\_bodies\\_2008-4.doc?bcsi\\_scan\\_3AE3F9E5D26CB146=1](http://www.dfpni.gov.uk/public_bodies_2008-4.doc?bcsi_scan_3AE3F9E5D26CB146=1)
- 4 [www.assemblywales.org/04-019.pdf](http://www.assemblywales.org/04-019.pdf)
- 5 HC Deb 9 May 2006 c.127W.
- 6 The Animal Health & Welfare Strategy England Implementation Group was dissolved in September 2009.
- 7 [www.mod.uk/DefenceInternet/AboutDefence/WhatWeDo/ScienceandTechnology/AWAC](http://www.mod.uk/DefenceInternet/AboutDefence/WhatWeDo/ScienceandTechnology/AWAC)

## WELFARE INDICATOR: The proportion of people interested in improving animal welfare

### RSPCA concern

The UK is often referred to as a 'nation of animal lovers'. It is viewed by some as a world leader in the treatment, care and respect of its animals, putting it way ahead of other countries. However, there is still much to be done to educate, create awareness and ultimately improve the lives of animals in the UK. For such improvements to be made to the welfare of animals, whether they are farmed for food, pets at home or animals used in research and testing, then awareness, understanding and support from the general public is vital. Members of the general public are very important, if not key, to animal welfare evolving and improving.

If laws, behaviour, purchasing choices, and attitudes are to be changed positively and therefore improved, the RSPCA believes that animal welfare must be a concept everyone in the UK and abroad understands and is engaged and familiar with.

### Background

The UK has legislation relating to all categories of animals; those farmed for food, those kept as domestic pets, animals used in research and testing, and wildlife living free or in captivity. As well as laws, there are many animal protection/welfare organisations and individuals that work for and on behalf of animals in many different capacities including campaigning, lobbying, hands-on work, fundraising and donating money. The fact that organisations such as the RSPCA and hundreds of other animal organisations exist throughout the world shows that there is an ongoing need for improvements to be made. Most of these organisations are primarily supported by the public and rely heavily on financial contributions from individuals who believe in their aims and objectives.

The role of the public in improving the welfare of animals can take many forms. At the highest level, contacting MPs (or Welsh Assembly Members and Scottish MPs) about a particular animal welfare concern, or responding to government consultations on an animal issue, can have a direct influence on animal welfare laws. Consumer purchasing power can help influence supermarkets, farmers, restaurants etc, change the way food is produced, and what products are sold. From the public's actions, such as lobbying MPs, buying higher welfare food products and outcry at certain horrific instances of cruelty, it could be assumed that there are many people wanting to improve animal welfare in the UK. In measurement terms, however, this is an unscientific presumption and although assessing the public's attitudes to animal welfare is important when attempting to define how the UK is performing with regard to its animals, it must be acknowledged that it is probably one of the hardest to gauge accurately.

The RSPCA and other organisations measure public and social attitudes by commissioning opinion polls to find out how the general public view different aspects of animal welfare and whether they want improvements to be made. Polls are also a useful way of measuring change in behaviour and/or opinion. Polling is a well-established and commonly used tool for measuring the social attitudes and opinions of the general public on all sorts of issues. It is recognised that such polls are subjective, and whilst every attempt can be made to formulate questions in an unbiased and objective manner there is no way of preventing the public from giving an answer they believe the questioner would like to hear, misinterpreting the question or quite simply lying. Polling questions tend not to delve into why certain responses are given or explain the reasoning behind the answers, and assumptions can only be made as to why someone has such a viewpoint. Even with these limitations, opinion polls are



**THERE IS AN INCREASE IN THE PROPORTION OF PEOPLE INTERESTED IN IMPROVING ANIMAL WELFARE.**

still an extremely useful way to find out the attitudes and opinions of the general public. And with regard to animal welfare, they can be used as an important measuring tool to identify where changes and improvements need to be made, where they have been made, and where further public education work needs to take place.

### The indicator figures

The following questions are extracted from different RSPCA commissioned omnibus surveys<sup>1</sup>. They provide a window into the views and thoughts of the public, their attitude to animal welfare and interest in improving it. All questions have been interpreted by the RSPCA.

#### **To what extent do you agree or disagree that: “In order for society to be truly civilised, animal welfare must be a key priority”?**<sup>2 3 4 5</sup>

The question was developed to find out if the general public thought animal welfare was an important factor when considering the society they live in. The question has been asked annually since 2006 and the results have changed significantly since then. In 2006, just over half (53 per cent) of the people questioned were in agreement with the statement, with about one-quarter (24 per cent) disagreeing. In 2007 nearly three-quarters (72 per cent) of those questioned agreed with the statement with just nine per cent disagreeing. The survey commissioned in 2008 demonstrated that 80 per cent of people agreed that animal welfare should be a key priority with just seven per cent disagreeing with the statement. The latest poll revealed that 74 per cent of those questioned agreed with the statement and although this shows a slight drop from the previous year, it is still a large increase since the initial survey was commissioned.

It is extremely positive that the majority of people view animal welfare as an important societal issue. The slight fall in positive responses could be related to the current economic crisis, with people being more concerned with their own financial and personal situations rather than other wider issues. The question does have its flaws. It is difficult to assess why, since the question was first asked, such an overall positive change has taken place, or to pinpoint what has happened to encourage the general public to believe that animal welfare is such an important issue. It is hoped that the introduction of the Animal Welfare Act 2006 in England and Wales and the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006, along with public figures like Jamie Oliver and Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall highlighting issues such as chickens bred for their meat, has increased the understanding and awareness of animals and the laws relating to their welfare.

**“Some people say that in addition to factors such as price and quality, there are ethical factors involved when buying different items. On this card is a list of factors which come under this ethical heading. Please tell me which two or three, if any, you personally think are the most important.”**<sup>2 3 4 5</sup>

The Co-operative Bank’s latest edition of its Ethical Consumerism Report<sup>6</sup> identified that the amount of household expenditure on ethical goods and services had increased by 15 per cent between 2006 and 2007. It reports that the overall ethical market in the UK is worth £35.5 billion a year and the spending on items like free-range eggs and poultry had increased by 21 and 12 per cent respectively. Notably it found that spending on Freedom Food had more than doubled (56 per cent) over a 12-month period.

With the results of the Ethical Consumerism Report in mind, the RSPCA has for the fourth year commissioned a question to ascertain how the public rate animal welfare when comparing to the purchasing of other ethical goods.

The following statements were provided:

- items are produced in an environmentally-friendly manner
- items are produced without violation of human rights
- items are produced in a way that minimises unnecessary suffering to animals
- items are produced with fair trade issues in mind.

For the third year running, the question saw a rise in positive responses concerning the welfare of animals. Although there is just a small change between 2008 and 2009, from 57 to 59 respectively, there has been a significant increase between 2007 and 2009. In 2007, 48 per cent of people believed that animal welfare was important, with this increasing by 11 per cent in 2009. Although all the statements were considered important, the survey reveals that items produced in a way that minimises unnecessary suffering to animals are the most important consideration when ethically shopping. It would be unfair to say the survey demonstrates the public believe animal welfare is more important than the environment or human rights, but it would be fair to say that animal welfare is considered as important as the other ethical factors highlighted and that its importance when shopping reflects the overall growth in the sale of ethical goods.

### “Did you learn about animal welfare at school?”<sup>23</sup>

The question was drafted to find out if there was any correlation between learning about animal welfare and whether or not it is something the public believes should be taught at school. Although, animal welfare does not form part of the statutory elements of the national curriculum it is included in a number of science and citizenship schemes. The RSPCA distributes a questionnaire each year to 6,400 schools throughout the UK (page 17) which demonstrates that within these schemes there are explicit references to the role of animals within our lives, and our responsibility to treat them and/or the environments within which they live with respect.

The results for the opinion poll have remained consistent over the past three years, with a slight increase in the percentage of people having learnt about animal welfare at school in 2009. In 2007 and 2008, 21 and 22 per cent respectively of those questioned answered positively. The most recent survey showed the positive response increased to 24 per cent of those questioned having learnt about animal welfare whilst at school.

For the third year running, the majority of those who said yes were in the 16–24 and 25–34 age categories. When schools in the UK were asked if they taught animal welfare as part of the curriculum, 88 per cent of those confirmed that they taught at least one lesson of animal welfare, the same as 2008. The school survey and the age of positive opinion poll responders suggest a number of explanations: perhaps over the past decade animal welfare is being taught more often; younger people can remember more about their school days, as they are more recent; or due to animal welfare playing such a small part of their education older responders fail to remember whether they were taught it or not.

Although just a quarter of people said yes when questioned, it is very positive that animal welfare is an issue that at some level is being taught in schools.

### “How important, if at all, do you think that it is for animal welfare to be one of the things young people learn about at school?”<sup>23</sup>

This question was asked to find out if the public felt that formal education was the right arena to create awareness of animal welfare and if there was any correlation with being taught it at school.

In 2009, 86 per cent of those questioned responded positively to the poll. This is slightly different to the previous years where in 2007 and 2008, 84 and 90 per cent respectively said they believed that animal welfare should be taught. All age groups believed it was important, which is extremely encouraging as it suggests the public

think that teaching animal welfare is something that is important and that school is the right vehicle for doing so. The results also complement the school survey, which found that 88 per cent of schools were teaching at least one lesson of animal welfare. It suggests that at a small level, schools are delivering and responding positively to public opinion, even if just 24 per cent remember being taught about welfare.

### Higher welfare chicken

At the beginning of 2008, there was huge media focus on how broiler chickens (chickens reared for their meat) are reared in the UK. This has coincided with a significant increase in the number of chickens being reared to higher on-farm welfare standards (page 45) for the same year. Over the past few years, and in particular 2008, a number of opinion polls have been commissioned to find out if the general public considers the welfare of chickens when they purchase them.

### How strongly do you agree or disagree that: “Animal welfare is an important consideration when I buy chicken”?<sup>78</sup>

With about 830 million chickens reared for their meat in the UK each year, it is important to find out if welfare is a factor when buying chicken.

The question was asked in 2006 and repeated in 2008, alongside a number of other chicken-related questions. There is little change in the responses. In 2006, 72 per cent agreed that animal welfare is an important consideration when buying chicken. In 2008, this rose to 79 per cent. A further question formed part of the survey and looked at the actual purchase of chicken and if higher welfare options, that is free-range, organic or Freedom Food, were bought. Interestingly, in both 2006 and 2008 70 per cent agreed or said they would buy the higher welfare option of chicken. As with the first question about chicken, it is extremely encouraging that the public are thinking about the welfare of chickens and purchasing the higher welfare options.

### “When I buy chicken I tend to choose higher welfare labels such as free-range, organic or Freedom Food.”<sup>9</sup>

The question formed part of a wider survey that looked at higher welfare meat, fish and eggs. The results of this particular question were rather different to the statement: ‘Animal welfare is an important consideration when I buy chicken’, with 39 per cent of those asked, agreeing with the statement. Just over one-third (34 per cent)

disagreed. Although the questions are different, the emphasis and the aims are very similar. There are a number of reasons why the results are so different. The label question was asked in an online survey, whereas the other question was asked during telephone interviews. It could be the case that when interviewed by a person, respondents may be more inclined to say what they feel they 'should' say, that is what the interviewer wants them to say or what they believe is the 'right' answer. With online polls, respondents are more anonymous and perhaps this makes them feel more comfortable with giving honest thoughts/opinions. The question that identifies labels may also be clearer, alternatively it could be more confusing as the labels are not always recognised or understood by the public.

As demonstrated in the farm animal indicator that focuses on the production of higher welfare chicken (see page 43), nearly 20 per cent of chickens produced in the UK are reared to higher welfare standards. Although just a fifth of UK production, this is a dramatic increase since 2006, when this figure was only three per cent. When considering the last two questions, there is quite a discrepancy between the responses and the actual production figures. This suggests a number of things: the public has good intentions about the sort of chicken they are purchasing but may not consistently buy the higher welfare option; labelling (lack of or confusion about wording and/or images); price (higher welfare chicken tends to be more expensive than standard); difficulty in finding higher welfare products; and/or lack of availability means that consumers do not always end up with the product they had planned to purchase.

Interestingly when the public was asked about higher welfare labelled eggs, the results were closer to the actual number of cage free, that is higher welfare eggs produced in the UK. About 41 per cent of eggs produced in the UK are considered higher welfare that is barn, organic or free-range (see page 40) – the vast majority of which are from Freedom Food approved farms. Fifty-six per cent of those questioned about the eggs they bought agreed they bought free-range, barn, Freedom Food or organic. Whilst there is still a discrepancy between production figures and the intentions of the purchasing public, it does seem that the public are more aware of the issues relating to eggs produced from caged systems and the higher welfare alternatives. This indicates that more work is needed to educate the public about the rearing and production methods of meat chickens.

#### FOOTNOTES AND REFERENCES

- 1 An omnibus survey is a method of quantitative market research where data on a wide variety of subjects is collected during the same interview – this can be carried out by phone, face-to-face or online. Usually, multiple research clients will provide proprietary content for the survey while sharing the common demographic data collected from each respondent.
- 2 Ipsos MORI poll: Results based on interviews with 2,028 adults aged 15+ in Great Britain. In-home, face-to-face interviews between 31 March and 6 April 2006. A split sample was used in 2006.
- 3 Ipsos MORI poll: Results based on interviews with 1,936 adults aged 15+ in Great Britain. In-home, face-to-face interviews between 9–19 February 2007.
- 4 Ipsos MORI poll: Results based on interviews with 2,110 adults aged 15+ in Great Britain, face-to-face interviews between 1–7 February 2008.
- 5 Ipsos MORI poll: Results based on interviews with 1,012 adults aged 15+ in Great Britain. In-home, face-to-face interviews between 20–26 February 2009.
- 6 The Co-operative Bank. Ethical Consumerism Report 2008.
- 7 TNS poll: Results based on interviews with 2,011 adults aged 16+ in Great Britain. Telephone interviews between 8–17 February 2008.
- 8 TNS poll: Results based on interviews with 1,013 adults aged 16+ in Great Britain. Telephone interviews between 12–14 May 2006.
- 9 YouGov poll: Results based on interviews with 1,990 adults aged 18+ in Great Britain. Online interviews between 6–9 June 2008.

## WELFARE INDICATOR: The proportion of UK schools that incorporate animal welfare into their curriculum

### RSPCA concern

Many animal welfare issues have implications for individuals, the communities within which they live and society as a whole. In order for young people to understand the role of animals within their lives and society, and make a positive contribution to their welfare, the RSPCA believes animal welfare education should be an integral part of children's formal education. For the majority of young people in the UK this formal education takes place in a school environment. The basic requirements of what is taught in schools are defined by the curriculum. Although the curriculum in all four UK countries includes a few explicit references to the role of animals within our lives and our responsibility to treat them and/or the environments within which they live with respect, far more references are made to the role of the curriculum in preparing young people to become active and responsible citizens.

The RSPCA would like to see schools using both of these opportunities to explore the role of animals and their welfare in our lives and in a civilized society.

### Background

The bodies responsible for education and learning in all four UK countries describe their vision for the school curriculum and communicate its purpose on dedicated websites and in published documents. Each country makes reference to the role of the curriculum in preparing young people to participate in society and make a positive contribution to the communities and environment within which they live.

The Welsh Assembly's 'Personal and social education framework for seven to 19 year olds in Wales' explains that one of the aims of this framework is to: "...empower learners to participate in their schools and communities as active responsible citizens locally, nationally and globally"<sup>1</sup>. Equally in its 'Framework for children's learning for three to seven year olds in Wales' it suggests that this age group: "...should learn to demonstrate care, responsibility, concern and respect for all living things and the environment"<sup>2</sup>. England's Qualifications and Curriculum Authority proposes three curriculum aims, one of which is to enable young people to become: "...responsible citizens who make a positive contribution to society"<sup>3</sup>. On a similar theme, Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence aspires to: "...enable all children and young people to become successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors to society and at work"<sup>4</sup>. Northern Ireland's statutory requirement for the curriculum (2007) is a: "...balanced and broadly based curriculum which (a) promotes the spiritual, emotional, moral, cultural, intellectual and physical development of pupils at the school and thereby of society; and (b) prepares such pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life by equipping them with appropriate knowledge, understanding and skills"<sup>5</sup>.

In order for children and young people to understand the role of animals within their communities and society, and make a positive contribution to their welfare, they need to experience animal welfare education at regular intervals during their school careers. Positive behaviour towards animals requires an understanding of their needs and an appreciation of the responsibility that humans have for them. A number of laws exist that protect and support the welfare of animals and the RSPCA believes that children and young people should explore why these were created and how they relate to their own lives. Throughout their lives children and young people will be required to make everyday decisions that can affect the lives of animals, for example the food they buy and the toiletries they use. It is important that young people make these decisions with a thorough understanding of the moral and ethical issues involved and the implications of the different decisions they may make.



**THERE IS LITTLE CHANGE FROM THE PREVIOUS YEAR.**

Finally, the welfare of animals is promoted by a number of different voluntary organisations, many of which operate in the local community. Young people need to understand the purpose of these organisations, how they contribute to society and how they can support their work.

### The indicator figures

To find out more about the frequency and context of animal welfare education in schools, a questionnaire was developed by the RSPCA and sent to a representative sample (approximately 25 per cent) of primary and secondary schools in the UK.

The questionnaire was sent to 6,400 schools in the UK and resulted in a seven per cent response rate. Although this was a higher response rate than the previous years (four and five per cent in 2007 and 2008 respectively), a number of schools submitted incomplete questionnaires which has proved detrimental to detailed analysis. Seventy-seven per cent of those schools who responded were primary schools, 11 per cent were secondary schools and 12 per cent did not indicate what type of school they were. The majority of responses, 66 per cent, were from schools in England which was expected due to England having around four times as many schools as the three other countries combined. The questionnaire asked four questions, the results of which are summarised below. These provide a 'snapshot' of animal welfare education in the UK today.

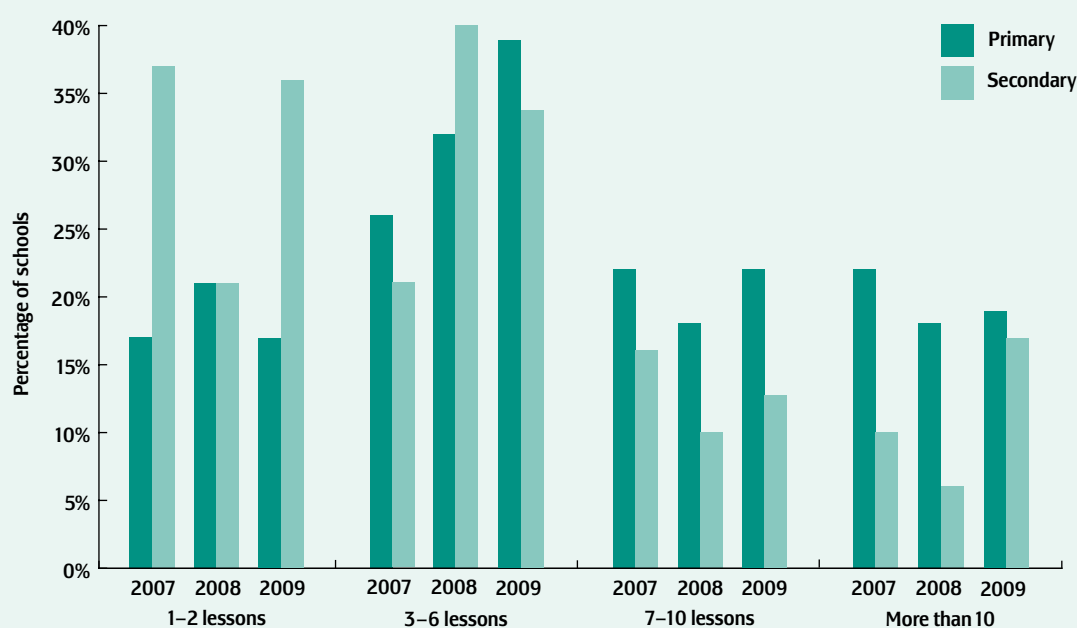
### “By the time a pupil leaves your school how many lessons will they have experienced that used animal welfare as either a focus or context for delivering the national curriculum?”

A significant number of schools in the UK (88 per cent) are providing at least one lesson about animal welfare, which is the same percentage as last year. Nine per cent of schools are failing to offer any lessons on animal welfare and three per cent of schools chose not to respond to this question. This is a slight change compared to last year, with a reduction in the number of schools failing to provide any lessons on animal welfare reducing from 12 per cent to nine per cent but an increase in the number of schools which chose not to answer this question, zero per cent to three per cent.

Northern Ireland is the country in which a higher percentage of its schools (26 per cent) are failing to deliver any lessons on animal welfare. In contrast pupils in Scotland are most likely to experience more lessons on animal welfare during their time at school, with 45 per cent of schools delivering more than seven lessons on animal welfare.

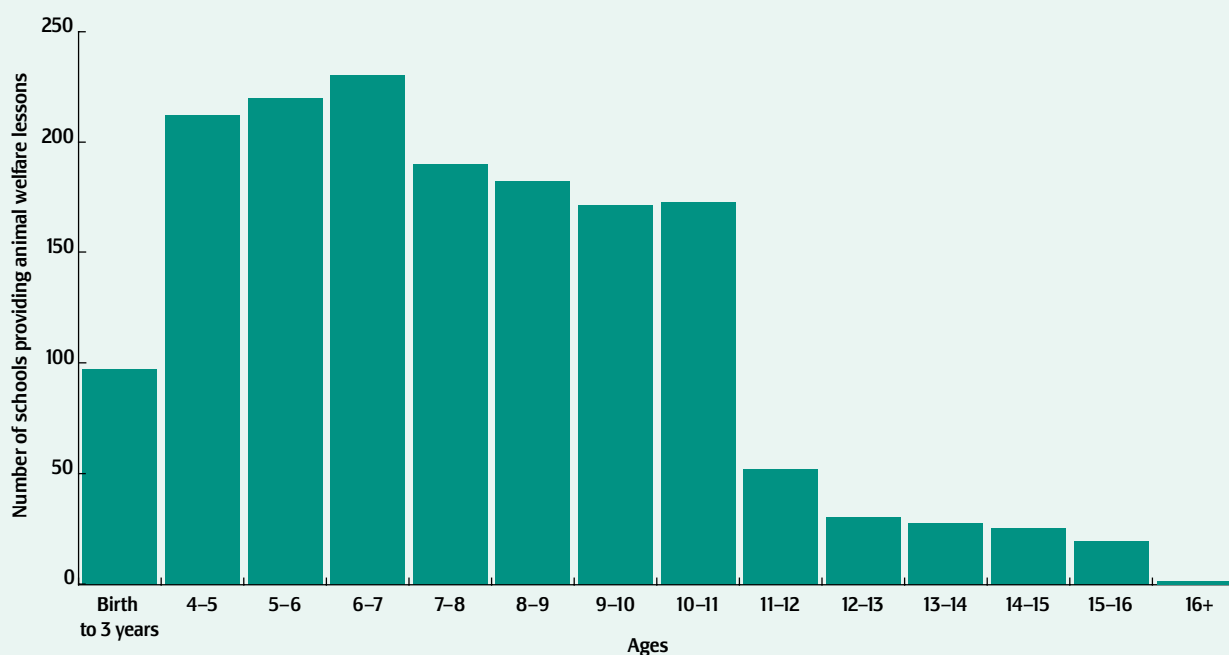
Figure 1 illustrates the difference between the number of lessons provided by primary schools and those provided by secondary schools. Most primary schools are likely to provide between three and six lessons, which is the same as last year. The number of lessons provided by most secondary schools has actually reduced since last year, down from three to six lessons, to one or two. However it is worth noting that a significant percentage of secondary schools are increasing the number of lessons they offer, with those schools providing more than 10 lessons on animal welfare increasing from six per cent last year to 17 per cent this year.

**Figure 1: Number of lessons provided by primary and secondary schools on animal welfare, 2007–2009**



Data source: Education Direct.

**Figure 2: Ages at which young people experience animal welfare education at school, 2009**



Data source: Education Direct.

**“Please explain why you don’t use animal welfare as either a focus or context for delivering the national curriculum”**

Only the schools which don’t provide lessons about animal welfare answered this question. Schools were able to provide more than one reason as to why animal welfare was not either a focus or context for delivering the curriculum. The main reason provided by schools was lack of curriculum time (39 per cent), with lack of curriculum resources accounting for 26 per cent of the responses. Twelve per cent of schools suggested that lack of knowledge about animal welfare issues was a contributing factor. The overall figures are similar to last year, when lack of curriculum time was the most popular response.

The fact that 88 per cent of the schools that responded are able to provide at least one lesson on animal welfare suggests that time can be found within the curriculum and that perhaps this is more an issue of perception than reality. Lack of curriculum resources and/or knowledge should not be a barrier to providing animal welfare education as the majority of animal welfare organisations provide curriculum-linked resources, and some provide teacher training on how to incorporate animal welfare as part of the curriculum.

**“In what year group(s) is animal welfare part of your curriculum work?”**

Schools were able to choose more than one year group in response to which year group(s) is animal welfare part of your curriculum work. As Figure 2 demonstrates, children and young people may experience animal welfare education at any point during their school careers. However, this is more likely to occur between birth and age eleven

in all four countries reflecting the age at which most young people leave primary school and start secondary school. These results mirror those for the last two years. Animal welfare education is equally important whatever the age of young people and should be taught as a progressive set of skills, knowledge and attitudes. Some secondary schools are demonstrating this commitment and it is important that other schools do the same.

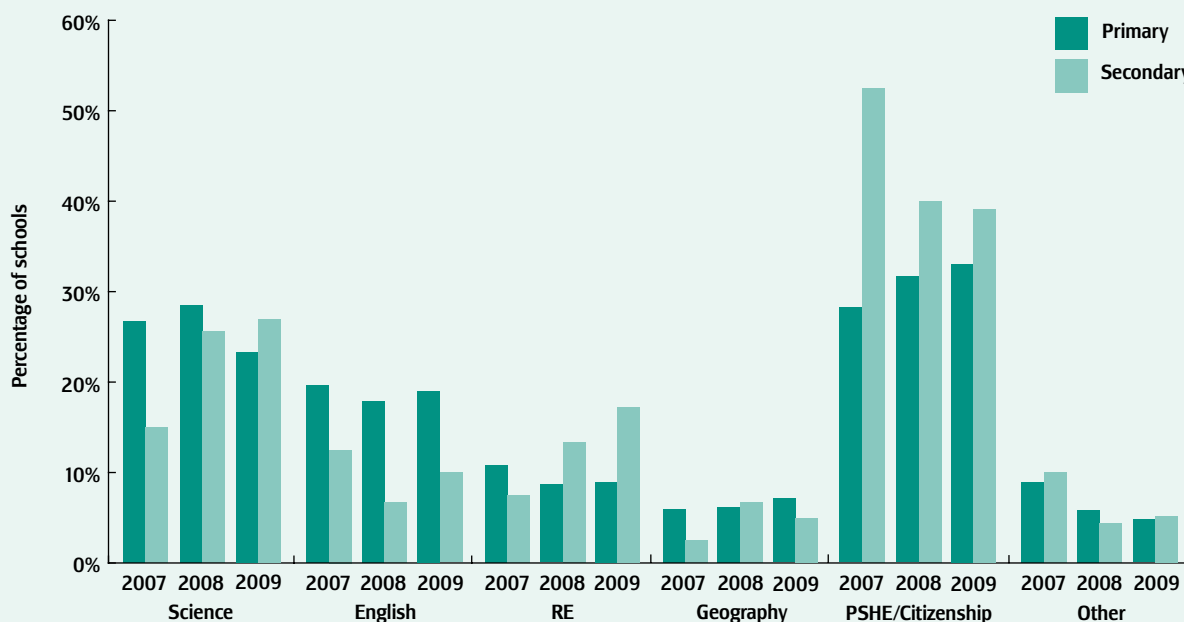
**“In what subject(s) is animal welfare part of your school’s curriculum work?”**

Although animal welfare education is taught in a number of different subject areas, a combination of personal and social education/ personal, social and health education and citizenship education are the most popular subject areas overall, closely followed by science (Figure 3). This is true for all four UK countries with the exception of Wales, where English is a more popular subject for teaching animal welfare education than science.

There has been a slight reduction in the number of secondary schools teaching animal welfare education as part of the science curriculum this year, however more secondary schools are teaching animal welfare in English and religious education lessons.

This section provides an indication of which areas of the curriculum provide openings for animal welfare education and should enable those schools that don’t provide any lessons on animal welfare, or only provide a few, with pointers as to where to begin. Many animal welfare organisations produce curriculum resources, which support these areas of the curriculum.

Figure 3. Subjects within which animal welfare education is taught, 2007–2009



Data source: Education Direct.

As with the previous two years, it is disappointing that such a small number of schools have responded to the questionnaire. With such a small per cent participating, it is extremely difficult to assess the true situation of animal welfare education in the UK. It is hoped that in future years more schools will respond to the questionnaire so a fuller conclusion can be drawn about the teaching of animal welfare in schools. It is welcoming that children are learning about some areas of animal welfare during their formal education, however it is hoped that more time is spent on the issue in the future.

FOOTNOTES AND REFERENCES

- 1 Personal and social education framework for seven to 19 year olds in Wales (2008) Welsh Assembly Government Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills.
- 2 Framework for children’s learning for three to seven year olds in Wales (2008) Welsh Assembly Government Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills.
- 3 The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority’s Aims of the curriculum: [www.qca.org.uk](http://www.qca.org.uk)
- 4 Learning and Teaching Scotland: [www.ltscotland.org.uk](http://www.ltscotland.org.uk)
- 5 The Education (Curriculum Minimum Content) Order (Northern Ireland) 2007.

## WELFARE INDICATOR: The number of firework-related communications received by the RSPCA

### RSPCA concern

Fireworks are a universal symbol of celebration used for various cultural and religious events worldwide, primarily for aesthetic effect and entertainment purposes.

In the UK fireworks are traditionally associated with Bonfire Night and New Year's Eve, but they are also used throughout the year at weddings, concerts and festivals. Whilst fireworks create a spectacular backdrop to events, animals can suffer as a consequence of the noise created by them.

The RSPCA is concerned for the welfare of animals affected by stress and anxiety caused by loud fireworks and is encouraging a more responsible attitude to their use by the public.

### Background

The charity Environmental Protection UK<sup>1</sup> recognises that: "While adding excitement to occasions, fireworks can also frighten and disturb people and animals." Its website (as well as others, including local authority sites) details the laws relating to fireworks: when they can be used, who can buy them, and what to do if you want to make a complaint about the noise of fireworks. These sites recognise that fireworks can have a negative effect on animals and provide an abundance of information about keeping animals safe when fireworks are going off.

Most animal organisations produce information and advice about keeping animals safe when fireworks are going off, as it is increasingly recognised that fireworks can be a cause of great anxiety to animals. Opinion polls commissioned by the RSPCA in 2007<sup>2</sup> and 2008<sup>3</sup> show that of the respondents questioned who owned a pet, 57 and 63 per cent respectively said their animals were frightened of fireworks.

The Firework Regulations 2004 set the maximum noise limit for fireworks sold to the public and prohibits anyone under the age of 18 from possessing fireworks in a public place and using them at night. The current noise limit for fireworks for use by the public is set at 120 decibels (dBA), that is equivalent noise to a jet aircraft taking off<sup>4</sup>. The RSPCA would like to see the noise limit lowered to 97 dBA, which is equivalent to a car door slamming shut, as this could help reduce the stress suffered by animals.

The legislation has applied a curfew to the use of fireworks for private use. It prohibits the use of fireworks at night and states that no fireworks are to be used between the hours of 11pm–7am except during Bonfire Night (up to midnight), Diwali and Chinese New Year (up to 1am). Although a curfew may help, it is difficult to see how this will reduce the stress caused to animals, as they cannot tell the difference between a firework going off at 10.45pm and 11.05pm. Furthermore it is virtually impossible for authorities to detect where a firework has been fired from and who was responsible, making it difficult to enforce and police the curfew.

Under the Environmental Protection Act 1990<sup>5</sup>, local authorities have powers to prevent or abate noise nuisance from premises and land. Local authority environmental health officers have to judge whether a problem complained about might be considered a statutory nuisance and act accordingly. Complaints about fireworks and other noise problems should be reported to local authorities, but currently there are no centrally-held records of the number of firework-related noise complaints received<sup>6</sup> and therefore it is difficult to judge how many people are complaining. When asked who should be contacted to complain about fireworks' noise, 63 per cent of



**THERE HAS BEEN A DROP IN COMPLAINTS ABOUT PETS AND FIREWORKS.**

people did not know. Of those that knew who to contact, 75 per cent believed they had to call the police to complain about firework noise. In 2007 and 2008, nearly a quarter of people (22 per cent) correctly said they would complain to their local authority<sup>2,3</sup>. This clearly demonstrates that there is much confusion about who to contact about firework noise. The RSPCA is encouraging local authorities to make it clearer to the public about whom they should complain to and ideally record the number of complaints they receive about noise.

The RSPCA, other animal welfare organisations<sup>7,8</sup> and local authorities provide the general public with information about how to minimise stress and anxiety to animals when fireworks are being used. However it is up to pet owners, users of fireworks, firework manufacturers and distributors to join forces and promote a more responsible attitude towards the use of fireworks and make people aware of the negative effect they have on animals.

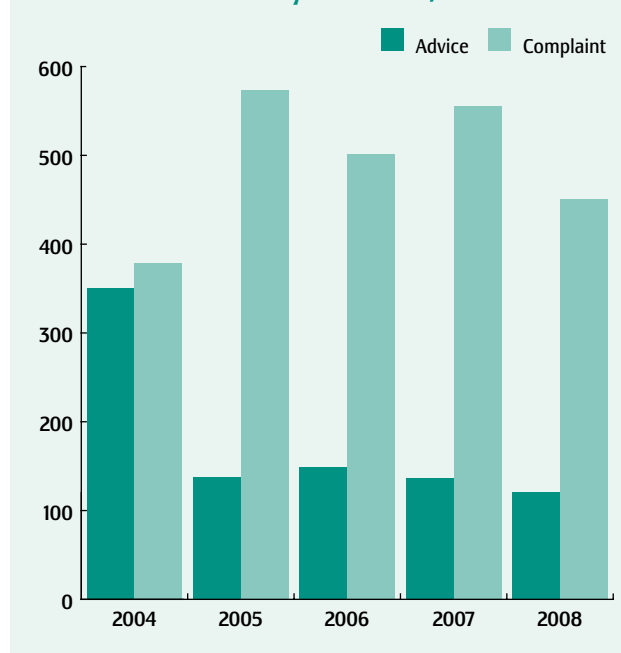
### The indicator figures

Throughout the year, the RSPCA, other animal organisations, local authorities and the police receive complaints about fireworks, including those that involve animals. However it is from around Bonfire Night in early November, that the RSPCA and others receive the majority of complaints. It is currently impossible to obtain information at a national level regarding the amount of communication received about fireworks and animals, therefore in an attempt to measure the problem RSPCA data and information is used here.

In 2005, 2006 and 2008, the RSPCA contacted about 3,000 vets in England and Wales to find out how many animals they'd seen that had been affected by fireworks. Unfortunately the questionnaire received an extremely poor response rate each year. In 2009 a new survey was developed and it is hoped that more vets will complete it. For this welfare indicator to be representative and meaningful, the RSPCA wants to use a number of data sources, not just its own, to determine how many animals are affected by fireworks. Data from vets is vital if this is to be achieved.

The limited results from the survey showed that the majority of animals seen by vets due to stress caused by fireworks are dogs. One possible explanation is that dogs are most likely to show obvious signs of stress and anxiety, whereas it is more difficult to observe stress behaviours in cats or small animals such as rabbits and guinea pigs. Trying to establish the impact fireworks have on wild animals and farm animals is especially hard, as there is little reporting on these issues. Therefore pets, mainly dogs, are the main focus for advice and literature. The charity, Cats Protection, commissioned a survey of veterinary practices in 2008 to determine the effect

**Figure 4: The number of firework complaints and advice calls received by the RSPCA, 2004–2008**



Data source: RSPCA.

fireworks have on cats. The survey noted that the problems seen in cats with regard to fireworks are behaviour related, rather than physical. They found that the main problems associated with fireworks were cats spraying or soiling indoors, cats suffering from apathy or withdrawal and cats scratching or clawing at furniture<sup>9</sup>.

While it is acknowledged that fireworks can cause anxiety and stress to some animals, the RSPCA believes it is important to find out how big the problem actually is and has looked at its own communications with the public regarding animals (usually pets) and fireworks. Every year, members of the public contact the RSPCA seeking advice, requesting fireworks literature or complaining, and during the build up to Bonfire Night this level of communication increases. Complaints about fireworks going off in local areas are received and advice is requested on how to look after pets when fireworks are going off and how to find animals that have bolted from their owners.

Figure 4 shows the complaints and advice calls received by the RSPCA's National Control Centre over the last five years. Since 2004, the RSPCA has been receiving less phone calls asking for advice, however in the same time period complaint calls have risen. One explanation is that information on how to keep pets safe is more readily available on the RSPCA website<sup>10</sup> and other websites<sup>7,8</sup>. During the fireworks season the RSPCA cruelty and advice line's recorded message advises callers to look at its website for information about keeping pets safe. In the second half of 2007 there were more than 10,000 visits to the RSPCA's website firework pages, and this more than doubled in 2008 with around 21,000 visits. It would seem that pet owners are becoming more knowledgeable about the distress fireworks can cause to their animals, more aware of the preventative measures they can take to prevent their animals suffering and better informed about what to do if their animals become distressed. These changes mean that animal owners do not need to phone the RSPCA for advice.

However the increase in the number of complaints received is harder to understand. Since 2004 complaints to the RSPCA have been steadily increasing, although they fell in 2008. One reason for the increase could be that fireworks seem to be used more often, over a longer period of time and seem to be getting louder which is causing upset animal owners to contact the RSPCA. The 2008 drop in complaints can possibly be explained by the change in the UK classification of explosives, which has meant that fireworks contain less flash powder (a pyrotechnic composition that can produce a big bang), so the 'bang' is not as loud as it once was.

**Table 3: Firework communications sent and received by the RSPCA in 2007–2008**

Communication	2007	2008
Information sent to general public	6,898	175,000
Website	10,000	21,000
Text messages	3,100	3,200
Complaints/advice calls	692	572

Data source: RSPCA.

Each year the RSPCA sends firework posters and leaflets to thousands of veterinary practices, public libraries and local authorities in England and Wales. Table 3 shows the different types of communication sent and received in 2007 and 2008. During this time the RSPCA aired radio adverts advising people to get in touch for information on looking after pets around the main firework period and more than 3,000 people responded by text. In 2008, 175,000 leaflets and posters were distributed to the general public offering advice and guidance about animals and fireworks, indicating that the public is eager for tips on how to alleviate the distress fireworks cause to animals.

It is extremely positive that people are concerned about their pets' welfare and are keen to receive information on how to alleviate the stress and suffering fireworks cause. It is unfortunate that a comparison between RSPCA data and that from other organisations and charities cannot be made, but it is hoped that in future the RSPCA will be able to obtain adequate external data to identify how big the fireworks problem is for the UK's animals.

**FOOTNOTES AND REFERENCES**

- 1 [www.environmental-protection.org.uk/neighbourhood-nuisance/fireworks](http://www.environmental-protection.org.uk/neighbourhood-nuisance/fireworks)
- 2 TNS poll: Results based on interviews with 1,015 adults aged 16+ in Great Britain. Telephone interviews between 7–9 December 2007.
- 3 TNS poll: Results based on interviews with 1,003 adults aged 16+ in Great Britain. Telephone interviews between 5–7 December 2008.
- 4 Keep the noise down: Loud fireworks frighten animals. 2005. RSPCA.
- 5 Environmental Protection Act 1990, Part III.
- 6 Parliamentary question 2008 by Rob Marris. To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform: "How many complaints about firework noise have been received by his department; and what statistics his department has collected on complaints regarding firework noise received by other public bodies in each month from 1 January 2003 to 31 December 2007". Mr Thomas replied: "Complaints about noise from fireworks are not collected and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost".
- 7 [www.bluecross.org.uk](http://www.bluecross.org.uk)
- 8 [www.berr.gov.uk/fireworks](http://www.berr.gov.uk/fireworks)
- 9 The effects of fireworks on cats survey was conducted during October 2008 by Lake Market Research on behalf of Cats Protection: [www.cats.org.uk](http://www.cats.org.uk)
- 10 [www.rspca.org.uk](http://www.rspca.org.uk)

## WELFARE INDICATOR: The number of stray dogs collected by local authorities in the UK

### RSPCA concern

The RSPCA regularly receives enquiries about stray dogs, even though the Society does not deal directly with the issue. In April 2008 section 68 of the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005 (CNEA) was implemented. The Act transferred the responsibility for receiving stray dogs out of hours from the police to local authorities in England and Wales. This has largely resulted in local authorities taking responsibility for receiving stray dogs outside the hours of 9am–5pm during weekdays and throughout the weekend.

Whilst many local authorities fulfil their obligation to seize and detain stray dogs, others carry out additional proactive work such as microchipping, neutering and dog training advice either as independent councils or in partnership with animal welfare charities or other councils. The RSPCA promotes those local authorities that are providing a good service as well as those that are being more proactive in educating owners. This has largely been done through the RSPCA's Community Animal Welfare Footprints (CAWF), an annual scheme that rewards and promotes good practice by local authorities and housing providers in the areas of their work that impact on animal welfare, including the stray dog service. In September 2008, the first year of the scheme, 28 local authorities successfully achieved the stray dog footprint and a further 21 received other footprints<sup>1</sup>. And 2009 has proved even more successful with 47 authorities receiving stray dog footprints.

The RSPCA will continue to encourage, and in some cases assist, local authorities to implement more effective measures that could help reduce the number of stray dogs and increase the number of dogs returned to their owners. The Society will also continue to work with the government to solve the problem of stray dogs.

### Background

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) defines a stray dog as: "One that is in a public place, not under the charge of its keeper"<sup>2</sup>. Under the Environmental Protection Act 1990<sup>3</sup> (EPA) local authorities are given specific orders to appoint an officer to be responsible for: "Discharging the functions imposed or conferred by this section for dealing with stray dogs found in the area of the authority". The EPA also gives joint responsibility to police and local authorities for the receipt of strays, which in turn has sometimes created confusion in some authority areas about who is actually responsible for stray dogs. The CNEA was intended to resolve the confusion of joint responsibility by terminating police responsibility for stray dogs<sup>4</sup> and passing sole responsibility for stray dogs to local authorities. It was agreed by Defra, following pressure from a number of local government and animal welfare organisations, that this could not be implemented until funding had been transferred from the police to local authorities. In November 2007, two years after the Act was passed, Defra announced the implementation date for the CNEA as 6 April 2008<sup>4</sup>. A settlement of £4m to assist local authorities in providing an out-of-hours contact number and "where practicable" a reception point for strays was also agreed. One year on from the changes in legislation, there are early indications that it has created greater inconsistency in the quality of service local authorities are now providing. Local authorities have cited many reasons for this, but they are mainly focussed on three issues: a lack of funding, money not being ring-fenced, and a higher volume of stray dog-related out-of-hours calls than anticipated.

To monitor the problem of stray dogs in the UK and to see if the numbers of dogs local authorities are dealing with on a yearly basis are increasing or decreasing, an information request was sent to local authorities under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA). The FOIA entitles anybody to ask a public authority for any recorded information that they keep. A response must be made available within 20 working days from receipt of the request. The reason for using this method is to ensure that the survey produces a good response within the time parameters outlined in the Act, and therefore gives the RSPCA a more accurate picture of the situation.

As with previous years, the survey was sent to all local authorities in England (354), Wales (22), Scotland (32) and Northern Ireland (26). To ensure there could not be any misinterpretation, those questions that concerned the collection and disposal of dogs in England and Wales were worded in line with the direction given in the Environmental Protection Act 1990.



**THERE IS LITTLE CHANGE FROM THE PREVIOUS YEAR.**

**WHILST MANY LOCAL AUTHORITIES FULFIL THEIR OBLIGATION TO SEIZE AND DETAIN STRAY DOGS, OTHERS CARRY OUT ADDITIONAL PROACTIVE WORK SUCH AS MICROCHIPPING, NEUTERING AND DOG TRAINING ADVICE EITHER AS INDEPENDENT COUNCILS OR IN PARTNERSHIP WITH ANIMAL WELFARE CHARITIES OR OTHER COUNCILS.**

There are other methods of data collection that are used to determine how big the problem of stray dogs is in the UK. However, the essential difference between the RSPCA's research on stray dogs compared to any others is that it seeks to clarify which dogs are euthanased after the statutory seven-day period<sup>5</sup> and those that are euthanased on medical grounds.

### The indicator figures

The overall UK response to the survey was 266 from 434 (61 per cent) of local authorities, which is lower than the 304 (70 per cent) responses in the previous year. Northern Ireland had the best response rate with 77 per cent (20), while Wales had the worst response rate with just 11 of the 22 local authorities responding. The overall response rate is less than the previous years, where 70 and 75 per cent of local authorities responded. While this is disappointing, it could be reflective of the work and time pressures that those responsible for stray dog services are now under due to the legislative changes. It may also reflect some level of resistance to similar surveys being carried out regarding this issue and is something the RSPCA will seek to resolve in the forthcoming year.

To effectively compare year-on-year data and due to a number of local authorities not participating in the survey, the stray dog figures for the past two years have been projected to reflect a 100 per cent response rate. The number of stray dogs collected in the UK in the 2007–2008 financial year (that is between 1 April 2007 and 31 March 2008) was 87,287<sup>6</sup>. The overall figure represents little change in the previous figure of 87,183<sup>7</sup> between the 2006–2007 financial year.

As Figure 5 shows, and despite the apparent increase in number of seized dogs, those being returned to their owners has remained relatively consistent with the previous year at around 44 per cent. During 2007–2008, Scotland returned the most stray dogs to their owners (58.9 per cent)<sup>8</sup>, more than 10 per cent better than the next placed country, England (48.4 per cent). Statistically, Northern Ireland had the poorest return rate with less than a quarter (20.7 per cent) of

stray dogs being returned to their owners. In the UK, 44 per cent of those seized by local authorities were returned to their owners, which is slight decrease on 48.6 per cent in the financial year 2006–2007. Whilst this change is not significant it has shown that the levels of stray dogs returned to owners are not improving. This is something that needs to be looked at in more detail and analysis carried out on what impact schemes, such as microchipping and neutering, are having on reducing stray dogs and increasing numbers returned.

Information was also collected on the number of stray dogs given to members of the public and to rehoming establishments (Figures 6 and 7), in addition to those dogs euthanased both on medical grounds and after the seven-day statutory period. The total number of stray dogs being euthanased in the UK represents seven per cent (6,032) of all dogs. Although comparatively low, this represents a projected increase of 600 dogs on the previous year's euthanasia figure of 5,414.

England and Wales collectively saw a slight increase on the previous two years, of 3,863 or 5.4 per cent compared with 4.8 per cent or 3,548 in 2007 and four per cent or 2,632 in 2006. Scotland for a second year recorded the lowest euthanasia percentage with just 2.4 per cent at 132. However that was almost 50 per cent up on the previous year's figures which represented just 1.6 per cent of all dogs seized. Northern Ireland was once again the highest rising from 20 per cent in 2007, to 23 per cent of strays being euthanased in 2008. Disturbingly this has meant that more dogs in Northern Ireland were put to sleep than returned to their owners in the financial year 2007–2008.

Although the total number of dogs euthanased is important, what is far more significant is the number of dogs being euthanased after the statutory seven-day period, where they are likely to be healthy. These figures are slightly tainted by the fact that almost 3,000 of the 5,807 dogs euthanased in the UK were not classified in either health or medical grounds categories, or after the statutory seven-day period.

Of the figures supplied 33.7 per cent of the total dogs euthanased in

Figure 5: The percentage of stray dogs returned to their owner by local authorities in the UK, 2006–2008

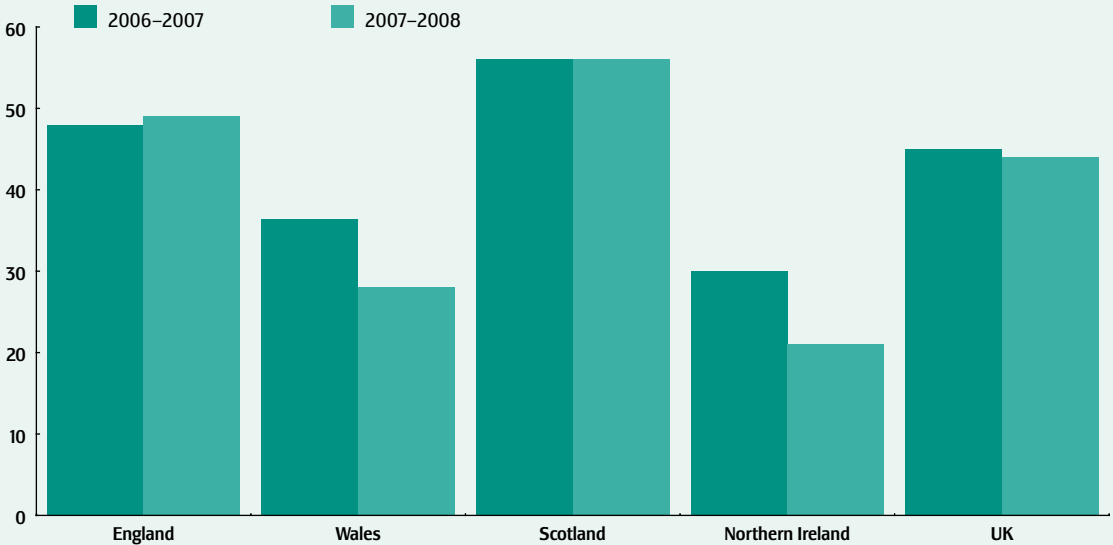


Figure 6: The percentage of stray dogs given to the public by local authorities in the UK, 2006–2008

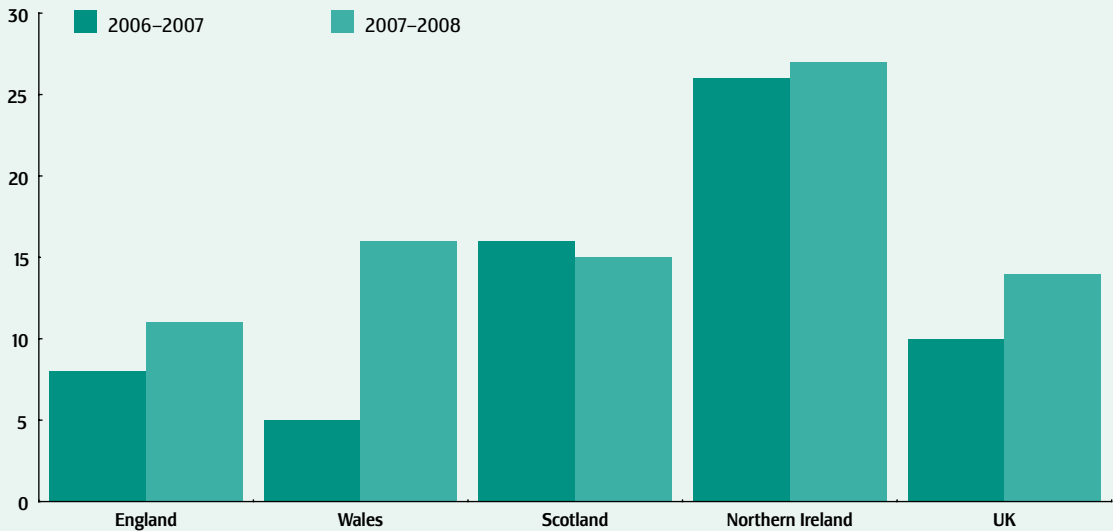
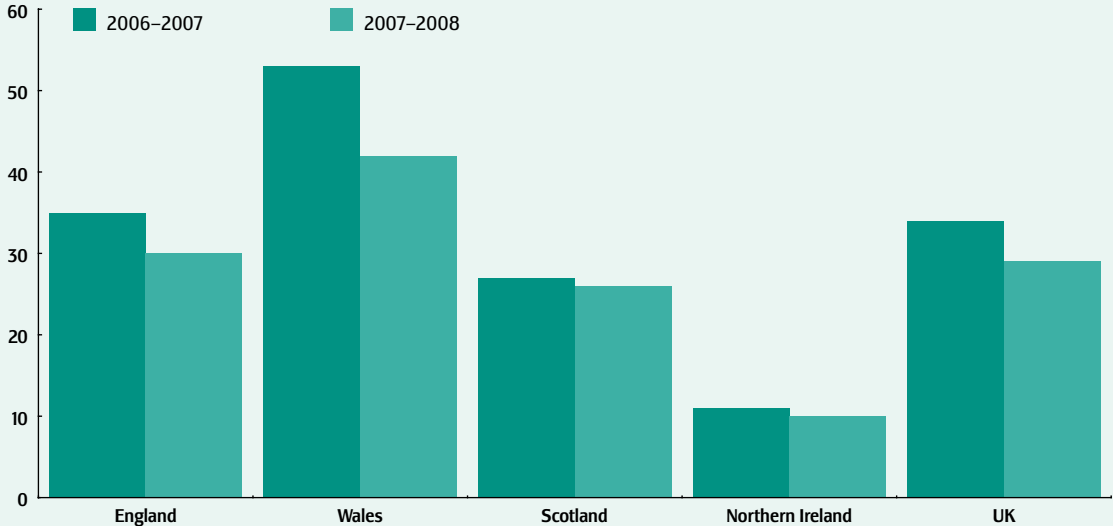


Figure 7: The percentage of stray dogs given to establishments for rehoming by local authorities in the UK, 2006–2008



Data source: RSPCA

**Table 4: The number of stray dogs reported to have been euthanased by UK local authorities, 2006–2008**

Country	Euthanased on medical grounds		Euthanased on non-medical grounds		Euthanased (no explanation)	
	2006–2007	2007–2008	2006–2007	2007–2008	2006–2007	2007–2008
England	1,443	898	824	1,247	766	1,172
Wales	237	262	197	174	80	186
Scotland	20	33	71	20	80	79
Northern Ireland	826	5	0	591	1,775	1,365
<b>UK</b>	<b>2,526</b>	<b>1,198</b>	<b>1,092</b>	<b>2,032</b>	<b>2,701</b>	<b>2,802</b>

Data source: RSPCA.

the UK were done so after the seven-day statutory period and 19.9 per cent on medical grounds. Compared to the 2007 figures, they are quite different. Whilst the total number of euthanased dogs for 2008 – 6,032 – is similar to that of the previous year 6,319, the figures for reasons for euthanasia are very different. Unlike 2007, more dogs were euthanased after the seven-day statutory period (33.6 per cent or 2,032), than in 2007 when 1,092 or 17.3 per cent of all euthanased dogs were done so after the seven-day period in 2007.

There is a similar turnaround on the figures for strays being euthanased on medical grounds. In 2008, 1,198 dogs were euthanased on medical grounds compared with 2,526 the previous year – a reduction of more than 52 per cent (Table 4).

Overall, the results of the stray dog survey for the financial year 2007–2008 are very similar to that of 2006–2007. The data provided highlights a number of issues regarding a lack of consistency among

local authorities and contract stray dog kennelling/wardening services when it comes to information about the disposal of stray dogs.

There appears to be a genuine need for a standard form of data recording for stray dogs, and while the balance must be made not to overburden local authorities and their staff with bureaucracy, it is important to get a consistency of collection across the tiers of local authorities in England and Wales. Without this, it will be difficult for trends to be accurately assessed and meaningful conclusions to be drawn. Ultimately, without truly accurate data, arguments over levels of funding for this important animal welfare service are difficult to make.

The figures for 2008–2009, the first post-CNEA, are likely to highlight further the need for more accurate data collection to ensure that local authorities have the resources they need to deal with what is likely to be a significant increase in stray dog numbers.

**FOOTNOTES AND REFERENCES**

- 1 For further information on the CAWF scheme visit: [www.rspca.org/cawf](http://www.rspca.org/cawf)
- 2 [www.defra.gov.uk/environment/localenv/dogs/strays.htm](http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/localenv/dogs/strays.htm)
- 3 Environmental Protection Act 1990 s149 (1) and (3).
- 4 Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005. s68.
- 5 Under Section 6 of the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 1990, a dog must be detained for seven days before it can be disposed of, that is rehomed or euthanased.
- 6 Actual number of strays reported from the 266 local authorities in the UK was 55,292 dogs.
- 7 The actual number of stray dogs seized in the UK was 60,053.
- 8 Actual number of strays returned to owners 2,396 out of 4,070 seized from 24 of 32 local authorities in Scotland.

## WELFARE INDICATOR: The number of local authorities in the UK that have an animal welfare charter

### RSPCA concern

Local authorities in England and Wales are involved in a number of services that relate directly to animals, including the collection of stray dogs and the licensing of pet shops, dog breeding establishments and kennelling facilities. There are other areas of public service delivery that have some impact, directly or indirectly, on animal welfare, where the local authority may influence policy. These include areas such as housing provision, pest control and emergency planning.

An animal welfare charter is a document that in its most basic form establishes some basic principles the local authority generally supports with relation to the welfare of animals. The implementation of a charter can encourage animals to be a consideration in all aspects of a local authority's work and help to ensure that services have mechanisms in place to maintain and increase good standards of animal welfare.

The RSPCA believes that all local authorities should adopt an animal welfare charter, so that the welfare of animals becomes a natural consideration within the authority's decision-making and policy process.

### Background

The passing of two pieces of major legislation, the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005 (CNEA)<sup>1</sup> and the Animal Welfare Act 2006 (AWA)<sup>2</sup>, in the last few years, has impacted on all tiers of local authorities in England and Wales with regard to services directly related to animals. Sections 55 and 56 of the CNEA give local authorities the power to issue dog control orders on any open spaces, including parks. The orders allow authorities to exclude dog access completely or exclude dogs not on leads, and increases fines for dog fouling. Section 68 removes any responsibility for stray dogs from the police, leaving local authorities with sole responsibility for them. Within the AWA, local authorities are given powers of entry and enforcement that they may exercise to improve animal welfare, although there is no obligation for local authorities to use these powers. However, they also must ensure that those they license adhere to the AWA. This means the Act should impact on the licensing of pet shops and events that involve animals, as well as ensuring that kennelling facilities used for stray dogs meet the welfare needs of the dogs held there.

Local authority animal welfare charters come in a variety of forms. Some are a collection of policy statements on various aspects of local authority work, others are a set of principles the local authority aims to work to in all aspects of council business. The most effective animal welfare charters are those that cover both the principles and practical side and touch on areas of local authority work that may not be instantly linked with animal welfare e.g. social services and housing. However, in order for a welfare charter to be meaningful and effective it must be backed up by action. This in turn can create good public relation opportunities and link in with aspects of local authority work. For example, responsible pet ownership promotion could result in a reduction in problems such as stray dogs, fouling, barking and the use of dogs to intimidate others, all of which fit under the anti-social behaviour umbrella.

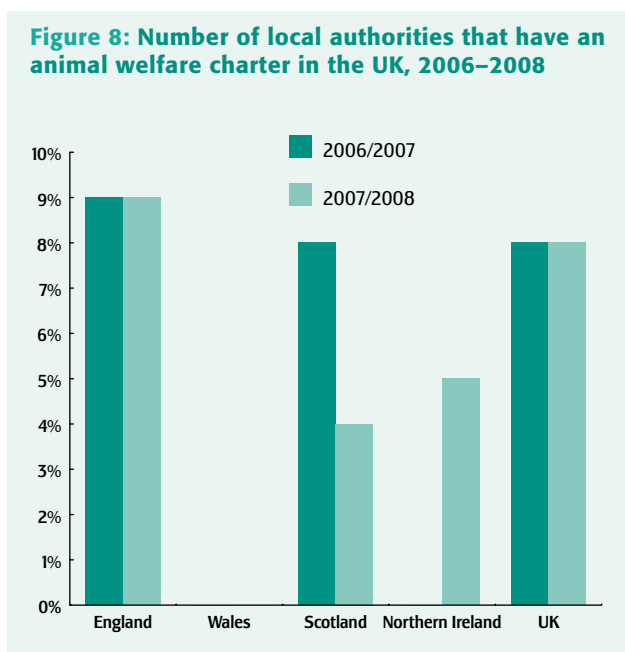
The RSPCA believes that a robust and practical animal welfare charter would also go some way in assisting contractors, officers and managers who may not have a primary animal-related role to become more aware of the implications of their work on animal welfare.

Currently there are no national local government or housing indicators that directly focus on animal services in the same way that waste management and anti-social behaviour do. The RSPCA recognises this as a major obstacle to seeing improvements in animal welfare related services.



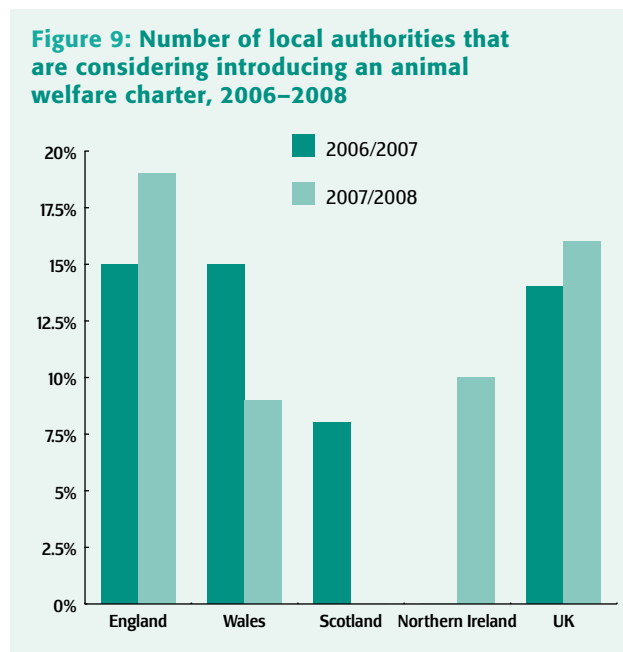
**THERE IS LITTLE CHANGE FROM THE PREVIOUS YEAR.**

**Figure 8: Number of local authorities that have an animal welfare charter in the UK, 2006–2008**



Data source: RSPCA/local authorities.

**Figure 9: Number of local authorities that are considering introducing an animal welfare charter, 2006–2008**



In April 2008, we launched the RSPCA Community Animal Welfare Footprints (CAWF), a scheme to reward and promote good practice in animal welfare by local authorities and housing providers. The scheme generated strong interest from both local government and housing sectors, and the Society received more than 60 different footprint entries from 49 different local authorities.

In 2009 the scheme grew substantially and more than 100 footprint applications from over 80 different organisations were received. The scheme appears to be producing the desired effects with local authorities being celebrated and rewarded for their good practice and then sharing info with other local authorities that are seeking solutions to their service problems. Further information about the scheme is available at: [www.rspca.org.uk/cawf](http://www.rspca.org.uk/cawf)

This animal welfare indicator was developed to monitor the number of local authorities that currently have animal welfare charters and those that are considering introducing a charter in the forthcoming year. However, it should be noted that this charter indicator is just an indication of whether the council, in particular the political leadership, view animal welfare as an important issue for the authority. It should also be noted that there are many local authorities doing excellent work to improve animal welfare that don't have a charter.

### The indicator figures

An information request on animal welfare charters was sent to all 376 local authorities in England and Wales, as well as the 32 authorities in Scotland and 26 authorities in Northern Ireland<sup>3</sup>. The data was collected alongside the information request for stray dogs (see page 23) and as result saw a similar drop in response rate from 2008. In 2009 the response rate was 63.8 per cent or 277 from 434 local authorities in the UK, a drop of 63.8 per cent on the 304 local authorities that responded in 2008.

In England and Wales in 2009, the number of local authorities that currently have animal welfare charters has remained around the same level as 2008 at 8.15 per cent. The number of local authorities considering the introduction of an animal welfare charter has increased for the second year running from seven per cent and 15 per cent in 2007 and 2008 respectively, to 17 per cent in 2009.

However as Figure 8 shows, Welsh local authorities are still not declaring a charter and only one of the 11 respondents<sup>4</sup> claims to be considering introducing one. It should also be noted that the majority of local authorities in Wales have been investigating animal welfare issues in some depth as part of the Wales Assembly Government's CAWES (Companion Animal Welfare Enhancement Scheme) work. This means that in a number of cases, local authorities in Wales that

do not have charters may well be carrying work that will improve animal welfare substantially.

Once again England (Figure 9) had the highest percentage of local authorities with animal welfare charters and those that were considering or planning to introduce one in the next 12 months with nine per cent and 19 per cent respectively<sup>5</sup>. While the number of charters remains the same as the previous year, there is an impressive increase of four per cent for local authorities considering charters compared with 2008 (15 per cent).

Northern Ireland was the only country to see an increase in the percentage of local authorities that had a charter. It improved from having no local authorities with charters or considering charters in 2008 to five per cent and 10 per cent respectively<sup>6</sup>. However this remains a very low number of local authorities involved.

Scotland saw the reverse to Northern Ireland with the number of local authorities that stated they had an animal welfare charter decrease from eight per cent in 2008 to just four per cent in 2009. No local authority claimed to be considering introducing a charter, a drop from eight per cent in the previous year<sup>7</sup>.

The inconsistency of these results is a concern. However it should be noted that in some cases the officer tasked with providing the response may not have been aware of the existence of the council's animal welfare charter.

While many of the local authorities with charters have placed animal welfare at the centre of much of their work, there are many more local authorities without charters that are going beyond their basic requirements to improve animal welfare. Both the Welsh Assembly CAWES project and the RSPCA's CAWF scheme highlight this.

#### FOOTNOTES AND REFERENCES

- 1 Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005. S55, 56, 68.
- 2 [www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2006/pdf/ukpga\\_20060045\\_en.pdf](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2006/pdf/ukpga_20060045_en.pdf)
- 3 Unitary, metropolitan, London borough, district and Welsh unitary councils were surveyed. County councils were not included.
- 4 11 of 22 (50 per cent) of local authorities in Wales responded to the 2009 survey.
- 5 19 local authorities in England said they had a charter and 42 said they were considering introducing one, from the 222 that responded.
- 6 One local authority had a charter in Northern Ireland. 20 out of 26 (77 per cent) local authorities responded.
- 7 One local authority had a charter in Scotland. 24 out of 32 (75 per cent) local authorities responded.

**WELFARE INDICATOR:** The number of relevant white papers published by the UK government that include a positive animal welfare component

RSPCA concern

In the UK animal welfare is traditionally seen as an issue resting with one government department, namely the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). In the devolved governments of Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, animal welfare rests with the Welsh Assembly Government’s Department for Rural Affairs, the Scottish Government’s Rural Affairs and the Environment Department and the Department of Agricultural and Rural Development in Northern Ireland. Other UK ministries, such as the Home Office and the Ministry of Defence, have a direct role in setting policies on animal welfare or managing issues that have an impact on animal welfare, but they are usually not automatically considered when the issue of animals and their health and/or welfare is raised. Ideally, all government departments in all UK countries would consider the current and future needs of animals and acknowledge the relationship of animals with other issues when developing policy and laws even if there is not an obvious animal welfare theme.

The RSPCA would like the UK government and devolved governments to take a holistic approach to animal welfare, and advocates that all government departments give the issue due consideration when developing and implementing policy and legislation.

Background

Alongside Defra, other major departments that set animal welfare policy include the Home Office (animals used in research and testing), and the Department for Communities and Local Government (urban regeneration). Other ministries have an indirect impact – such as the Department for International Development (DFID), which has an animal welfare policy that is considered for any overseas programmes, and the Ministry of Defence which runs the Defence Animal Centre (DAC) and is responsible for the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee (AWAC).

By looking at the UK government’s plans for future policy, an assessment can be made about how animal welfare is currently viewed and whether aspects of it are being considered and incorporated into future plans across different government departments. To gain some insight into current and future government thinking and actions about aspects of animal welfare, white papers<sup>1</sup> (documents produced by government departments to outline details of future policy) are reviewed.

Although white papers are just one step in the process of making government policy, they are useful indices in measuring how legislators view animals and their welfare. By looking at white papers, it is hoped that cross-departmental thinking on animal welfare will be evident and encouraged to occur in future years.

The indicator figures

Between January 2004 and December 2008<sup>2,3</sup>, 53 white papers were published by different UK government ministries. During 2008, 12 were published. None of the white papers published during this five-year period were specifically about animals or their welfare and only one was produced by Defra, the department with overall, recognised responsibility for animal welfare. However, it would seem likely that a number of the issues covered by some of the white papers would have some direct or indirect impact on animals even if it wasn’t initially obvious.

In order to assess whether animals and/or their welfare would be included in the white papers, the following questions were asked:

- Does the title suggest that animals will be included in the white paper?
- Does the foreword, preface or executive summary suggest that animal welfare will be incorporated into the document?
- Does the government department producing the white paper have any direct or indirect links to animal health or welfare?



**THERE IS LITTLE CHANGE FROM THE PREVIOUS YEAR.**

**Table 5: White papers published 2004–2007 that could have included a positive animal welfare component**

Date	Department	Title	Animal welfare components	Country
April 2004	Home Office	One step ahead: A 21st century strategy to defeat organised crime <sup>4</sup>	No	UK
April 2004	Foreign and Commonwealth Office	Prospects for the EU in 2004 <sup>5</sup>	Yes	UK
July 2004	Department of Trade and Industry*	Making globalisation a force for good <sup>6</sup>	No	UK
Sept 2004	Foreign and Commonwealth Office	White paper on the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe <sup>7</sup>	Yes	UK
Nov 2004	Home Office	Building communities, beating crime: A better police service for the 21st century <sup>8</sup>	Yes	England and Wales
Nov 2004	Department of Health	Choosing health: Making healthier choices easier <sup>9</sup>	No	England and Wales
Feb 2005	Foreign and Commonwealth Office	Prospects for the EU in 2005 <sup>10</sup>	Yes	UK
Feb 2005	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister**	Sustainable communities: People, places and prosperity <sup>11</sup>	No	England
Feb 2005	Department for Education and Skills***	14–19 education and skills <sup>12</sup>	No	England
Oct 2006	Department for Communities and Local Government	Strong and prosperous communities: The local government white paper <sup>13</sup>	No	England
Dec 2006	Department of Health	Review of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act <sup>14</sup>	No	UK
Mar 2007	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs	A Sea Change <sup>15</sup>	Yes	UK

Data source: Weekly Information Bulletin<sup>2</sup>.

\* Now known as the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform.

\*\* Now known as the Department for Communities and Local Government.

\*\*\* Now known as the Department for Children, Schools and Families.

If the previous questions were answered positively then those white papers were assessed according to the following criteria.

- Is there any reference to animal welfare?
- How in depth does the white paper go?
- Is the detail provided adequate?
- By the nature of the document, should animal welfare have been considered?

Of the 41 white papers published between 2004 and 2007, 12 white papers were identified as having the potential to incorporate an animal welfare element within them. In 2008, not one was considered relevant.

Table 5 lists the 12 white papers published between 2004 and 2008 that would be expected to consider animals and their welfare.

The table highlights the government department that produced them so as to demonstrate the crossover of animal welfare within different areas of government policy.

Just five of the 12 white papers that had the potential to incorporate animal welfare actually made reference to animal welfare within some capacity. The remaining seven did not mention animal welfare. The five white papers are listed here.

### ■ A Prospects for the European Union (EU) – 2004 and 2005<sup>5 10</sup>

Both of the white papers include references to animal welfare, namely CAP<sup>16</sup> (Common Agricultural Policy) reform and REACH<sup>17 18</sup> (Registration, Evaluation and Authorisation for Chemicals).

### ■ Treaty Establishing a Constitution for Europe<sup>7</sup>

Article III–121 states that: “In formulating the Union’s agricultural, fisheries, transport, internal market and technological development and space policies, the Union and the member states shall, since animals are sentient beings, pay full regard to the requirements of animal welfare...”

### ■ Building communities, beating crime<sup>8</sup>

The white paper’s foreword and executive summary do not explicitly discuss animals, however they do discuss dedicated neighbourhood policing teams and the government’s aim to: “reduce crime, to tackle anti-social behaviour and disorder”, in which dog fouling was later referred to as anti-social behaviour.

### ■ Sea Change<sup>15</sup>

The paper focuses on wildlife and habitat protection rather than directly on welfare. It refers to other legislation including the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Habitat Regulations 1994.

It is encouraging that the four white papers, not produced by Defra, make reference to animal welfare especially as three concern the EU and Europe. However it is equally disappointing that animal welfare is of little or no consideration when policy and debate concerns other issues relating to the UK such as education, local government and health. It is hoped that when different government ministries look at policy and legislation, animal welfare (where appropriate) is given due consideration and is reflected in future white papers.

Using white papers as a year-on-year measurement of change and growth of cross-departmental thinking and policy is difficult because the number of white papers published each year changes. Each government department may produce a number of documents or none at all and it is expected that just a small selection will need to mention the welfare of animals in any detail. However, it does not take away the importance of the indicator as a measurement of and encourages cross-departmental thinking and future policy.

#### FOOTNOTES AND REFERENCES

- 1 White papers are produced by UK government departments, however they may or may not have an impact in all four UK countries.
- 2 Weekly Information Bulletin. On: [www.parliament.uk](http://www.parliament.uk)
- 3 Office of public sector information website: [www.opsi.gov.uk](http://www.opsi.gov.uk)
- 4 Command paper: CM6167.
- 5 Command paper: CM6174.
- 6 Command paper: CM6278.
- 7 Command paper: CM6309.
- 8 Command paper: CM6360.
- 9 Command paper: CM6374.
- 10 Command paper: CM6450.
- 11 Command paper: CM6450.
- 12 Command paper: CM6476.
- 13 Command paper: CM6939.
- 14 Command paper: CM6989.
- 15 Command paper: CM7047.
- 16 The Common Agricultural Policy was first established in 1962. The CAP aims to have a sustainable and vibrant farming sector within the EU.
- 17 Proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals (REACH), establishing a European Chemicals Agency and amending Directive 1999/45/EC.
- 18 REACH is the EU Commission’s proposals for a regulatory framework on chemicals.

## **WELFARE INDICATOR:** The number of investigations and convictions taken by the RSPCA under the Protection of Animals Act 1911 and the Animal Welfare Act 2006

### RSPCA concern

In 1822, England and Wales first enacted legislation specifically intended to prevent cruelty to animals with: "An Act to prevent the cruel and improper treatment of cattle". This was one of the earliest laws on animal cruelty in the world and seems to refer to all livestock not just cattle. It was followed by the establishment of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals in 1824 for the purpose of enforcing this new Act and promoting education on animal issues. The RSPCA, as it became known in 1840 and which remains today, established an inspectorate to enforce the animal welfare related legislation. The RSPCA investigates and prosecutes the majority of offences of animal cruelty and breaches of animal welfare in England and Wales<sup>1</sup>. As Richard Martin MP, a founding member of the RSPCA, said in 1822: "If legislation is to be effective, it must be adequately enforced". Nearly two hundred years later, the importance of this quote is still very much at the heart of why the RSPCA prosecutes individuals under the Protection of Animals Act 1911 (POAA) and its successor the Animal Welfare Act 2006 (AWA).

In an ideal world investigations into animal cruelty and breaches of animal welfare, and any subsequent convictions, wouldn't be necessary because animals would not be suffering as a result of neglect or cruelty. Unfortunately, this is unlikely ever to be the case, so a more realistic aim is for the year-on-year reduction of the number of investigations and convictions, resulting in an overall increase in the standard of animal welfare.

### Background

Until 2007, the laws relating to animal cruelty were found in the Protection of Animals Act 1911. Section 1 (1)(a) of the Act made it an offence to cruelly beat, kick, ill-treat, torture, or terrify any domestic or captive animal, or wantonly or unreasonably to do or omit to do any act which causes such an animal unnecessary suffering. The AWA in England and Wales significantly updates this 97-year-old legislation and, most importantly, introduces a welfare offence<sup>2</sup>. This imposes a duty on a person responsible for an animal to take reasonable steps to ensure the needs of that animal are met to the extent required by good practice. For the purposes of the Act, an animal's needs include its need for: a suitable environment; a suitable diet; to exhibit normal behaviour patterns; any need to be housed with, or apart from, other animals; and to be protected from pain, suffering, injury and disease. The offence of causing cruelty and unnecessary suffering in the 1911 Act has been updated in the AWA<sup>3</sup>.

Since 1824, the Society has conducted prosecutions of those alleged to have committed offences related to animals. Prosecutions are taken to bring offenders to justice and to protect animals from suffering by deterring others from offending. When the RSPCA takes a prosecution, the Code for Crown Prosecutors<sup>4</sup> is applied and the evidence and public interest in bringing a prosecution is considered. The Society has a consistently high success rate with its prosecutions – in 2008, 97.6 per cent of the RSPCA's prosecutions in England and Wales were successful. Although the RSPCA does take prosecutions using more than 30 pieces of animal legislation, the vast majority were taken under the 1911 Act and are now taken under the AWA. Data on the numbers of convictions achieved by the RSPCA under Section 1 (1)(a) of the POAA and subsequently the AWA are therefore a useful indicator to assess trends in England and Wales.

### The indicator figures

Each year, the RSPCA receives more than one million phone calls to its cruelty and advice line. The calls include animal cruelty incident reports, members of the public seeking advice and concerns about the welfare of animals in England and Wales. In 2008, 1,098,680 telephone calls were received. During the same period, the Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SSPCA)<sup>5</sup> received 126,250 phone calls and the Ulster Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (USPCA)<sup>6</sup> in Northern Ireland received more than 1,000 calls each week. Therefore in 2008 about 1.3 million phone calls concerning the welfare of animals in the UK were taken by just three organisations. There are likely to be many more reports that are received by these charities via written correspondence and to



**THERE HAS BEEN A RISE IN THE NUMBER OF CRUELTY COMPLAINTS INVESTIGATED.**

other organisations such as the police and local authorities.

Telephone calls made to the RSPCA lead to the majority of investigations the RSPCA carries out each day. Figure 10 shows the number of cruelty complaints investigated between 2004 and 2008. The number of cruelty complaints that led to investigations was at its highest in 2008 and since 2004 the numbers have steadily increased from 109,985 to 140,575 in 2008. However, many of the phone calls received by the RSPCA are from members of the public seeking advice and therefore will not lead to an investigation.

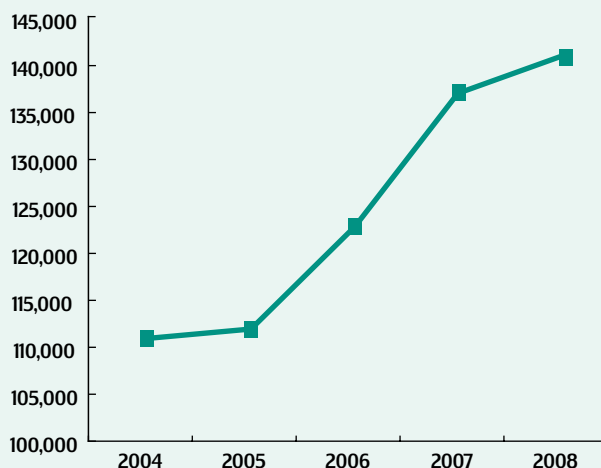
Trying to explain the reason for this huge increase in cruelty complaints over the past five years is difficult, as there are a number of factors that could encourage the public to call the RSPCA. The increase doesn't simply mean that cruelty or neglect of animals is getting worse or that more animals in England and Wales are unnecessarily suffering, although this could be true. Complaints could be rising because the public is more aware of whom to call if they see an incident or require advice about an animal welfare problem. Prior to the AWA coming into force, there were many public awareness campaigns and a lot of media information about the proposed changes in law and the need for animal protection laws to be strengthened.

A series of RSPCA commissioned polls<sup>7</sup> conducted between August 2006 and April 2007 demonstrated how in the months leading up to the implementation of the Act in England and Wales (April and March 2007 respectively), knowledge of the change in the law grew substantially. In August 2006, just 14 per cent of those questioned had heard about a change in the law, but when the same question was asked eight months later this awareness had grown to 57 per cent. This awareness of the law change or knowledge about animal welfare could have encouraged more people to contact the RSPCA and other organisations with complaints. It is also likely that people are more informed about whom to make complaints to because they have better access to knowledge and information via the media.

The number of convictions for animal cruelty under the POAA and the AWA is shown in Figure 11. Since 2004, the number of convictions has changed year on year – this is looking at both Acts and combining the numbers in 2007 and 2008. In 2005 and 2007 the number of convictions were similar, but in 2004 and 2006 there were around 300 fewer convictions. To explain the reason why prosecutions and convictions rise or decrease each year is extremely difficult. If the figures increase in one year, but decrease the following and then rise again, it is too simplistic to simply say that in a certain year people were less or more cruel. There is a fairly stark jump in the number of convictions between 2007 and 2008 – 1,780 and 2,408 respectively. Again it is wrong to assume that in 2008 animal welfare was worse than previous years. With the introduction of the AWA and the 'welfare offence', for the first time people can be taken to court and subsequently convicted for not ensuring that the needs of their animals are met. With the introduction of this new offence, it is not surprising that convictions have risen. The RSPCA predicted that the AWA and the new offence could lead to an increase in the number of cases submitted to its prosecutions department, which would lead to more cases being taken to court and more people being convicted.

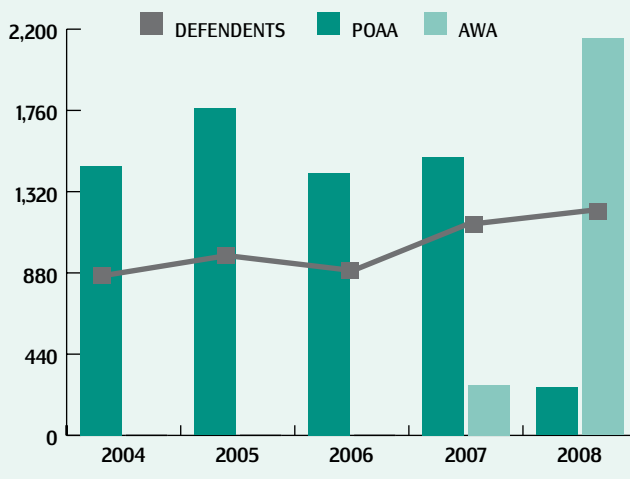
It is difficult to make any firm conclusions about the figures and trends until the new Act has been in place for a number of years. However, while people continue to fail to meet the welfare needs of their animals and cause suffering, there is a need to continue to investigate and subsequently prosecute those that carry out such crimes.

Figure 10: Cruelty complaints investigated, 2004–2008



Data source: RSPCA.

Figure 11: Number of convictions and defendants convicted for offences under the Protection of Animals Act 1911, 2004–2008, and the Animal Welfare Act 2006, 2007–2008



Data source: RSPCA.

FOOTNOTES AND REFERENCES

- 1 Some of the investigations and convictions are taken by other authorities but are assisted by the RSPCA.
- 2 Animal Welfare Act 2006, s9.
- 3 Animal Welfare Act 2006, s4.
- 4 [www.cps.gov.uk/victims\\_witnesses/code.html](http://www.cps.gov.uk/victims_witnesses/code.html)
- 5 [www.scottishspca.org](http://www.scottishspca.org)
- 6 [www.uspca.co.uk](http://www.uspca.co.uk)
- 7 Ipsos MORI poll: Results based on 1,011 telephone interviews conducted with adults aged 16+ in Great Britain from 13–15 April 2007; 1,007 telephone interviews conducted with adults aged 16+ in Great Britain from 9–10 December 2006; 1,005 telephone interviews conducted with adults aged 16+ in Great Britain from 17–18 November 2006; and 1,003 telephone interviews conducted with adults aged 16+ in Great Britain from 11–13 August 2006.