



ANIMAL WELFARE INDICATORS

Wales

www.politicalanimal.org.uk/wales

Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

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ANIMAL WELFARE INDICATORS

Wales

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Foreword

MARK WATTS, RSPCA CHIEF EXECUTIVE

The RSPCA is delighted to have produced the first set of animal welfare indicators for Wales. It is especially timely that this was achieved during the year the people of Wales voted yes in its referendum, which has seen animal welfare formally devolved to the Welsh Government.

It is also an opportunity to celebrate the welcome piece of legislation that has seen the use of electric shock collars for dogs and cats banned in Wales – the first law of this kind to be passed in the UK. This year has seen the first prosecution taken under the new law with the subsequent conviction of a man who used a shock collar on his dog.

Historically, we have seen Wales implement the Animal Welfare Act 2006 a month before England. Wales was the first country within Great Britain to implement Codes of Practice for cats, dogs, and equines under the Act and is the only country to have a Code of Practice for rabbits.

In 2010, another first for Wales and animal welfare saw 81 percent of Assembly Members, staff and civil servants vote in favour of the Assembly switching to Freedom Food-labelled produce. Freedom Food eggs and salmon have now been introduced in the National Assembly for Wales – the first legislature to do so.

The indicators in this report aim to provide a snapshot of what is happening in Wales today with regard to animal welfare. Data has been obtained from a variety of sources including the Welsh Government's unique Companion Animal Welfare Enhancement Scheme (CAWES) and our own statistics, many of which have for the first time been produced solely for Wales. We hope that by understanding and benchmarking the issues faced by animals we can continue to strive to make improvements to their lives, and for this information to help inform all of us where our efforts need to be focused.

The RSPCA has a strong visible 'on the ground' presence in Wales, with 28 inspectors, five animal collection officers, five animal welfare officers and two animal centres providing a twenty-four hour service for animals in need. Our fourteen local Branches, RSPCA shops and one Branch animal centre, all of which are run by volunteers, work tirelessly to provide advice, rehome and rehabilitate animals and provide microchipping, subsidised neutering and promote the welfare of animals in Wales.

We are proud of our work with the Welsh Government and the National Assembly for Wales, and have since 1999 had a dedicated member of staff to liaise with the Government. Our work together is more important than ever.

We hope over the forthcoming years, the information detailed in this report will be expanded; new indicators introduced covering a wider variety of issues and animals, and to see the Welsh Government and the RSPCA continue to strive for high standards of animal welfare.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Watts'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Foreword

JOHN GRIFFITHS AM, MINISTER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT



John Griffiths

At the Welsh Government we are proud of our record on animal welfare issues and we have the opportunity to do even more to protect animals in Wales. The implementation of the Animal Welfare Act (2006); four Codes of Practices for common pet animals; and a ban on shock collars in Wales were all firsts in the UK, as were revisions for sheep and cattle codes, but we know there is much to be done.

The Animal Health and Welfare Strategy for Great Britain (GB AHWS) has entered its sixth year, but we and the Animal Health & Welfare Strategy (AHWS) Wales Steering Group have agreed to review and assess how we move the Strategy agenda forward in Wales for the next four years and beyond.

In the companion animal sector, another Wales-only innovative animal welfare project, the Companion Animal Welfare Enhancement Scheme (CAWES) (2008–2011), provided us with crucial data and a snapshot of some of the animal welfare issues facing us in Wales. Dog breeding and the emotive issue of puppy farming, or ‘unlicensed breeders’, emerged as a clear front-runner in the need for an urgent review of the existing legislation. Draft legislation born out of the considerations of a Task and Finish Group was consulted upon earlier this year and following some revisions and a proposed second consultation at the time of writing, it is our intention to make new legislation to protect these animals, in 2012.

The Animal Welfare Network for Wales (AWNW) is unique to Wales and an excellent forum and representative body of the third sector animal welfare organisations. The AWNW – and the secretariat provided by the RSPCA – is one of the keys to our development work on animal welfare and this I am sure will be born out as the CAWES successor scheme, the Cross Sector Companion Animal Welfare forum, develops with the assistance of the AWNW.

The Welsh Government is committed to the continued vigilance and good stockmanship by farmers in the fight against animal disease in Wales, we work with the industry to interpret and implement European regulations whilst raising standards of animal health and welfare in Wales. The recent EC Broiler Directive was implemented in Wales and introduced a maximum stocking density of 33kg/m² more akin to the Freedom Food scheme standard. We continue to receive positive indication from the Egg Marketing Inspectorate that the egg industry in Wales will have converted from conventional cage production to free-range, barn, organic or enriched production by 1 January 2012.

It would be impossible to discuss animal welfare standards in Wales without recognising the contribution the RSPCA makes. In England and Wales it undertakes more animal welfare enforcement operations, particularly in domestic premises than the formal statutory bodies. I am though greatly encouraged by the amount of joint working between the RSPCA and local authorities in Wales where the CAWES scheme has aided such relationships especially in the larger farm and commercial cases. In all of this, partnership is key. Local authorities, the Animal Welfare Network Wales and other key animal welfare organisations all have a role and responsibility to inform and enforce the law and to raise standards.

I was very proud to have been appointed the Minister with responsibility for animal welfare for it is a subject close to my own heart and one I also believe in firmly. As a Government we recognise too the importance placed on the issue by the Welsh public, our own pilot survey revealed that just under half of all households in Wales have a pet. We also have a proud farming heritage where animals are key to the industry and we are responsible for zoo animals. Thus animals touch our lives in many ways. It is for this reason I welcome this report by the RSPCA and I look forward to working with them and others in protecting them in our society.

Introduction

Animal Welfare Indicators – Wales brings together for the first time a collection of indicators that provide an insight into what is happening in Wales with regard to animal welfare. This report highlights a range of welfare issues that impact on a variety of animals, and intends to create a picture of the state of animal welfare in Wales.

Measuring animal welfare

The animal welfare issues facing Wales are diverse, vast and limitless. This collection of indicators is just a snapshot of some of the important current animal welfare issues facing Wales, as any index cannot cover every single animal or consider each of the welfare implications associated with them.

For a number of years the RSPCA has recognised the importance of measuring the welfare of animals and has produced five reports that looked at the state of animal welfare in the UK as a whole¹. Each report monitored change, both positive and negative, highlighted how welfare can be measured objectively and encouraged research, data collection, consistency and regular publication of statistics. They acknowledged this can be challenging, but vital if improvements are to be made to the lives of animals. This ethos continues in *Animal Welfare Indicators – Wales*.

**Wales encourages
the continuation of
partnership working
across the welfare spectrum
which is already
prevalent in Wales.**

Why Wales?

The concept of producing an animal welfare publication that focuses solely on Wales was established because of two important factors. Firstly the 'yes' vote from the Welsh public in the May referendum saw animal welfare formally devolved legislatively (with some exceptions). It is therefore important that from a welfare and protection perspective information about animals is looked at from a Welsh, and not UK, point of view. Secondly the encouragement and support from the Welsh Government has enabled the RSPCA to bring together this collection of indicators about animals in Wales.

A publication of this nature intends to not only benchmark and demonstrate 'where we are' with animal welfare in Wales, but aims to be thought provoking, encourage change and make recommendations to how improvements can be made. It is important for many reasons, not only from an animal protection perspective, and is essential for informing government both national and local, other stakeholders and the Welsh public. It is hoped this can be a valuable guide to what is happening in Wales with regard to animal welfare and means that problems can be identified and addressed, solutions established, and positive learnings replicated across different issues.

Partnerships

Animal Welfare Indicators – Wales encourages the continuation of partnership working across the welfare spectrum which is already prevalent in Wales. Since 2006, the Animal Welfare Network for Wales (AWN²) has brought together a range of organisations including vets, local authorities and animal welfare groups, "...working as one to improve the welfare of all animals in Wales."² To date there are 146 member organisations that make up a large representative of the animal welfare sector across Wales. The Network provides a number of services for its members such as information facilitation of political developments related to animal welfare and was an active partner in the former Welsh Government administrated Companion Animal Welfare Enhancement Scheme (CAWES).

¹ *The welfare state: Five years measuring animal welfare in the UK 2005–2009*. 2010. RSPCA.

² www.awnwales.org

It is hoped that this welfare indicator report can be utilised by such collaborations as the AWW and C-SCAW, increase discussion about relevant animal issues and encourage others to contribute with data and experience so that animal welfare in Wales can continue to move forward.

Set up in 2008, CAWES was established to promote companion animal welfare in Wales with a focus on partnership working in Wales, and provided new funding to complement the existing animal welfare provision. Local authorities, animal welfare organisations and the Network worked together alongside others who have an interest or animal welfare remit including the police, vets and Animal Health. Funding was made available for special projects on companion animal issues that were of public concern and its education remit has seen its target audience of 7–11 year olds receive talks, literature and activity days about looking after pet animals.

Baseline data about companion animal welfare issues in Wales was collected by local authorities for three years, some of which has been utilised in this report. With the CAWES project now ended, a new initiative has been established. The Cross Sector Companion Animal Welfare (C-SCAW) forum champions partnership working with representatives from government, local authorities, animal welfare organisations and the Network.

The RSPCA is also one of the 17 members who sit on the Animal Health and Welfare Strategy (AHWS) steering group. The group advises and assists the Welsh Government on a variety of key issues that impact on the AHWS in Wales.

It is hoped that this welfare indicator report can be utilised by such collaborations as the AWW and C-SCAW, increase discussion about relevant animal issues and encourage others to contribute with data and experience so that animal welfare in Wales can continue to move forward.

The indicators

CAWES and now C-SCAW are extremely important for companion or pet animal issues in Wales. As the Government's National Survey for Wales 2009–2010 pilot survey revealed, 43 percent of households in Wales own a pet and of those households 61 percent own at least one dog³. This is reflected in this report with many of the indicators focusing on pet or companion animals.

Each of the indicators identifies the welfare concerns and any laws relevant to those animals, and outlines the current situation. Recommendations for improvement are suggested and key statistics are highlighted. Currently, the majority of issues use the most recent available data. In future it is hoped that regular measurement, data collection and publication of statistics will continue so trends can be identified, and this information can be fed into important decisions that impact on the welfare of animals.

By identifying how Wales is performing with regard to its animals, it is hoped that everyone involved with animal welfare – from the public to those involved in making laws – will focus on areas where improvements are required, where it is possible to find appropriate solutions and will learn from and be encouraged by positive changes and recognise Wales as a leader in animal welfare.



Eggs

NUMBER AND PROPORTION OF HENS REARED IN NON-CAGE SYSTEMS

ANIMAL WELFARE CONCERNS

There are several key welfare issues that relate to laying hens kept in cages. Conventional barren battery cages are to be banned from 2012, however so-called 'enriched' battery cages will still be allowed. These cages provide a minimum of just 50cm² extra usable space for each hen, compared to conventional cages, with limited facilities. Evidence indicates that neither cage system adequately satisfies the birds' full physical or behavioural requirements¹. Non-cage or 'alternative' systems – free-range, barn or organic – allow hens to move around more freely, exercise and carry out natural behaviours such as dustbathing and foraging.

Legislation

European Council Directive 1997/74/EC of 19 July 1999 laying down minimum standards for the protection of laying hens. Implemented through domestic legislation in 2002 and replaced by the Welfare of Farmed Animals (Wales) Regulations 2007.

THE CURRENT SITUATION

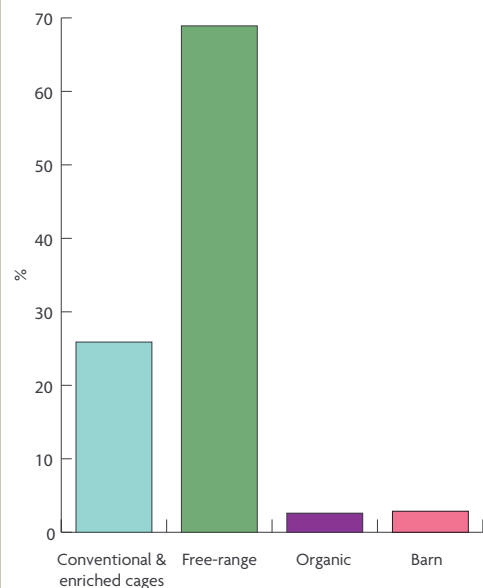
As of July 2011, the majority of laying hens in Wales are reared cage-free, with 1,571,643 hens kept in free-range, organic or barn systems and 553,630 reared in either conventional or enriched battery cages. There are 366 laying hen holdings of which just nine are producing battery eggs. However, there are a large number of hens reared in these farms with less than three percent of farms responsible for 26 percent of the total number of birds.

It is extremely encouraging that three-quarters of all hens in Wales are currently reared in higher welfare systems.

»» RSPCA recommendation

The RSPCA believes that all hens should be kept in properly managed free-range or barn systems which can provide hens with much higher standards of welfare compared with cages, and would like to see all cages banned and converted to 100 per cent non-cage systems that are compliant with the RSPCA's welfare standards for laying hens².

The proportion of hens kept in different systems as of July 2011



Data source: Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency.

»» For more information and statistics go to: www.politicalanimal.org.uk/wales

Telephone calls

NUMBER OF TELEPHONE CALLS MADE TO THE RSPCA

ANIMAL WELFARE CONCERNS

The RSPCA's National Control Centre (NCC) is staffed around the clock and allows the public to report neglected, injured, mistreated or distressed animals 24 hours a day. On average the RSPCA receives a call to its cruelty line every 30 seconds from someone in Wales and England. Its advice team based at the Society's headquarters also handles a large number of phone and online enquires about a wide variety of animal welfare issues. The majority of work carried out by RSPCA inspectors stems from reports made to the Society's NCC cruelty line.

THE CURRENT SITUATION

In 2010, the RSPCA received about 60,000 phone calls that originated from Wales to its cruelty line – 0300 1234 999 – and its advice team. Therefore approximately one in fifty people in Wales will have called the NCC in the past year to report an incident or to seek advice about an animal.

The number of phone calls the RSPCA receives from the Welsh public could indicate a number of things:

- the public are more aware of who to phone if they see an animal in distress or being cruelly treated
- mistreatment to animals is high and more animals are in need of assistance
- the RSPCA is more effective at handling and actioning phone calls
- the public is acting responsibly and is seeking advice for their own or other people's animals.

60,000 telephone calls
were made
to the RSPCA from Wales

»» For more information and statistics go to: www.politicalanimal.org.uk/wales

Public awareness

THE PROPORTION OF PEOPLE WHO KNOW WHO TO CONTACT ABOUT STRAY DOGS AND DOG FOULING

ANIMAL WELFARE CONCERNS

Local authorities are responsible for stray dogs. They also have the power to introduce and enforce dog control orders under the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act (S55), which includes tough penalties for fouling. Local authorities also have a duty to keep highways and public land clear of dog excrement. Stray dogs and dog fouling are caused by irresponsible dog ownership and place an unnecessary financial burden on local authorities. Straying dogs, if not returned to their owner, are rehomed directly, given to animal welfare charities or rehoming organisations, or are euthanased. Dog fouling is not only unpleasant, but also dangerous with the biggest threat to public health being from the infection toxocarasis, which can affect both children and dogs. In 2006, dog faeces was found in 14 percent of streets and 57 percent of parks in Wales¹.

Legislation

Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005 – implemented April 2008.
Animal Welfare Act 2006.
Environment Protection Act 1990.

»» RSPCA recommendation

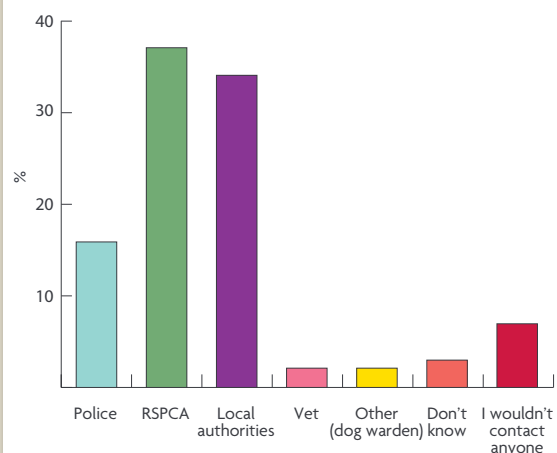
With the majority of people in Wales aware who to contact about dog fouling, it seems that public awareness campaigns by local authorities or organisations such as Keep Wales Tidy, have successfully got the message across. Awareness about local authorities responsibilities with regard to stray dogs is fairly low and therefore more needs to be done to communicate to the public about who they should contact.

THE CURRENT SITUATION

Although the RSPCA has no legal responsibility for stray dogs, it regularly receives phone calls from people who are unsure who to contact about strays. To find out if the Welsh general public know who to contact to report a stray, the RSPCA commissioned an opinion poll which also asked a question to find out if there was awareness of who to contact about dog fouling².

Of those questioned, 37 percent of Welsh adults would contact the RSPCA to report a stray dog with 34 percent contacting their local authority/council. However of the two percent who gave 'other' as a response, the majority said they would contact a dog warden – indicating a slight confusion about who dog wardens work for. A further 16 percent would call the police. When asked about dog fouling 85 percent would contact their local authority with just one percent calling the RSPCA.

Who would the public contact to report a stray dog?



»» For more information and statistics go to: www.politicalanimal.org.uk/wales



Stray dogs

THE FATE OF STRAY DOGS COLLECTED BY LOCAL AUTHORITIES

ANIMAL WELFARE CONCERNS

Stray dogs in Wales are the sole responsibility of local authorities that are bearing the burden of irresponsible pet owners who allow their dogs to stray. Once in the 'system', there are a number of eventualities that will take place once a stray dog is collected. Ideally all dogs will be returned to their owner or keeper, but unfortunately this is not always the case. Healthy stray dogs that cannot be returned to their owners are rehomed directly to the public by local authorities, given to animal welfare and rehoming charities, or, in some cases, euthanased due to injury/sickness or after the statutory seven-day period¹.

Legislation

Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005 – implemented April 2008.
Animal Welfare Act 2006.
Control of Dogs Order 1992, SI 1992/901, art 2(1).

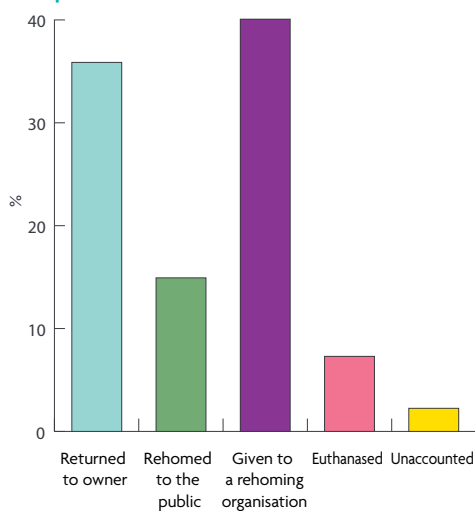
Political situation

Local authorities are experiencing major cuts to budgets therefore it is getting even harder for some to meet their basic statutory requirements to provide stray dog care.

THE CURRENT SITUATION

The RSPCA surveyed all 22 local authorities in Wales, for the financial year ending 31 March 2010. The survey revealed that 8,039 stray dogs were collected by Welsh local authorities². Of those just over one-third were returned to their owners. The remaining 5,224 dogs were either given to an animal welfare or rehoming organisation, were rehomed directly to the public or were euthanased. Seven percent of all stray dogs were euthanased, with 106 euthanased on non-medical grounds that is after the statutory seven-day period – accounting for less than one percent of all stray dogs collected by Welsh local authorities.

The fate of stray dogs in Wales,
1 April 2009 – 31 March 2010



RSPCA recommendation

The number of stray dogs returned to their owners is still worryingly low. One way of assisting local authorities in reuniting dogs with their owners is by encouraging owners and keepers to microchip their dogs. Microchipping can help with proving ownership of an animal and is very useful when dealing with incidents of pet theft, cruelty and straying dogs, and is one of the most reliable methods of tracing pets and/or their owners. The RSPCA recognises that dog owners must behave more responsibly by ensuring their dog has a collar and tag³, and by encouraging microchipping and neutering to reduce both the number of long-term strays and the dogs desire to stray in the first place. The RSPCA encourages a consistent stray dog service across Wales through the introduction of a mandatory regulation which requires a dog to be microchipped and identified annually on a register.

»» For more information and statistics go to: www.politicalanimal.org.uk/wales

¹ Under Section 6 of the CNEA 2005, a dog must be detained for seven days before it can be disposed of, that is rehomed or euthanased.

² Figure based on a 86 percent response rate (19 out of 22 local authorities).

³ A dog owner has a legal requirement to ensure their dog whilst on a highway or in a public place wears a collar with the name and address of the owner inscribed on it.

Education

NUMBER OF LESSONS ON ANIMAL WELFARE PROVIDED BY SCHOOLS

ANIMAL WELFARE CONCERNS

In order for children and young people to understand the role of animals within society and their communities, and be able to make a positive contribution to animals' welfare, they need to experience animal welfare education at regular intervals during their school careers. Basic requirements of formal education as defined by the curriculum¹ only include 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.

THE CURRENT SITUATION

In 2009 and 2010, a questionnaire was sent to a representative sample (approximately 25 percent) of primary and secondary schools across the UK². The survey found that in consecutive years in Wales, schools are likely to offer between three to six lessons on animal welfare, so by the time a pupil leaves either primary or secondary school they would have had at least three animal welfare lessons.

Pupils in Wales are more likely to receive animal welfare education up to the age of 12 during Personal and Social Education (PSE) and science lessons. Subjects or areas of learning such as PSE promote the development of respect for others, an understanding of rights and responsibilities and active citizenship. Science and other associated areas of learning, such as knowledge and understanding of the world, provide an opportunity to consider the role of animals in our lives, how our behaviour can have a detrimental effect on wildlife, and highlight moral and ethical dilemmas such as using animals for research and testing.

»» RSPCA recommendation

The RSPCA would like to see schools using the opportunities the curriculum presents to explore the role of animals and their welfare in our lives and within a civilised society. Animal welfare education therefore should be an integral part of children's formal education.

By the time a **pupil** leaves school in Wales, they will have had between **three** and **six** animal welfare lessons.

»» For more information and statistics go to: www.politicalanimal.org.uk/wales

Puppy breeding

NUMBER OF LICENSED AND UNLICENSED DOG BREEDING ESTABLISHMENTS

ANIMAL WELFARE CONCERNS

There are a number of issues associated with the breeding of dogs that are of great concern to the RSPCA. These include welfare and health issues linked with the breeding of pedigree dogs, irresponsible breeders or 'puppy farmers', and current standards for licensed breeders.

THE CURRENT SITUATION

The Companion Animal Welfare Enhancement Scheme (CAWES) data for dog breeding identifies nearly 2,000 establishments in Wales that are breeding dogs². The biggest growth in numbers is in the exempt category that is those operators/owners of breeding dogs that are exempt from requiring a licence as per the legislation. In 2008/2009, 533 establishments were identified, this rose to 1,587 in 2010/11. This growth is due to increased identification and investigation by local authorities and the CAWES Special Projects on internet trading, dog breeding and classified adverts offering dogs for sale that identified breeding dogs in this category. The number of unlicensed dog breeding establishments has dropped considerably with breeders being moved into the other two categories. This is due to better identification and investigation, and action taken when required.

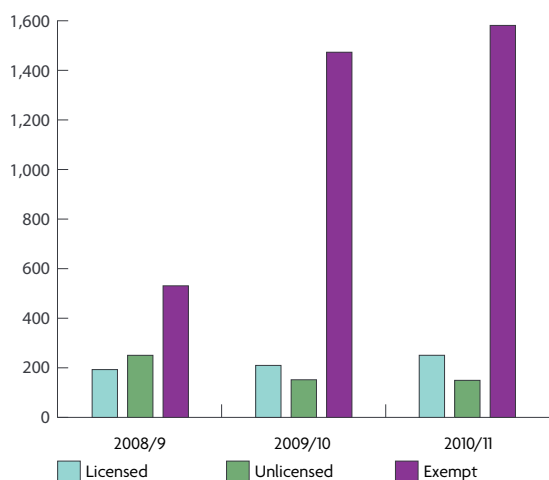
Legislation

Breeding of Dogs Act 1973, Breeding of Dogs Act 1991 and as amended to both by Breeding and Sale of Dogs Act 1999. Animal Welfare Act 2006.

Context

The Welsh Government has the power to repeal the existing primary legislation, the Breeding of Dogs Act 1973 and replace it with new Regulations. The Government's 2010 Task and Finish Group was set up to review legislation and guidance to take into account the new provisions as set out in the Animal Welfare Act 2006¹. More than 500 consultation responses were received on the proposals to change the current legislation. An announcement concerning the next stage of the process is due in November 2011.

Number of dog breeding establishments in Wales, 2008–2011



»» RSPCA recommendation

The RSPCA welcomes the Welsh Government's commitment to introduce new Regulations that will give greater powers to tackle bad practice in the dog breeding industry, especially the proposals that require more breeders to have a licence, a minimum staff ration and mandatory microchipping. The RSPCA is keen for content that has previously been 'guidance' to be enshrined as mandatory standards in new legislation, which will help ensure that a consistent approach of enforcement will improve the welfare standards at breeding establishments.

»» For more information and statistics go to: www.politicalanimal.org.uk/wales

¹ <http://new.wales.gov.uk/about/cabinet/cabinetstatements/2010/100707dog/?lang=en&status=close.d>

² <http://wales.gov.uk/docs/drah/publications/110915cawesbaselineen.pdf>



Livery yards

NUMBER OF LIVERY YARDS AND TOTAL NUMBER OF ANIMALS IN THESE ESTABLISHMENTS

ANIMAL WELFARE CONCERNS

Livery yards (where an owner pays a fee to keep their horses and ponies stabled) are not required to be licensed and are not regularly inspected by any authority. Therefore, there is no way of knowing the standards of care in which equines are kept and it is difficult to trace any problems due to this lack of inspection. Despite the complex nature of horses (and other equines) and their very specific welfare needs, no experience or qualifications are required in order to manage such establishments. There is also a level of confusion over ownership and responsibility with regard to the animals kept at livery yards, in particular with 'do it yourself' livery yards. In recent years the RSPCA and local authorities have been forced to take costly action against such premises, but only after the animals have suffered considerably and over a period of time. Without legislation to provide for inspections it is challenging to prevent such suffering and to ensure the welfare of thousands of equines.

Context

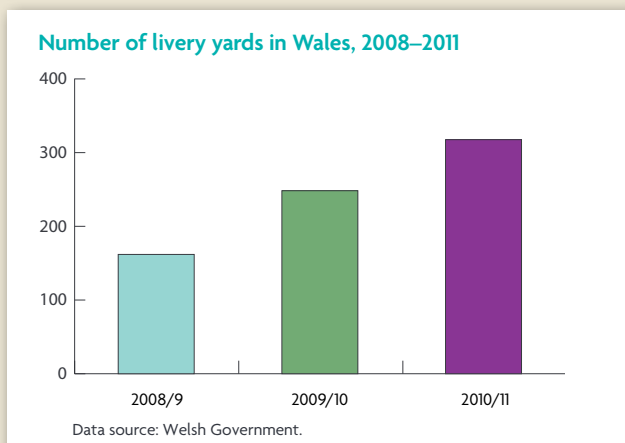
The Welsh Government has the means to introduce a scheme to regulate livery yards under Section 12 of the Animal Welfare Act 2006.

Legislation

Animal Welfare Act 2006.

THE CURRENT SITUATION

The Companion Animal Welfare Enhancement Scheme (CAWES) data recorded 319 livery yards in Wales in 2010–2011. The “widest definition (of livery) has been applied”¹ and includes land that is rented for horse keeping and much larger serviced establishments. Over the past three years, it seems that the number of livery yards has dramatically increased, however this is due to the increased assessment and identification of establishments and a Special Project on Equine Welfare that was being undertaken. Previous estimates have suggested that more than 200 livery yards could “translate to over 20,000 horses”, but this would equate to thousands more if based on the current CAWES data.



»» RSPCA recommendation

The RSPCA advocates a licensing scheme that will help ensure the welfare of those animals kept at these commercial premises. Regulation is required in order to ascertain the suitability of the premises and the staff caring for the animals, and for annual inspections and spot checks to be carried out. Ideally such a licensing scheme would be cost neutral and would benefit the welfare of horses, give reassurance to equine owners and be of benefit to all responsible livery yards.

»» For more information and statistics go to: www.politicalanimal.org.uk/wales

Sanctuaries

NUMBER OF ANIMAL SANCTUARIES THAT ARE UNREGULATED

ANIMAL WELFARE CONCERNS

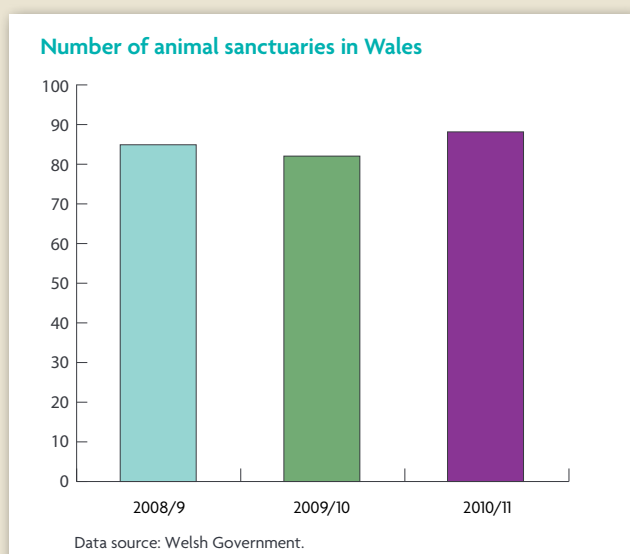
There is no way of knowing the standards of care in which these animals are kept. In recent years the RSPCA and local authorities have been forced to take action against premises that have advertised themselves as sanctuaries. In these situations the intelligence has come to light only after the animals have suffered considerably and over a period of time. Such cases can prove extremely costly because they often involve large numbers of animals. Without legislation to provide for annual and spot inspections there is no way of preventing such suffering. Where specialist rehabilitation skills are required, such as with wildlife (which also incorporates complex legislation), there are additional welfare concerns to consider.

Context

The Welsh Government has the means to introduce a scheme to regulate animal sanctuaries under S12 of the Animal Welfare Act 2006. Local authorities cannot currently access such premises without first applying for a warrant that must be based on sufficient cause for concern. This is despite many such premises operating as open to the public. Many sanctuaries in Wales provide a much-needed service for the long-term care, rehabilitation and rehoming of animals but there is currently no way of preventing the suffering in premises that fall below the legal standards of care for animals.

THE CURRENT SITUATION

The Companion Animal Welfare Enhancement Scheme (CAWES) data recorded 85¹ sanctuaries in Wales². Due to a lack of recognised definition and also the problems associated with recording consistent data across the participating local authorities, this figure could be much higher. Following a workshop in 2009, the Animal Welfare Network for Wales has been conducting a review of the case for regulation of sanctuaries, which has included consulting all relevant stakeholders as well as taking written and oral evidence from such parties. A report is due to be presented to the Welsh Government early in 2012.



»» RSPCA recommendation

Legislation is needed in order to ascertain the suitability of both the premises and the skill sets of the staff on site in order to protect all animals kept at a sanctuary. With a licensing scheme that is fully cost-recoverable for the local authorities, there is the ability to ensure annual inspections, to include a veterinary expert, as well as provisions for spot checks. The RSPCA believes such measures are crucial to protecting the welfare of animals in sanctuaries.

»» For more information and statistics go to: www.politicalanimal.org.uk/wales

Status and dangerous dogs

NUMBER OF INCIDENTS UNDER SECTION 1 OF THE DANGEROUS DOGS ACT 1991

ANIMAL WELFARE CONCERNS

'Status' dogs and prohibited breeds (e.g. pit bull terriers etc.) can become dangerous dogs because many are powerful animals that are conditioned to be used as part of anti-social behaviour. Often victims of cruelty themselves, these animals can be encouraged to be aggressive and may be forced to fight other dogs. There has been a growth in the ownership of 'status dogs' (currently bull breeds and mastiff types are popular) in recent years, which is often attributed to indiscriminate breeding on some large housing estates. Due to over breeding, there has been a rise in abandoned, neglected and cruelly treated bull breed dogs.

Legislation

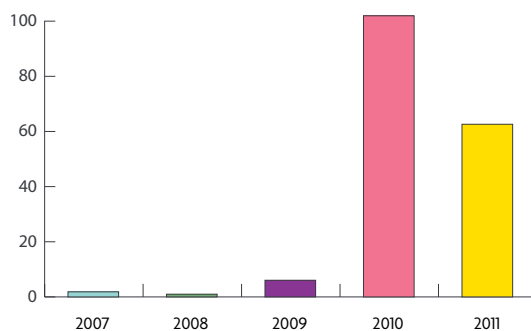
Animal Welfare Act 2006.
Dangerous Dogs Act 1991.
Dangerous Dogs (Amendment) Act 1997. Control of Dogs Order 1992.

THE CURRENT SITUATION

The RSPCA is working alongside the police, local authorities and registered social landlords to educate local communities about responsible dog ownership, and to encourage effective enforcement of dog welfare and control legislation. The RSPCA, South Wales Police and local authorities in Merthyr Tydfil and Cardiff are devising innovative projects incorporating advice, neutering, microchipping and other practical measures to tackle the 'status dog' problem in these areas. If these projects prove to be successful they could be rolled out to other communities.

South Wales Police has seen a large increase in the number of incidents under Section 1¹ of the Dangerous Dogs Act over the past five years. In 2007 there were just two reported incidents, this has risen to 103 in 2010 and up to the end of July 2011, the police had 63 reports.

Number of incidents involving Section 1 dogs, 2007–2011*



*up to 31 July 2011. Data source: South Wales Police.

»» RSPCA recommendation

The RSPCA would like the current dog control laws reviewed, consolidated and updated in Wales. The RSPCA has drafted proposed legislation that would update current legislation and is supported by the police, local authorities and the RSPCA, the main enforcers. This would focus on prevention and would enable enforcement agencies to take early intervention as well as improving public safety, animal welfare and reducing costs. Regardless of its breed or type, any dog has the potential to be dangerous. There is a need to develop coordinated and targeted education programmes to assist in persuading owners of dogs to be responsible, and for dogs to be bred more responsibly.

»» For more information and statistics go to: www.politicalanimal.org.uk/wales



RSPCA

Unwanted animals

NUMBER OF UNWANTED HEALTHY CATS AND DOGS TAKEN INTO THE CARE OF THE RSPCA

ANIMAL WELFARE CONCERNS

In Wales, 43 percent of all households own a pet – the majority being a dog or cat¹. This equates to at least 1,290,000 owned pet animals in Wales, although there are likely to be tens of thousands more. Pets are easy to obtain from a wide variety of sources, can be bought on impulse and are often acquired when they are young and small with little consideration given to what owning an animal actually means. Recent research has found that one-fifth of people who bought a puppy in the last two years no longer have their dog². Without considering the impact on their own lifestyle, the costs involved, and without the knowledge or ability to look after them properly, owners often abandon their pets, allow them to stray or give them up to rehoming or rescue centres. Some will be given away to friends or family, advertised on websites, and some will be euthanased at the request of their owner or as a consequence of too many unwanted animals and not enough homes.

Legislation

Animal Welfare Act 2006.

»» RSPCA recommendation

The RSPCA would like to see the number of pet animals being bred matching the number of responsible homes available. Ultimately the number of unwanted animals in Wales would significantly reduce until the problem ceases to exist. Pets should be bred responsibly and owners encouraged to consider the long-term needs of their animals, so that less animals need new homes/owners.

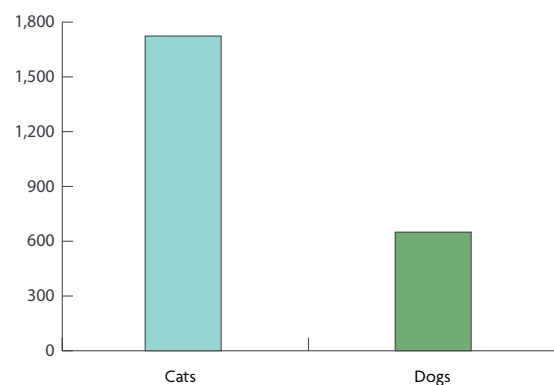
THE CURRENT SITUATION

There is no established format to identify the total number of unwanted pets or the total number of rehoming or rescue centres in Wales, however the Companion Animal Welfare Enhancement Scheme (CAWES) recorded nearly 3,000 businesses in 2010–2011 that were operating as dog breeders, other species breeders, pet shops and animal sanctuaries/refuges.

To find out how many unwanted pets there are in Wales, data from the RSPCA is used to indicate how wide the problem is. In 2010, 646 dogs and 1,723 cats came into the Society's care, all looking for a new owner. Local authorities dealt with 8,039 stray dogs who were then subsequently rehomed or given to an animal welfare organisation.

To find out how big the problem of unwanted pets actually is, more information is required from all rehoming centres/organisations in Wales.

Number of unwanted dog and cats taken into the care of the RSPCA in 2010



»» For more information and statistics go to: www.politicalanimal.org.uk/wales

¹ <http://wales.gov.uk/docs/statistics/2011/110224sb142011en.pdf>

² Research conducted by TNS via OnlineBus, an internet survey. A sample of 7,272 GB adults aged 16–24 were interviewed. Of these 848 people had acquired a puppy in the past two years. Interviewing was conducted by online self-completion from 23 November 2010 to 20 January 2011.

Circuses

NUMBER OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES THAT HAVE POLICIES REGARDING THE USE OF WILD ANIMALS IN CIRCUSES

ANIMAL WELFARE CONCERNS

Scientific research has shown that circus life can have a harmful effect on the welfare of many species, and the most commonly used wild animals are the least suited to this existence¹. Wild animals are likely to be caused significant welfare problems due to close confinement, abnormal social groups, unnatural environment, forced training and performance, frequent travel and loud noise.

THE CURRENT SITUATION

There are no circuses that use wild animals based in Wales, however such circuses are able to travel through and perform in Wales. In 2006 and 2009, the RSPCA contacted Welsh local authorities requesting information about policies concerning circuses on public land. In 2006, six local authorities had policies that banned circuses with wild animals from public land. Three years later this doubled with 12 out of 22 local authorities having policies that banned circuses with wild animals on public land.

12 out of 22 local authorities
have policies banning
circuses that use
wild animals
on public land

»» RSPCA recommendation

The RSPCA is calling for a complete ban on using wild animals in circuses and is encouraging all local authorities to have policies that ensure animal circuses that use wild animals are not permitted on their land. The RSPCA would support a phased-in ban of wild animals in circuses as this would provide a framework for the industry, improve animal welfare and ensure Wales is not left lagging behind other countries with regards to animal welfare standards.

Legislation

Animals & Animal Products (Import & Export) (Wales) (Laboratories, Circuses & Avian Quarantine) Regulation 2007. Performing Animals (Regulation) Act 1925. Animal Welfare Act 2006. Welfare of Animals (Transport) (Wales) Order 2007.

Context

Legal opinions obtained by the RSPCA (and other welfare groups) show the Welsh Government can issue a prohibition on the use of wild animals in circuses under S12 of the Animal Welfare Act 2006 (AWA). The government can take the needs of animals as a starting point, but can also take account of other considerations such as public opinion and the government's view of the social utility of the practice.

»» For more information and statistics go to: www.politicalanimal.org.uk/wales

Local authorities

NUMBER OF STRAY DOGS COLLECTED BY LOCAL AUTHORITIES

ANIMAL WELFARE CONCERNS

Stray dogs in Wales are the sole responsibility of local authorities that are bearing the burden of irresponsible pet owners who allow their dogs to stray. Healthy stray dogs that are not able to be returned to their owners are rehomed by local authorities, given to animal welfare and rehoming charities, or in some cases euthanased. All this puts a financial burden on those involved and the animal welfare consequences result in dogs suffering unnecessarily.

THE CURRENT SITUATION

For the financial year ending 31 March 2010, 8,039 stray dogs were collected by Welsh local authorities¹. It is difficult to compare the number of stray dogs annually, as each year a different number of local authorities responded to the RSPCA's survey. The latest survey received a 86 percent response rate whereas in previous years this was as low as 50 percent. The Welsh Government's investment in the Companion Animal Welfare Enhancement Scheme (CAWES) 2007–2010, may have had a positive impact on encouraging local authorities to complete the questionnaire. If the figures were projected each year to take into account all 22 local authorities, a downward trend in stray dog numbers would be seen.

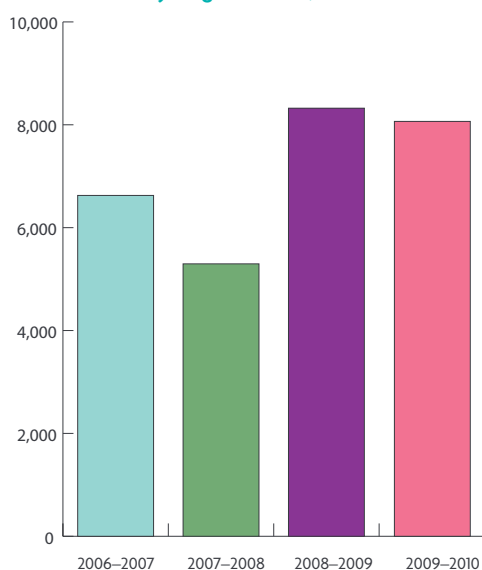
Legislation

Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005 – implemented April 2008.
Animal Welfare Act 2006.

Context

Local authorities are experiencing major cuts to budgets which is making it even harder for some to meet their basic statutory requirements to provide stray dog care.

Number of stray dogs in Wales, 2007–2010²



Data source: RSPCA/local authorities.

RSPCA recommendation

The RSPCA continues to make the Welsh national and local governments aware of the invaluable service local authority dog wardens provide for their community. The RSPCA understands that due to funding being limited and not ring-fenced, there is great disparity in the amount of money allocated by each local authority and would encourage a consistent stray dog service across Wales through the introduction of a mandatory regulation which requires a dog to be microchipped and identified annually on a register. The RSPCA recognises that dog owners must behave more responsibly by ensuring their dog has a collar and tag, and encourages microchipping and neutering to reduce both the number of long-term strays and the immediate cause of dog straying.

»» For more information and statistics go to: www.politicalanimal.org.uk/wales

¹ Based on an 86 percent response rate (19 out of 22 local authorities).

² Survey sent to local authorities via a Freedom of Information Act request – 2007–2010.

120 Cardiff schools source
Freedom Food chicken and eggs



Freedom Food

NUMBER OF WELSH MEMBERS OF FREEDOM FOOD AND NUMBER OF ANIMALS IN THE SCHEME

ANIMAL WELFARE CONCERNS

It is highly challenging to ensure that all farm animals have an acceptable quality of life. This is due to the sheer number of animals, more than 900 million livestock are produced in the UK each year, and the variety of welfare issues associated with rearing, handling, transporting and slaughtering the different livestock species. Unfortunately the law alone is not always strong or detailed enough to ensure that all farm animals have a good quality of life. The RSPCA is aiming for all farmed animals in the UK to be kept to its higher welfare standards – these are used in the Society's Freedom Food scheme and elsewhere.

Legislation

Animal Welfare Act 2006.
The Welfare of Farmed Animals (Wales) Regulations 2007.

THE CURRENT SITUATION

Freedom Food is the RSPCA's farm assurance and food labelling scheme. It is the only UK farm assurance scheme to focus solely on improving the welfare of farm animals reared for food and covers every stage of an animal's life. Nine different farmed animals are covered by the Freedom Food scheme. Members of the scheme include hauliers, farmers, processors and abattoirs.

Currently, there are 139 Freedom Food members in Wales¹. This accounts for more than 1.8 million¹ Welsh farm animals and each stage of their life from birth/hatching to slaughter is governed by strict and compulsory RSPCA welfare standards.

139 Freedom Food members in Wales – accounting for more than 1.8 million animals

»» RSPCA recommendation

The RSPCA would like to see more farm animals reared to higher welfare standards in line with those developed by the Society and under the Freedom Food scheme. It is hoped that more animals will be covered by the Freedom Food scheme. The Society is delighted the National Assembly for Wales only serves Freedom Food sourced eggs and salmon, and is encouraging other Welsh Government offices to follow their example. This is the first time a legislature in the UK has taken forward such an initiative.

»» For more information and statistics go to: www.politicalanimal.org.uk/wales

Euthanasia

NUMBER OF CATS AND DOGS EUTHANASED

ANIMAL WELFARE CONCERNS

There are a number of reasons why pet animals are put to sleep or euthanased, including injury, illness, disease and behaviour. Unfortunately, some are also reluctantly euthanased by vets, local authorities and animal welfare organisations due to these animals being unwanted and/or the inability to find them new homes. Quite simply there are too many animals being bred, particularly certain breeds, not enough good homes available and some pet owners not taking responsibility for their animals. This results in rehomeable animals being unnecessarily euthanased.

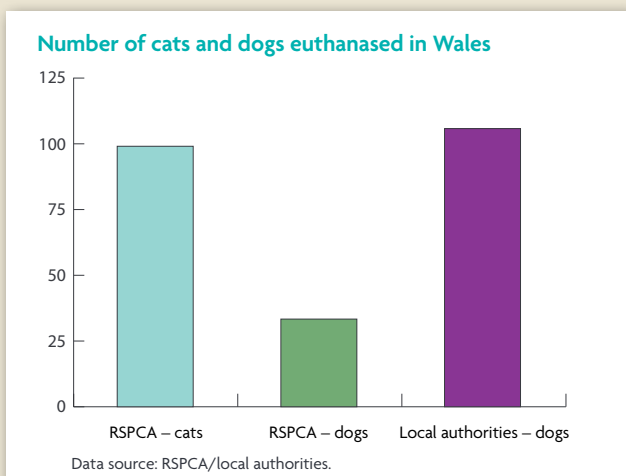
Legislation

Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005 – implemented April 2008.
Animal Welfare Act 2006.

THE CURRENT SITUATION

It is extremely difficult to find out how many rehomeable animals are euthanased each year in Wales. Vets, at the owners or keepers request, some animal welfare organisations and local authorities will euthanase unwanted animals, however these statistics are not widely available or collected nationally. Therefore, the data gathered from the RSPCA and local authorities must be considered just a snapshot of the euthanasia issue.

In 2010, the RSPCA euthanased 97 and 33 unwanted rehomeable cats and dogs respectively and between 2009–2010, Welsh local authorities euthanased just over one hundred dogs¹. Even though the figures are relatively low – just six percent of the cats and dogs that have rehoming potential were euthanased by the RSPCA – this is still unacceptable.



RSPCA recommendation

The RSPCA would like to see a future where no rehomeable animal is euthanased. This will only be achieved by animal owners, keepers and breeders adopting more responsible attitudes to pet animals. Simple, practical actions can be implemented by owners. These include neutering so as to prevent unwanted pregnancies and microchipping that will assist local authorities and others in reuniting dogs and other animals with their owners. Sellers of animals could improve welfare by providing information and guidance to potential or new owners. Ultimately, before anyone adopts or purchases a pet, the question: “Are you able to care for a cat/dog/rabbit or make sure he/she is cared for every single day of his/her life?” should be asked. This refers to meeting all of the animals welfare needs for the whole of its life.

»» For more information and statistics go to: www.politicalanimal.org.uk/wales

Prosecutions

NUMBER OF CONVICTIONS UNDER THE ANIMAL WELFARE ACT 2006

ANIMAL WELFARE CONCERNS

The Animal Welfare Act 2006 (AWA) significantly updated the Protection of Animals Act 1911 and, most importantly, introduced a welfare offence¹. This imposes a duty of care 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. Codes of Practice, to promote animal welfare, have been subsequently introduced for four companion animal species, rabbits, dogs, cats and equines. Even though animals in Wales are more protected than ever before, especially with the introduction of the welfare offence, there are still times when prosecution is required as offences against animals have been committed.

Legislation

Animal Welfare Act 2006.

Context

The RSPCA and others are able to take prosecutions under various pieces of animal welfare legislation. The majority of prosecutions and subsequent convictions are taken under the Animal Welfare Act 2006 by the RSPCA.

THE CURRENT SITUATION

In 2010, of the 60,000 telephone calls received by the RSPCA's cruelty line, 8,009 were subsequently investigated as complaints. There were 147 convictions under the AWA as a result of prosecutions taken by the RSPCA. The majority, 114, of these were for causing unnecessary suffering² and 28 for failing to meet the welfare needs of animals in their care¹.

The number of overall convictions has dropped by more than a quarter (28 percent) when compared to the previous year. In 2009, there were 204 convictions in Wales for the offence of cruelty and other offences contrary to the AWA. The number of Disqualification Orders imposed under the Act has also dropped over the two years with 74 and 52 people in 2009 and 2010 respectively being prevented from owning or keeping animals³.

**147 convictions under
the Animal Welfare Act 2006
in 2010**

»» RSPCA recommendation

In an ideal world, neglect and cruelty to animals would not occur therefore investigations into animal cruelty and breaches of animal welfare, plus any subsequent convictions wouldn't be necessary. Realistically, this will never be the case and whilst the RSPCA actively advocates education and prevention to stop suffering occurring, there will always be times when prosecution is required. Ideally the number of convictions for breaches of animal welfare legislation in Wales will fall each year.

»» For more information and statistics go to: www.politicalanimal.org.uk/wales



88% of Welsh adults
believe it should be compulsory
for vets to be present at
greyhound racing

Greyhounds

THE PROPORTION OF PEOPLE WHO BELIEVE GREYHOUND RACING SHOULD BE REGULATED

ANIMAL WELFARE CONCERNS

There are a wide variety of welfare concerns which can occur throughout the life of a racing greyhound, including their breeding, living facilities, the time they are racing, the end of their racing days and what happens to them when they retire. The All Party Group for Animal Welfare (APGAW) in Wales published a report in 2003 and suggested that as many as 600 greyhounds in Wales were killed or discarded annually after their racing career was over¹. Whilst on track there is no requirement for a vet to be present at any race and at any trial where there is more than one greyhound running on the track at the same time. Injuries and even death can occur whilst on track, yet no immediate treatment or help can be administered by a qualified veterinarian.

Legislation

Animal Welfare Act 2006.

Political situation

In 2010, 43 out of the eligible 45 Assembly Members in the last assembly signed up to a campaign that is encouraging the introduction of regulations for racing greyhounds.

THE CURRENT SITUATION

Currently there are no specific regulations for racing greyhounds in Wales. The Greyhound Board for Great Britain (GBGB) regulates a number of tracks in England and none in Wales. There is one independent greyhound track in Wales that has between 70 and 84 dogs racing each week² and whilst no vet is specifically required to be present at track side, owners of the animals have a responsibility to ensure the welfare of their animals is not compromised.

To find out the views of the Welsh public about racing greyhounds the RSPCA commissioned a survey that asked if greyhound racing should be regulated and whether or not a vet should be present during the race³.

62 percent of people felt there should be regulations specific to greyhound racing, with just five percent opposing them. 88 percent of the Welsh public believe that it should be compulsory for vets to be present at greyhound racing in Wales, with 55 percent of people thinking that it is already a compulsory feature of greyhound racing.

62% of Welsh adults believe there should be regulations specific to greyhound racing

»» RSPCA recommendation

The RSPCA believes that the welfare of racing greyhounds should be protected from cradle to grave. Welfare issues can occur at any stage therefore all aspects of their lives, including breeding, kennelling, racing, transportation, management and final retirement need to be protected. The Society is encouraging the introduction of regulations and a Code of Practice in Wales that covers the whole life of each racing greyhound.

»» For more information and statistics go to: www.politicalanimal.org.uk/wales

¹ *The fate of racing greyhounds and working lurchers in Wales*. 2003. APGAW.

² Figures adapted from *The Greyhound Forum for Wales report: A Better Bet for Greyhounds*. 2007.

³ All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 1,064 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 19–23 August 2011. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all Welsh adults (aged 18+).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The concept of developing an animal welfare indicator report for Wales has been discussed by the Welsh Government and the RSPCA for a number of years. It is therefore with much enthusiasm that in 2011 a report of this nature has been produced with the support of so many individuals within Government and the Society.

There are many people who have assisted the RSPCA and whilst too numerous to mention the Society would like to express its gratitude to the Welsh Government for their support and input, and in particular the Animal Welfare team in the Office for the Chief Veterinary Officer for championing the idea throughout.

The RSPCA would like to acknowledge and thank all of its staff across Wales and England who have contributed to the report through researching, writing, editing etc., and to its frontline staff in Wales who work tirelessly to ensure the welfare of so many animals.