

Summary:
Northern Ireland

PAW

PDSA ANIMAL WELLBEING

REPORT

2018

The essential
insight into
the wellbeing
of UK pets

Methodology

This summary provides an overview of our key findings for pets in Northern Ireland from our 2018 PDSA Animal Wellbeing (PAW) Report.

We surveyed a demographically representative sample of 4,639 UK pet owners in partnership with YouGov for the main Report, and we present here the results for the subset of these owners living in Northern Ireland (NI).

Our total sample size was 237 dog, cat, and rabbit owners; aged 18 or over; and living in Northern Ireland. Fieldwork was undertaken between 9th and 19th January 2018. The survey was conducted online and statistically analysed

by YouGov. Percentages were rounded to the nearest whole number. A minimum sample size of 50 was set to ensure robust results. Where a sample size of 50 was not available (i.e. for rabbit data), UK averages are shown.

UK figures are taken from the main PAW Report and full methods are detailed therein. They have only been given for comparison where regional results are **statistically significantly different** from them. These have been highlighted in bold for clarity.

In Northern Ireland we surveyed ...

119 dog owners

111 cat owners

7 rabbit owners

You can download the full PAW Report from our website pdsa.org.uk/pawreport

100 years

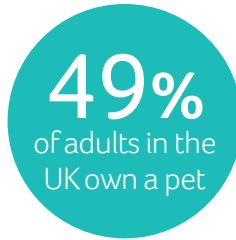
As the UK's leading veterinary charity, PDSA is committed to identifying and addressing barriers to pet wellbeing. After 100 years of working every single day to improve the lives of our nation's pets, we can reflect on how far we have come, and how far we still have to go.

The findings of our PAW Report continue to provide a valuable insight into the wellbeing of our nation's pets. We're incredibly proud that over the last eight years these findings have helped form the basis of campaigns and collaborative initiatives across the animal welfare sector and veterinary profession, to help improve pet wellbeing and give our nation's pets the great lives they deserve.



Population

Population estimates are usually calculated using a combination of data collected for the PAW Report, a nationally representative survey of UK adults, and official government statistics.



However for NI there were insufficient responses to accurately estimate population sizes. UK figures from the full PAW Report are given here for illustration.



24%

of adults in the UK own a dog



25%

of adults in the UK own a cat



2%

of adults in the UK own a rabbit

The 5 Welfare Needs

This report is structured around owners' knowledge and application of the Animal Welfare Act and the 5 Welfare Needs that are enshrined within them.

In Northern Ireland ...

38% of owners state they are familiar with the Welfare of Animals Act (Northern Ireland) 2011

22% of owners feel very informed with all 5 Welfare Needs

but only

11% of owners are able to correctly identify all 5 Welfare Needs



Similar to UK figures, Northern Irish owners feeling very informed of the 5 Welfare Needs did not translate to the ability correctly identify them from a list and few were familiar with the relevant Animal Welfare Act.

Pre-purchase

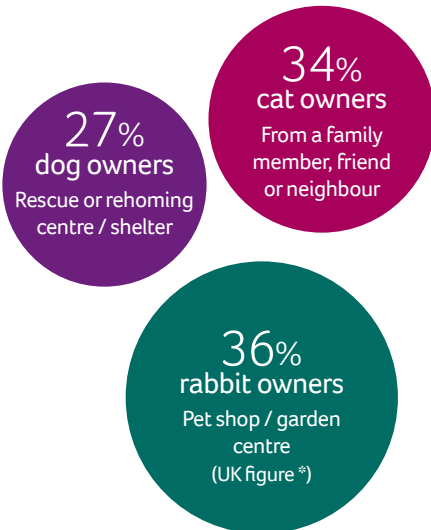
Despite pre-purchase research being a vital part of responsible pet ownership, 30% of Northern Irish pet owners did none at all before choosing a pet.

in Northern Ireland...

Only 24% of pet owners visited their pet on more than one occasion before taking them home (worse than the UK average 35%)


16% of pet owners would consider buying from a puppy farm


Top places NI owners got their pet...



Costs of pet ownership

 **79%** of NI dog owners underestimated the minimum lifetime cost of dog ownership (worse than the UK average 68%)

 **97%** of NI cat owners underestimated the minimum lifetime cost of cat ownership

 **92%** of UK* rabbit owners underestimated the minimum lifetime cost of rabbit ownership

For details of how we calculated the costs of ownership and what owners were asked to include in this estimate, please refer to the full report available online at pdsa.org.uk/pawreport

in summary ...

Fewer owners in Northern Ireland than in the whole of the UK visited their pet on more than one occasion before taking them home, and other figures reflect similar issues to UK averages.

*All results for rabbits are UK averages due to our nationally representative dataset containing too few responses to report statistically significant figures for NI.

Dogs



Environment

More dogs in NI are missing out on being walked daily compared to the UK average which could lead to behavioural and health issues

- **28% of dogs are walked less than once a day (worse than the UK average 16%)**
- 50% of owners have one or more concerns about walking their dog

Diet

NI results are similar to UK averages, with dog obesity remaining a key problem

- 26% of dog owners matched the shape of their pet to an overweight or obese silhouette (body condition score (BCS) 4/5 or 5/5)
- 52% of owners did not know the weight or BCS of their dog

Behaviour

More dogs in NI go without the most basic training, which could manifest as poorly behaved dogs ill-equipped to be good pets

- **21% of dog owners haven't trained their dog in any way (worse than the UK average 12%)**
- 81% of dog owners report that they would like to change at least one of their dog's behaviours
- 84% of dogs are reported to be afraid of something (e.g. fireworks, thunder and lightning)
- 39% of dogs are afraid of fireworks

Companionship

NI results are similar to UK averages, with a high proportion of dogs being left alone for longer than advised

- 29% of dogs are left alone for 5 or more hours on a typical weekday
- 4% of owners report that they'd like to change their dog showing signs of distress when left alone

Health

NI results are similar to UK averages, with many still missing out on vital preventive care

- 13% of dogs aren't registered with a vet
- 55% of dogs aren't insured
- 14% of dogs aren't microchipped
- 26% of dogs aren't vaccinated with a primary course when young

in summary ...

Dog owners in Northern Ireland echo shortfalls seen in the whole of the UK regarding their dogs' Welfare Needs. In Northern Ireland, a focus to encourage owners to walk and train their dogs could improve the human-animal bond as well as dogs' wellbeing.



Cats



Environment

NI results are similar to the UK average, with a lack of resources a major problem

- In homes with multiple cats, owners aren't providing enough scratching posts or water bowls for their cats (recommended minimum is number of cats + 1)



Diet

A higher proportion of NI owners are unsure of the weight or body condition score of their cat compared to the UK average, and obesity remains an issue

- 56% of cat owners matched the shape of their pet to an overweight or obese silhouette (body condition score (BCS) 4/5 or 5/5)
- **77% of owners don't know the weight or BCS of their cat (worse than UK average 65%)**



Behaviour

NI results are similar to UK averages, with increased complaints of hunting wildlife possibly reflecting a larger rural population

- 74% of cat owners report that they would like to change at least one of their cat's behaviours
- Top three behaviours that owners wanted to change were scratching carpets, scratching furniture and killing wildlife
- 85% of cats were reported to be afraid of something. The top three fears were unfamiliar people, vacuum cleaners and travelling in the car.



Companionship

NI results are similar to UK averages, revealing poor owner understanding of cats' solitary natures

- 48% of cats live in a multi-cat household
- 26% of cats live with another cat or cats that they don't get on with



Health

Fewer owners in NI are providing for the preventive health needs of their cats, resulting in several severe shortfalls in this area

- **33% of cats aren't registered with a vet (worse than UK average 19%)**
- **20% of cats aren't neutered (worse than the UK average 9%)**
- **39% of cats aren't microchipped (worse than the UK average 32%)**
- 41% of cats aren't vaccinated with a primary course when young

in summary ...

As well as issues noted in the main Report, in Northern Ireland there are concerns due to a lower uptake of preventive healthcare compared with the whole UK, coupled with the fact fewer owners are aware of their cats' body shape or weight. Education focus in these areas is needed.

Rabbits

(UK)



Environment

Across the UK, rabbits are facing life in small, barren hutches

- 28% of UK rabbits are kept in inadequate housing

Diet

Across the UK, despite some improvement many rabbits are still fed inappropriate diets

- 20% of UK rabbits are fed rabbit muesli as part of their main diet
- Only 53% of UK rabbit owners feed the daily recommended amount of hay
- 77% of UK rabbit owners don't know the weight or body condition score of their rabbit

Behaviour

Across the UK, rabbits' natural behaviours are being misunderstood as problems

- 54% of UK rabbit owners want to change at least one of their rabbit's behaviours
- Top three behaviours owners wanted to change were thumping their back feet, digging up ground and / or carpets, and chewing furniture etc.
- 66% of UK rabbits are reported to be afraid of something (e.g. loud noises, fireworks, unfamiliar people)

Companionship

Across the UK, despite being highly social, many rabbits are kept on their own

- 54% of UK rabbits live alone

Health

Across the UK, the preventive health of many rabbits is being neglected

- 34% of UK rabbits aren't currently registered with a vet
- 46% of UK rabbits aren't neutered
- 49% of UK rabbits aren't vaccinated with a primary course when young

in summary ...

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The reality for pet rabbits is unfortunately far from having all their needs provided for. This is highlighted as one of the veterinary professions' top concerns for them: a complete lack of care and/or being forgotten about. Issues across all 5 Welfare Needs must be addressed in order to improve their wellbeing.
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Help us improve pet wellbeing

Every year the PAW Report gives us essential insights into pet wellbeing in the UK and this year we have released results for the UK's constituent nations and England's regions to help tailor local strategies.

We'd love for the findings of this year's Report to again be used by the sector to continue to stimulate change – to enable us all to acknowledge the most pressing issues and tackle them head on. This will ensure continued momentum in the drive to improve the welfare of pets in Northern Ireland and across the UK.

Only through hard work and collaboration can we tackle these issues in order to see improvements in key areas such as obesity, loneliness, behavioural issues, pre-purchase decision making and more in future

**Saving pets is what we do.
Every. Single. Day.**

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