

Date:

Monday 14 September 2026 at 4.00 pm

Venue:

Council Chamber, Dunedin House, Columbia Drive, Thornaby, Stockton-on-Tees TS17 6BJ

Cllr Jim Beall (Chair)

Cllr Steve Nelson (Vice-Chair)

Cllr Stephen Dodds, Cllr Sufi Mubeen, Cllr David Reynard, Cllr Tony Riordan, Cllr Ted Strike, Cllr Marilyn Surtees and Cllr Sylvia Walmsley

Agenda

1. Livestreaming

This meeting will be filmed for live and / or subsequent broadcast on the Council's website. The whole of the meeting will be filmed, except where there are confidential or exempt items, and the footage will be on the website for 12 months. A copy of it will also be retained in accordance with the Council's data retention policy.

If you attend and make a representation to the meeting, you will be deemed to have consented to being filmed. When admitted to the Council Chamber you are also consenting to being filmed and to the possible use of those images and sound recordings for livestreaming and / or training purposes. If you do not wish to have your image captured, please contact Democratic Services prior to attending the meeting.

If there are any technical difficulties with the livestreaming, the meeting will still proceed.

2. Evacuation Procedure (Pages 7 - 10)

3. Apologies for Absence

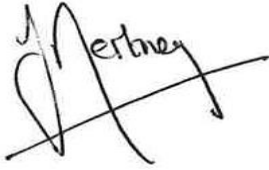
4. Declarations of Interest

5. Minutes (Pages 11 - 16)

To approve the minutes of the last meeting held on 13 July 2026

6. Scrutiny Review of Animal Welfare, Kennelling, and Protection of Pets (Pages 17 - 78)

7. Chair's Update and Select Committee Work Programme (Pages 79 - 80)



Jonathan Nertney
Head of Democratic Services
Friday 4 September 2026

Members of the Public - Rights to Attend Meeting

With the exception of any item identified above as containing exempt or confidential information under the Local Government Act 1972 Section 100A(4), members of the public are entitled to attend this meeting and/or have access to the agenda papers.

Persons wishing to obtain any further information on this meeting, including the opportunities available for any member of the public to speak at the meeting; or for details of access to the meeting for disabled people, please.

Contact: Scrutiny Officer, Michelle Gunn on email michelle.gunn@stockton.gov.uk

Key – Declarable interests are :-

- Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPI's)
- Other Registerable Interests (ORI's)
- Non Registerable Interests (NRI's)

Members – Declaration of Interest Guidance

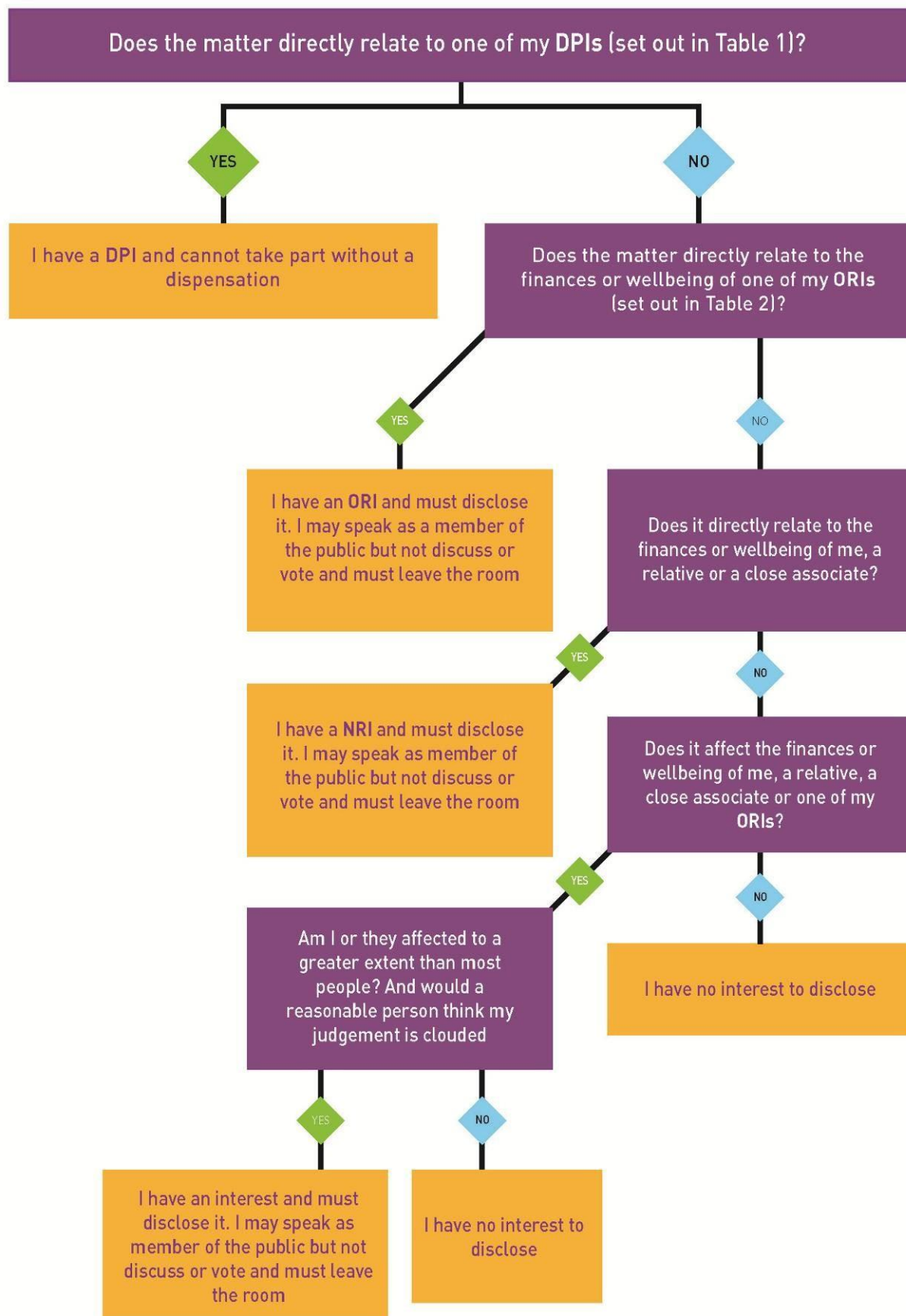


Table 1 - Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

Subject	Description
Employment, office, trade, profession or vocation	Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain
Sponsorship	Any payment or provision of any other financial benefit (other than from the council) made to the councillor during the previous 12-month period for expenses incurred by him/her in carrying out his/her duties as a councillor, or towards his/her election expenses. This includes any payment or financial benefit from a trade union within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992.
Contracts	Any contract made between the councillor or his/her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the councillor is living as if they were spouses/civil partners (or a firm in which such person is a partner, or an incorporated body of which such person is a director* or a body that such person has a beneficial interest in the securities of*) and the council — (a) under which goods or services are to be provided or works are to be executed; and (b) which has not been fully discharged.
Land and property	Any beneficial interest in land which is within the area of the council. 'Land' excludes an easement, servitude, interest or right in or over land which does not give the councillor or his/her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the councillor is living as if they were spouses/ civil partners (alone or jointly with another) a right to occupy or to receive income.
Licences	Any licence (alone or jointly with others) to occupy land in the area of the council for a month or longer.
Corporate tenancies	Any tenancy where (to the councillor's knowledge)— (a) the landlord is the council; and (b) the tenant is a body that the councillor, or his/her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the councillor is living as if they were spouses/ civil partners is a partner of or a director* of or has a beneficial interest in the securities* of.
Securities	Any beneficial interest in securities* of a body where— (a) that body (to the councillor's knowledge) has a place of business or land in the area of the council; and (b) either— (i) the total nominal value of the securities* exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body; or (ii) if the share capital of that body is of more than one class, the total nominal value of the shares of any one class in which the councillor, or his/ her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the councillor is living as if they were spouses/civil partners have a beneficial interest exceeds one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that class.

* 'director' includes a member of the committee of management of an industrial and provident society.

* 'securities' means shares, debentures, debenture stock, loan stock, bonds, units of a collective investment scheme within the meaning of the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000 and other securities of any description, other than money deposited with a building society.

Table 2 – Other Registrable Interest

You must register as an Other Registrable Interest:

a) any unpaid directorships

b) any body of which you are a member or are in a position of general control or management and to which you are nominated or appointed by your authority

c) any body

(i) exercising functions of a public nature

(ii) directed to charitable purposes or

(iii) one of whose principal purposes includes the influence of public opinion or policy (including any political party or trade union) of which you are a member or in a position of general control or management

Council Chamber, Dunedin House Evacuation Procedure & Housekeeping

Entry

Entry to the Council Chamber is via the Council Chamber entrance indicated on the map below.



In the event of an emergency alarm activation, everyone should immediately start to leave their workspace by the nearest available signed Exit route.

The emergency exits are located via the doors on either side of the raised seating area at the front of the Council Chamber.

Fires, explosions, and bomb threats are among the occurrences that may require the emergency evacuation of Dunedin House. Continuous sounding and flashing of the Fire Alarm is the signal to evacuate the building or upon instruction from a Fire Warden or a Manager.

The Emergency Evacuation Assembly Point is in the overflow car park located across the road from Dunedin House.

The allocated assembly point for the Council Chamber is: D2

Map of the Emergency Evacuation Assembly Point - the overflow car park:



All occupants must respond to the alarm signal by immediately initiating the evacuation procedure.

When the Alarm sounds:

1. **stop all activities immediately.** Even if you believe it is a false alarm or practice drill, you MUST follow procedures to evacuate the building fully.
2. **follow directional EXIT signs** to evacuate via the nearest safe exit in a calm and orderly manner.
 - do not stop to collect your belongings
 - close all doors as you leave
3. **steer clear of hazards.** If evacuation becomes difficult via a chosen route because of smoke, flames or a blockage, re-enter the Chamber (if safe to do so). Continue the evacuation via the nearest safe exit route.
4. **proceed to the Evacuation Assembly Point.** Move away from the building. Once you have exited the building, proceed to the main Evacuation Assembly Point immediately - located in the **East Overflow Car Park**.
 - do not assemble directly outside the building or on any main roadway, to ensure access for Emergency Services.

5. await further instructions.

- **do not re-enter the building under any circumstances without an “all clear”** which should only be given by the Incident Control Officer/Chief Fire Warden, Fire Warden or Manager.
- do not leave the area without permission.
- ensure all colleagues and visitors are accounted for. Notify a Fire Warden or Manager immediately if you have any concerns

Toilets

Toilets are located immediately outside the Council Chamber, accessed via the door at the back of the Chamber.

Water Cooler

A water cooler is available at the rear of the Council Chamber.

Microphones

During the meeting, members of the Committee, and officers in attendance, will have access to a microphone. Please use the microphones, when invited to speak by the Chair, to ensure you can be heard by the Committee and those in attendance at the meeting.

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Place Select Committee

A meeting of Place Select Committee was held on Monday 13th July 2026.

Present: Cllr Jim Beall (Chair), Cllr Steve Nelson (Vice Chair), Cllr Stephen Dodds, Cllr David Reynard, Cllr Tony Riordan, Cllr Ted Strike, Cllr Marilyn Surtees, Cllr Sylvia Walmsley

Officers: PC Chris Lambert (Cleveland Police), Marc Stephenson, Stephen Donaghy (Adult, Health and Wellbeing), Dale Rowbotham, Abigail Kiddell (Community Services, Environment and Culture), and Michelle Gunn (Corporate Services).

Also in attendance: Cllr Norma Stephenson

Apologies:

PLA/20/26 Livestreaming

The Committee noted the meeting was being livestreamed.

PLA/21/26 Evacuation Procedure

The Committee noted the evacuation and housekeeping procedures.

PLA/22/26 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

PLA/23/26 Minutes

AGREED the minutes of the meeting held on 15 June be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

PLA/24/26 Scrutiny Review of Animal Welfare, Kennelling, and Protection of Pets

The Committee received a presentation from Cleveland Police regarding their roles and responsibilities for dangerous dogs, animals of suspects arrested, and how they worked with the Council. Key information included:

- The two main piece of legislation that the Police were responsible for investigating were Section 1 and Section 3 of the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991.
 - Section 1 regarded prohibited types of dogs (banned breeds) which were XL Bullies, Pitbull Terriers, Japanese Tosa, Dogo Argentino, and Brazilian Mastiff.
 - Section 3 regarded dangerously out of control dogs, which could be any type of powerful dog that could or had caused injuries e.g. German Shepherd or Rottweilers.
- A person would be committing two offences if they owned a prohibited dog, without an exemption, which then attacked another person.

- The Police would only investigate an Animal Welfare offence under the Animal Welfare Act 2006 if there was an immediate risk, criminality or safeguarding issue.
- Cleveland Police were increasingly using the civil powers given under the Dogs Act 1871, which included control orders to be put in place, such as the dog must be on a lead and muzzled and be kept secure gardens. It also gave the power to request destruction from the court and to apply for disqualification of dog ownership. Under the legislation, evidence for cases where the victim withdraws consent or support for prosecution could still be presented to the civil court to attempt to get an outcome that protected the public.
- The data required to be recorded by the Home Office only included Aggravated Section 3 offences, which were offences where injuries had occurred. There had been a significant increase in 2025/26 of these cases in Cleveland Police area, and these were due to both an improvement to internal recording procedures and a year-on-year increase in the dog population.
- Due to the number of kennels available, the Police could not seize every dog involved in an offence and therefore used a triage tool to assess the risk and make a decision on whether it needed to be seized. This included factors such as the level of injury caused, whether it was a repeat offence, if children lived at the address with the suspect dog, and whether there were other vulnerabilities. Public Safety was the main consideration as well as consideration of the dog's welfare and the costs involved.
- The Police also investigated cases and reports of dogs out of control which did not result in injury, dealing with reports of Section 1 prohibited types which included taking responsibility from local authorities for handed in or stray prohibited dogs that needed to be processed through the court, and low-level complaints. There was cross over between Police and local authorities' responsibilities regarding dog-on-dog, neighbourhood disputes and anti-social behaviour and they would work together to make decisions on which organisation would lead on the case or whether it would be a jointly led.
- Out of court resolutions for dog offences were used alongside court or civil outcomes.
- Disqualification orders were being sought where necessary and used to prevent dogs going back to the owners and being reported again for similar offences. However, these could only be obtained following a destruction order.
- The number of days a dog was held in kennels had reduced from an average of 200 days three years ago to an average of 44 days, and the reduction had benefits for both the welfare of the dogs as well as costs. The main reason for a dog being in the kennel for longer was taking the case through the criminal justice court system where it may go to trial. The defence could request assessment of the dog's temperament or of the type of breed the dog was which needed to be built into and prolong the timeframe of the case.
- Partnership working and sharing of data was important. Local authorities and Police may be receiving complaints about the same animal and sharing information helped to build cases and to intervene at earlier stages by the organisation leading on the case, which could prevent a serious injury occurring. The Police would sometimes go with the Animal Welfare Team to present official documentation and warning notices, which also helped to prevent the issue escalating. Cleveland Police also linked with Children and Adult Services to understand the wider issues and situation with a particular dog that had been reported.

- Ensuring there was a clear pathway for that those working within Cleveland Police, local authorities and other partner organisation, along with clear reporting routes for the public, was important.

The Committee discussed prohibited types of dogs. It was noted that exemption certificates could be applied for via the courts who considered whether the dog posed a danger to public safety by applying a three-fold test: the dogs' temperament, whether the owner was a fit and proper person, and any other relevant circumstances. The court would give conditions the owner must follow with the exemption. DEFRA managed the database of exempt dogs and notified the police if that exemption was breached. The majority of cases regarding prohibited dogs would be taken through the civil court due to the shorter timeframe taken to process the case, however there would be no sentencing options for the owner via this route. The only cases dealt with through the criminal court would be if the dog had been involved in an incident where injury or fear of injury had been caused.

The relationship between Cleveland Police and the Council's Animal Welfare Team was raised, and it was noted that there was good professional relationship, with information sharing and collaborative working taking place. However, there was a challenge with communication to ensure that the correct procedure was followed when a person with a dog is remanded or in custody for a prolonged period, and police officers did not admit dogs to Animal Welfare in error.

It was questioned what happened to the dogs of prisoners who were sentenced. The Committee were informed that the Police would seek consent from the owner for the dog to be cared for by a family member or friend. If the person did not cooperate or did not have someone to nominate, and they may be with the police for a prolonged period, a legal notice would be served which would give them 14 days to nominate someone to take care of the dog. If they did not nominate anyone the Chief Constable relinquished their obligation to care for the dog and it would be assessed for re-homing, if it was not a prohibited breed.

It was noted that kennelling costs were sought by Cleveland Police from owners. In civic court cases, the court's decision may include that the owner reimbursed Cleveland Police for their court costs, which would then be sought. For criminal court cases the costs would be reclaimed through the criminal justice routes.

The Committee requested the following further information:

- A breakdown of aggravated Section 3 offences by Local Authority area
- A breakdown of the number of prosecutions for Section 3 offences
- The types of dogs being seized for Section 1, Section 3, and combined offences

The Committee thanked the Police Officer for the information.

AGREED that the information be noted.

PLA/25/26 Progress Update - Domestic Waste Collections Kerbside Recycling and Green Waste

Consideration was given to assessments of progress on the implementation of the recommendations from the Committee's previously completed review of Domestic Waste Collection, Kerbside Recycling, and Green Waste. This was the fourth update, and two recommendations were assessed as fully achieved while one, regarding the

communications and community engagement plan, remained on track due to engagement continuing until October 2026.

The Committee received a presentation as part of the update which outlined the following information:

- In the first month of the change to collections, April 2026, there was a reduction of approximately 1,800 tonnes (35%) of general waste collected from the kerbside, an increase from approximately 700 tonnes to over 1,000 tonnes of dry recycling collected, and 500 tonnes of food waste collected (55% increase of overall recycling tonnage).
- The amount collected exceeded the expected level of participation in recycling and food waste collection, which was 45-50% participation. Rounds were modelled on 65% participation level however the first few weeks saw 80% participation therefore there were some challenges and additional vehicles were needed.
- There had been issues with residents leaving out large amounts of bulky cardboard which could not be collected at the kerbside, and there was a need to highlight to residents that these should be either flattened and placed in the white sacks if they could be or taken to the recycling centre. The crews would collect multiple white bags of cardboard from the kerbside.
- The in-cab system tracked where vehicles were in real time, which helped to manage rounds and send crews to rounds which needed additional support. It also gave live information on participation levels and if there had been contamination issues.
- There had been an extensive communications and engagement plan using a range of channels, and engagement would continue until October 2026. The team had found that when speaking to residents who were nervous about the change, once they started to recycle they realised the system was ok.
- Green Waste subscriptions had also exceeded expectation, with 25% of households signed up and regular requests for new bins.

It was questioned whether green waste would be collected if it was put out in bags and officers informed that due to the new vehicles collecting the green waste having bin lifts, the crew were unable to collect green waste bags. The Committee requested further information regarding the projected number for year 2 green waste bins.

The bags for food waste were raised, with members commenting that they easily split, and officers informed that these had been bought in bulk, however would review the type of bags when purchasing again.

The Committee discussed the perception on social media of increased rats associated with the food waste collection and increased fires due to moving to fortnightly general waste collection. It was noted that there had been no increase in the reports of either to the Waste team, Environmental Health or Cleveland Fire Brigade since the change in collections. The Committee also discussed complaints regarding bins not being collected due to recycling and general waste being collected at different times of the day, and it was suggested that communications could reinforce this message.

Members questioned whether all the new vehicles ordered had been delivered and it was confirmed that they had, however not all had been rolled out as they needed time to be bed in. Due to the increase in recycling being higher than expected, extra vehicles were needed, including spare vehicles to make sure that if one goes down there is another that can cover. The cost of the extra vehicles would be covered by funding from

government and savings made through increased recycling. Where old vehicles were still being used there was a perception that the recycling was being mixed in the vehicles due to it being difficult to see the back, however there was some separation taking place.

The eligibility for larger bins was discussed, which included that the household must recycle, there was a medical reason why the household was generating more general waste, and the number of people living at the property.

The change to rounds was discussed, with these being refined to reflect the frequency changes in recycling and general waste collections, along with the higher concentration of garden waste collections in particular areas. The days of the collections had not changed to make it easier for residents.

Engagement and education regarding recycling was discussed and officers noted that the engagement team had visited over 30 schools. There would be further engagement with schools from September 2026.

The Committee commended the officers for the implementation of the major changes to waste collections. The Committee also commended residents for the uptake in recycling.

The Committee requested that the next progress report be presented in December 2026, following the end of the engagement plan.

AGREED that the progress update be noted and a further update be presented in December 2026.

PLA/26/26 Chair's Update and Select Committee Work Programme

Consideration was given to the work programme.

Two dates had been identified for the site visits to two kennels as part of the Scrutiny Review of Animal Welfare, Kennelling, and Protection of Pets. The Committee agreed on 14th August 2026.

AGREED that site visits would be arranged and the work programme be noted.

Chair:

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REPORT TO PLACE SELECT COMMITTEE

14 September 2026

Scrutiny Review of Animal Welfare, Kennelling, and Protection of Pets

Summary

The third evidence session for the Committee's review of Animal Welfare, Kennelling, and Protection of Pets will consider evidence from the PDSA.

Detail

1. As part of the scoping process, the Committee identified a the PDSA as a key contributor to the review. The local branch of PDSA have therefore been invited to give evidence regarding their experience of delivering veterinary support, and have provided the attached report ahead of the meeting.

2. In addition, the PDSA were asked a number of questions relating to their views on animal welfare and current service pressures. The response they provided is outlined below:

- **What support do you offer to those who are on low incomes and/or homeless pet owners?**

As per attached.

- **What are the main pressures currently affecting your practice?**

Recruitment/retention of veterinary staff - Intermittently there are recruitment issues however staff tend to stay as PDSA

There will always be a constant demand for PDSA along with rising costs across the estate be that medicine or business Caseload is increasing however we now have tools to maintain treatment with restrictions in registration be that capacity, mix of work or staffing constraints.

- **Have you noticed any significant changes in dog-related caseloads over the past 3-5 years?**

As per document - post Covid there were issues with viruses due to lack of service provision across the sector - There may be more indifferent reasons for euthanasia

regarding cost of care - the bigger picture of the family unit and helping manage personal debt is a moral obligation as well as one of pet welfare.

- **What are the most common welfare concerns you are currently seeing in dogs?**

All of the below are welfare concerns that will be seen across the veterinary sector: Obesity, behavioural issues (pandemic paralysis), poor breeding practices, chronic health conditions, lack of preventative care, or neglect linked to financial hardship

- **Are you seeing any emerging trends in dog ownership or dog health?**

In order of observation:

Breed popularity

Behavioural problems

Delayed treatment due to costs, uninsured pets, affordability concerns

Imported dogs

- **What support or interventions would help improve dog welfare and reduce pressures on veterinary services?**

All of the below:

Public education campaigns

Affordable neutering and vaccination schemes

Responsible ownership initiatives - Previously worked with councils over the years

Better breeder regulation

Partnership working

3. The Committee also identified other local authorities as key contributors to determine if there was any best practice in providing animal welfare services, the demand for services, and training provided for staff. All North East Local Authorities were therefore contacted, and a summary of responses received is also attached for noting.
4. In addition, Members of the Committee attended site visits in August and September to kennels used by the Council, and notes from the visits are to follow.

5. A copy of the agreed scope and project plan for the review is attached for information.

Name of Contact Officer: Michelle Gunn

Post Title: Scrutiny Officer

Telephone number: 01642 524987

Email address: michelle.gunn@stockton.gov.uk

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Review of Animal Welfare, Kennelling and the Protection of Pets

PDSA Acklam Road
Middlesbrough
Cleveland
TS5 4EB

Underpinning knowledge of PDSA

- Charity founded in 1917 by Maria Dickin 'Help the Pets of those Most in Need' This is still our ethos today; pets should not suffer in times of financial hardship.
- 91% of pet owners say that a pet's health and wellbeing should not suffer due to owners' financial hardship
- Pets are a lifeline when times are tough, owning a pet brings happiness and combats loneliness, improving their care givers lives.
- In 2025
 - Our PDSA pet hospitals treated 422,000 pets
 - 274,000 dogs; 140,000 cats and just over 8,700 pets including rabbits
 - On average, we care for around 4,900 pets every working day across our pet hospitals, approximately 11 pets every minute, across 40 UK Pet Hospitals and associated clinics
 - Providing approximately 2.2 million treatments a year.
- Middlesbrough history, our first dispensary was opened in 1937 at 59 Corporation Road; in 1974 we moved to 11 Borough Road; In 1988 we moved to our first purpose built Pet Hospital 148 -150 Borough Road; and in 2005 we moved to our current site on Acklam Road. As such we have a long history of service to the community across Middlesbrough and surrounding areas of nearly 90 years.
 - Our Middlesbrough Pet Hospital registers approximately 9,000 pets a year
 - Treat an average of 330 pets per week around 1,500 per month
 - Providing a holistic range of treatment where 41% of the individual pet workload per year includes

- 4% Neuters - ave 15 per week
 - 8% Vaccinations - ave 30 pets per week
 - Microchips for all
 - Flea and worm repeat prescriptions and other over the counter preventive care and nutraceuticals.
- PDSA deliver veterinary care and preventive services to those who qualify and register for treatment.
 - We are not a rehoming or a kennelling organisation for stray pets or otherwise.
 - This is outside of our Charitable Objects and the remit of other Charitable Organisations.
- Our service is provided to pet owners in a postcode catchment area
 - All the TS postcodes 1–29 except TS13
 - Darlington postcodes DL1-6; 14 -17 so we cover a wide range of council areas with differing expectations
- We provide service to those who are in receipt of a range of benefits and this provision will entitle them to either our Charitable (funded) service or our Concessionary low-cost service however the treatment provided is the same across both service provisions, Charitable (funded) or Concessionary low cost.
 - Consultations & Surgery – Funded and Concessionary
 - Preventive care including neutering, microchipping, parasitic prevention is the same reduced cost to all pets presented for preventive care
 - 24/7 OOHs Emergency care provision Funded and Concessionary service
- Resource is accessed by appointment online, and eligibility for the service can be checked at www.pdsa.org.uk/eligibility where clients can register for our services.
 - Registration lasts for one year
 - Clients who have no internet access can get assistance from our National Customer Service Centre NCSC based in Sunderland – 0300 3737 223 (anticipate wait times)
 - We have a Pet Health Hub available to anyone in the UK for pet advice for dogs, cats and rabbits www.pdsa.org.uk/phh ask it any questions and it will find you an answer

- We rely wholly on contributions and donations from members of the public. We receive no government funding, and clients are asked to leave contributions towards their pet care, funded or concessionary – we treat more pets than all other UK veterinary charities put together.
- Two out of three treatments (approximately 1.5million treatments) are funded by Gifts in Wills every year – equivalent to approximately 282,000 pets per year or 3,270 pets per working day.
- Out of these we support 339,000 clients including 625,000 family members too by helping keeping people and pets together.
- Of these we treated over 89,000 pets with emergency conditions, on average 246 per day.
- Tangible costs can be provided.

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PDSA ANIMAL WELLBEING

PAW

MINI REPORT

2025



Introduction and methodology

The PDSA Animal Wellbeing (PAW) Report has been running since 2011, collecting data annually through a nationally representative survey of dog, cat, and rabbit owners. The findings help to understand how UK owners care for their pets, alongside estimating pet population numbers in the UK. The approach to the PDSA PAW data is conducted in stages:

- An incidence question about pet ownership is asked to a large sample representative of the total UK population (the “incidence” data). In 2025, this comprised **10,975** UK adults aged 18 and over.
- The incidence data is then used to provide an understanding of how pet owners are distributed across the UK population’s demographics (e.g. age, gender, region).
- A large sample of UK dog, cat, and rabbit owners is drawn from the YouGov panel of over 2.5 million adults signed up to take part in research (the “pet owners” data).
 - In 2025, a total of **5,387** pet owners were surveyed, of which **2,566** were dog owners, **2,587** were cat owners, and **234** were rabbit owners. Fieldwork was conducted online between 17 December 2024 and 12 January 2025.
- The pet owners’ data is sampled and weighted to be representative of the pet-owning population in the UK, based on the incidence data.
- The data in this report summarises key findings from the PAW Mini Report 2025, with some analysis from previous years.
- Figures may not sum to 100% due to rounding or multiple responses being allowed.

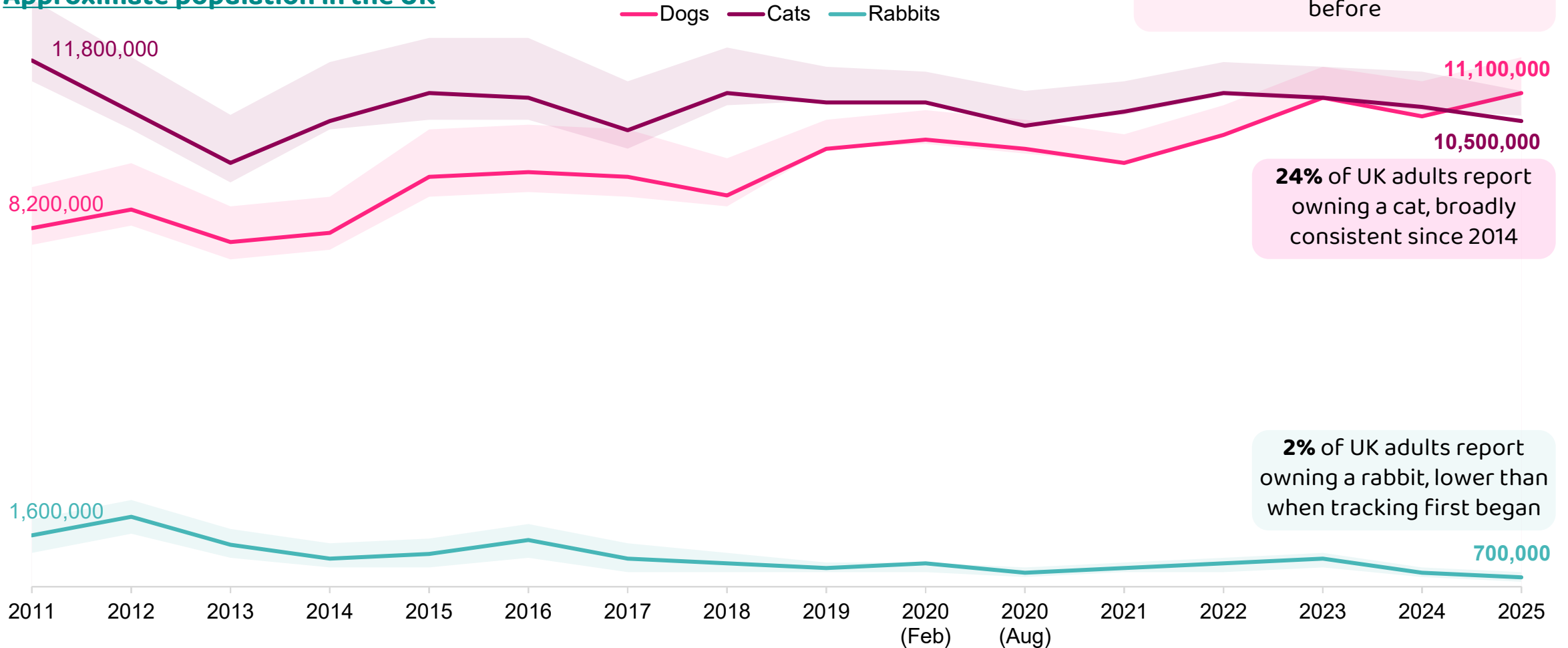
Key findings

- The estimated population of dogs continues to grow, now at its highest ever level, with **11.1 million** dogs in the UK. The population of cats is relatively steady (**10.5 million**), while the number of rabbits estimated in the UK continues to decline (**700,000**).
- People most commonly get their dog from a breeder (**33%**), and half (**50%**) visit on more than one occasion before taking them home. Cats are most commonly acquired from a rescue (**33%**), with just over two-fifths (**43%**) visiting on more than one occasion before taking them home.
- Perceptions around the cost of owning a pet continue to increase, with over **two-fifths** saying owning a pet is more expensive than expected (higher than when last asked in 2023). Nearly all think that the cost of owning a pet has increased, also significantly higher than in 2023.
- Half are worried about being able to afford the cost of veterinary care for their pet (**51%**). If asked to pay an unexpected vet bill, a quarter would draw from savings (**23%**), while **15%** would put it on a credit card.
- Nearly two-fifths (**38%**) of dog owners walk their dog for 30 minutes or less each day. The most common reasons for this are that their garden is big enough (**30%**), their dog doesn't need any more exercise (**28%**) or because they have more than one walk a day (**24%**).
- Seven in ten dog owners say their walks have unrestricted sniffing/exploration (**69%**) or interaction with other dogs (**69%**). Urban dog owners are less likely to say they have the opportunity for each type of enrichment (except owner interaction).
- Nearly half (**46%**) of dog owners say their pet has eaten something they shouldn't have, while around a quarter of cat (**24%**) and rabbit (**26%**) owners say the same.
- Dog owners tend to be the most well-informed about how to protect their pets' health (e.g. toxic food, signs of heatstroke), but cat and rabbit owners are more likely to know what plants are toxic (**47%** dog owners, **56%** cat owners, **56%** rabbit owners).
- **16%** of dog owners believe their pet has some form of mutilation (i.e. docked tail, no dew claws, cropped ears, debarking), with **9%** saying their dog has a docked tail.
- Nearly all pet owners who've experienced the loss of a pet say they will live on in their memory (**94%**), but less than half (**42%**) would consider donating to charity in their memory.
- Only **25%** are aware of a PDSA Pet Hospital in their local area, but around half (**51%**) live within a PDSA catchment area. Those in more deprived areas are more likely to be aware and more likely to live within a hospital catchment area.

UK pet populations

The estimated population of dogs continues to grow, while the population of cats is broadly steady, and rabbits continue to decline.

Approximate population in the UK

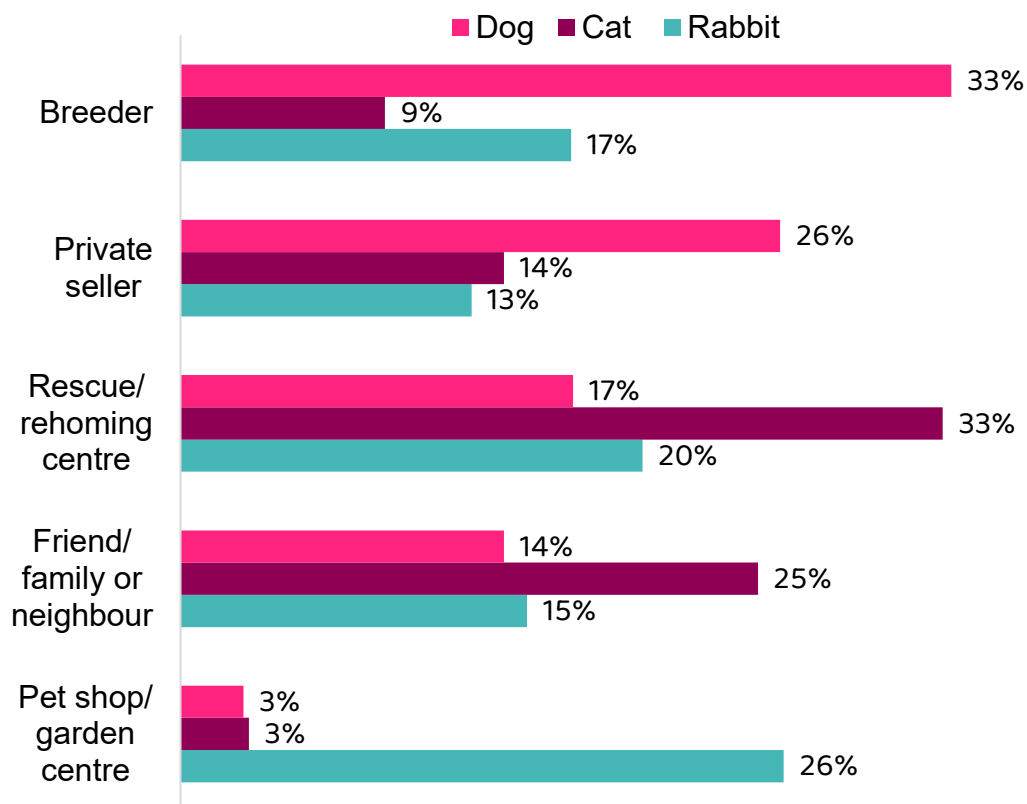


Pet population estimates are calculated from a combination of individual survey responses and household data from the ONS. There is a margin of error associated with the estimates; the shaded area indicates the high and low bounds of the pet population estimates for each year.

Getting a pet

**The most common place to get pets remains the same with prior years:
dogs from breeders, cats from rescues, and rabbits from pet shops/garden centres.**

Where did they get their pet from?



6% of owners say their pet is from abroad, including UK-based rescues for pets from abroad

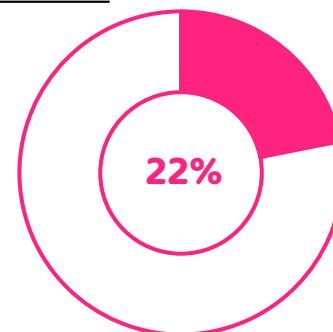
Q232. Where did you get [pet] from?

Base: All pet owners (dog owners=2556; cat owners=2587; rabbit owners=234)

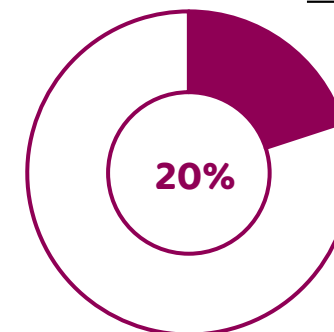
*Breeder includes breeder of one or multiple breeds but does not include private sellers or puppy farms.

Around a fifth say they saw their pet advertised on a social media site before they got them

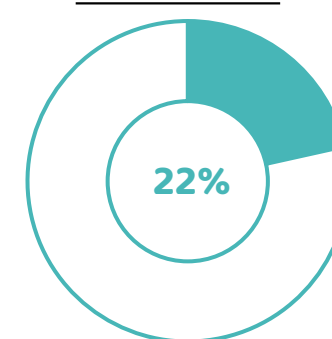
Dog owners



Cat owners



Rabbit owners



PP1_N25. Which, if any, of the following social media sites did you see [pet] advertised on before you acquired them?

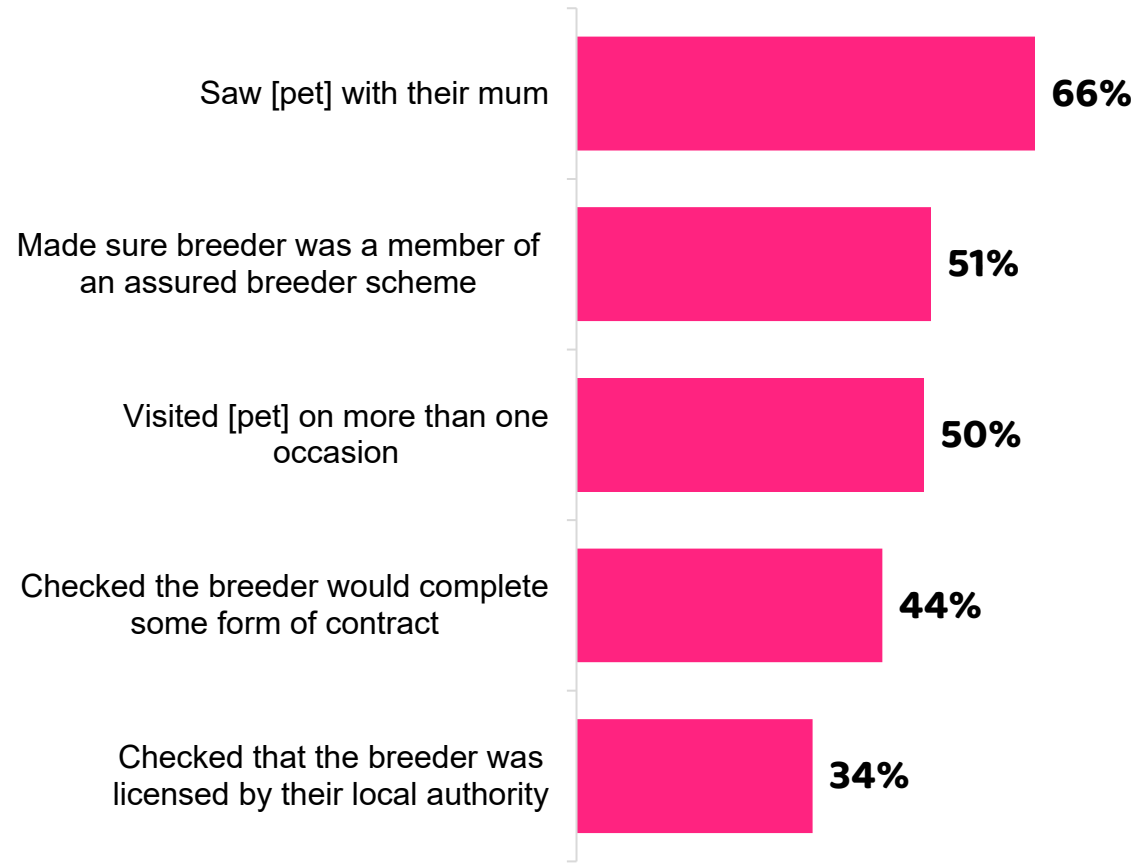
Base: All respondents (dog owners=2556; cat owners=2587; rabbit owners=234)

Note: Owners who said "Gumtree", "Pets4Homes", "Pre-loved" are not included as seeing their pet on "social media"

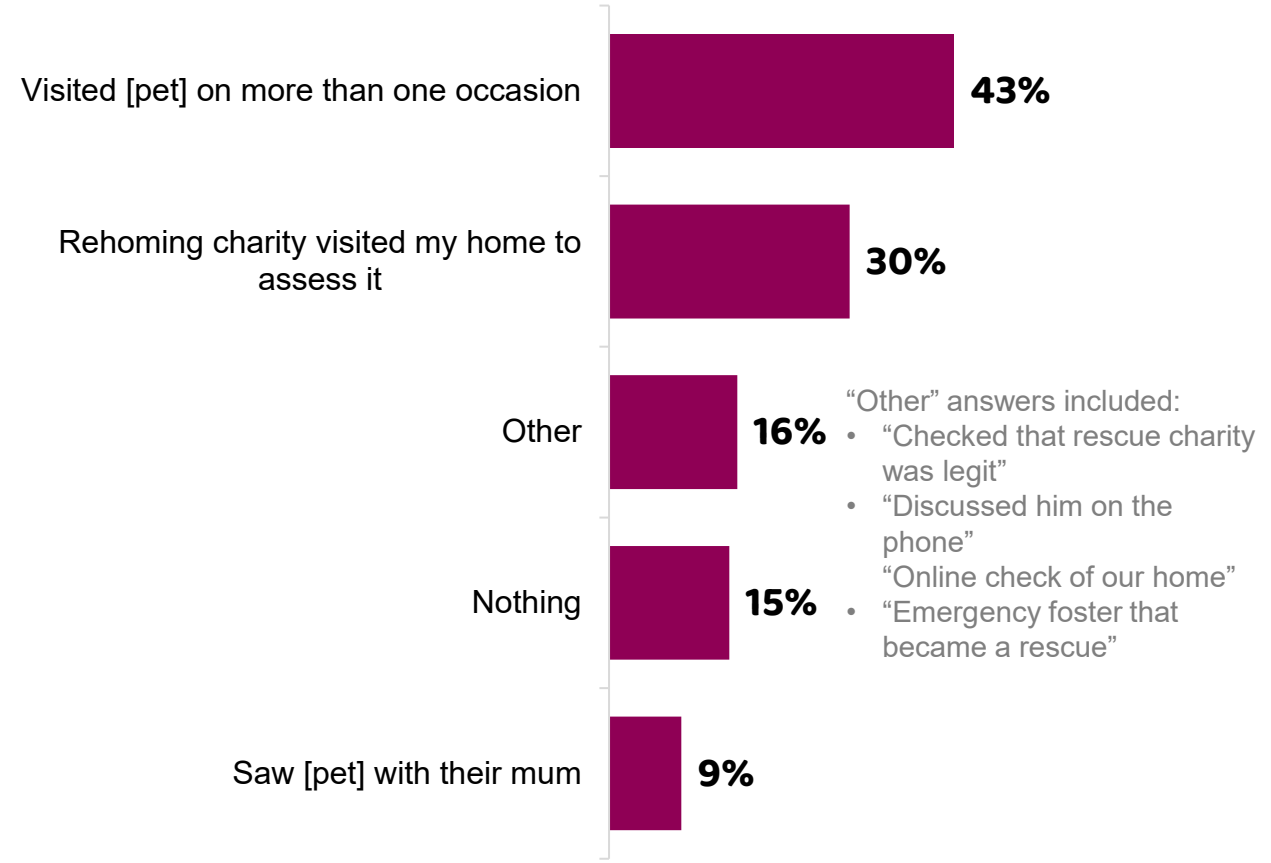
Half of those who got their pet from a breeder visited them on more than one occasion, and while this was the most common answer for those who got their pet from a rescue, slightly fewer had done so (around two-fifths).

Top five activities before getting their pet

Got pet from a UK breeder



Got pet from a UK rescue



Q233. Which of these, if any, did you do before you took [pet] home? Please tick all that apply.

Base: All who got their pet from a UK breeder (1024)

*Breeder includes a breeder of one or multiple breeds, but does not include private sellers or puppy farms.

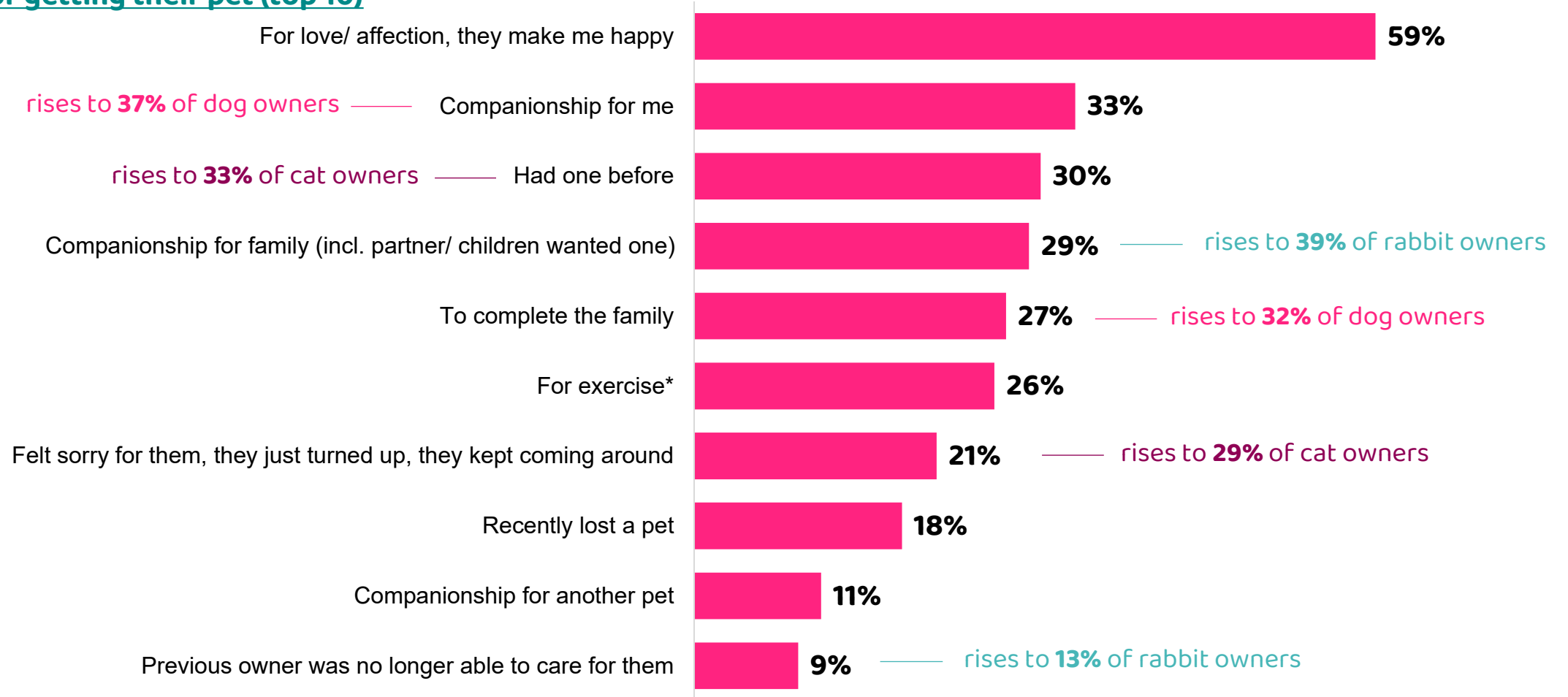
Q233. Which of these, if any, did you do before you took [pet] home? Please tick all that apply.

Base: All who got their pet from a UK-based rescue (1258)

Companionship

The top reasons to get a pet are for love and affection; For companionship for themselves or for their family.

Reasons for getting their pet (top 10)



Q32. Why did you decide to get \$Q2? Please tick all that apply.

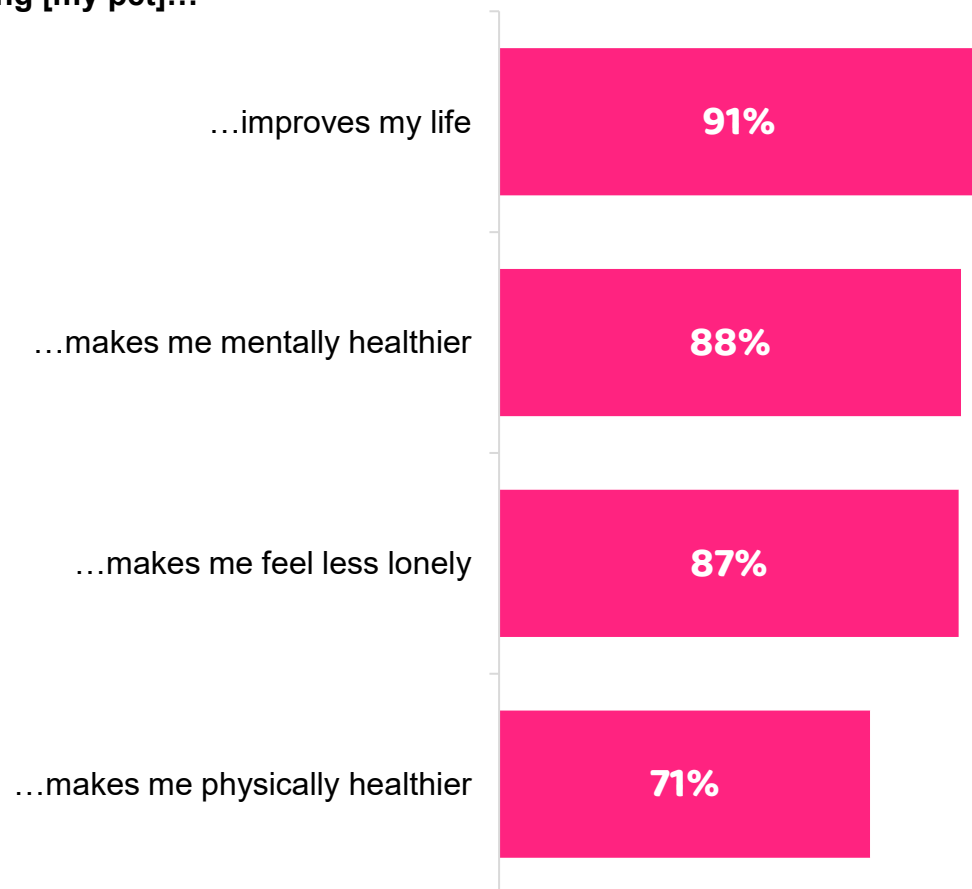
Base: All pet owners (5387)

*"Exercise" option only included for dog owners, 26% of dog owners say they got their pet for exercise

Pet owners are unequivocal about the improvement their pet brings into their lives

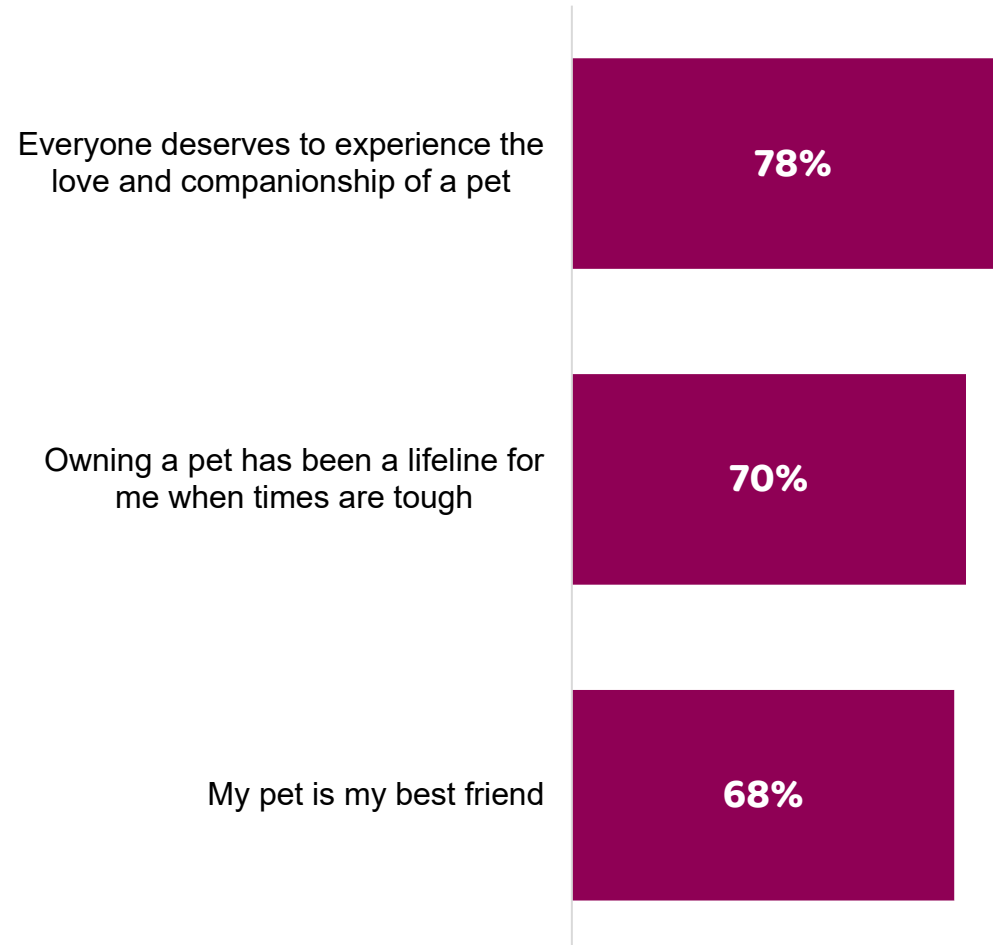
Agreement with statements

Owning [my pet]...



Q70. Thinking about owning a pet, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?
Base: All pet owners (5387)

Agreement with statements



OT6_N25/ Q_Own_14. Thinking about owning a pet, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?
Base: All pet owners (5387)

Owners expressed what their pet means to them, with many affectionately referring to how important their pet is.



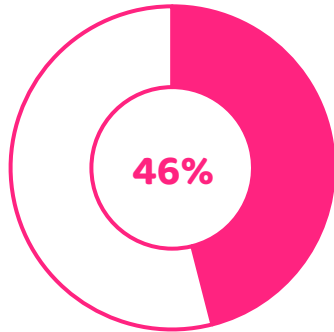
Cost of living

Many say owning a pet is more expensive than expected, and owners near-unanimously think costs have increased.

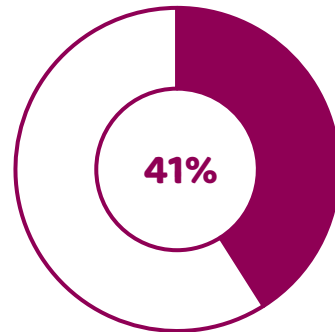
Two-fifths or more say owning a pet is **more expensive than they expected**. This has risen from 2023, when a third said the same

Nearly all think the **cost of owning** a pet has **increased**, with larger proportions agreeing than in 2023

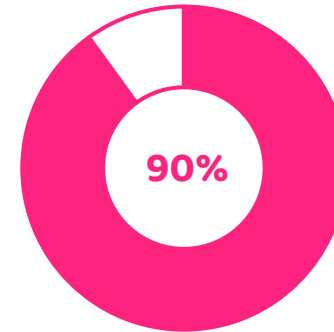
Dog owners



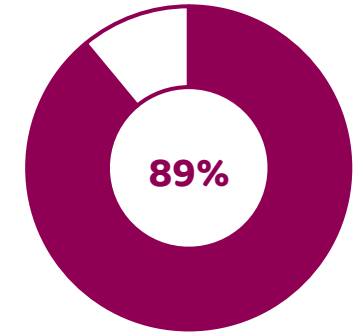
Cat owners



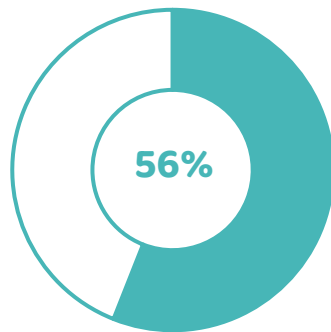
Dog owners



Cat owners

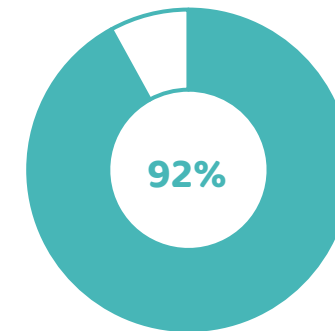


Rabbit owners



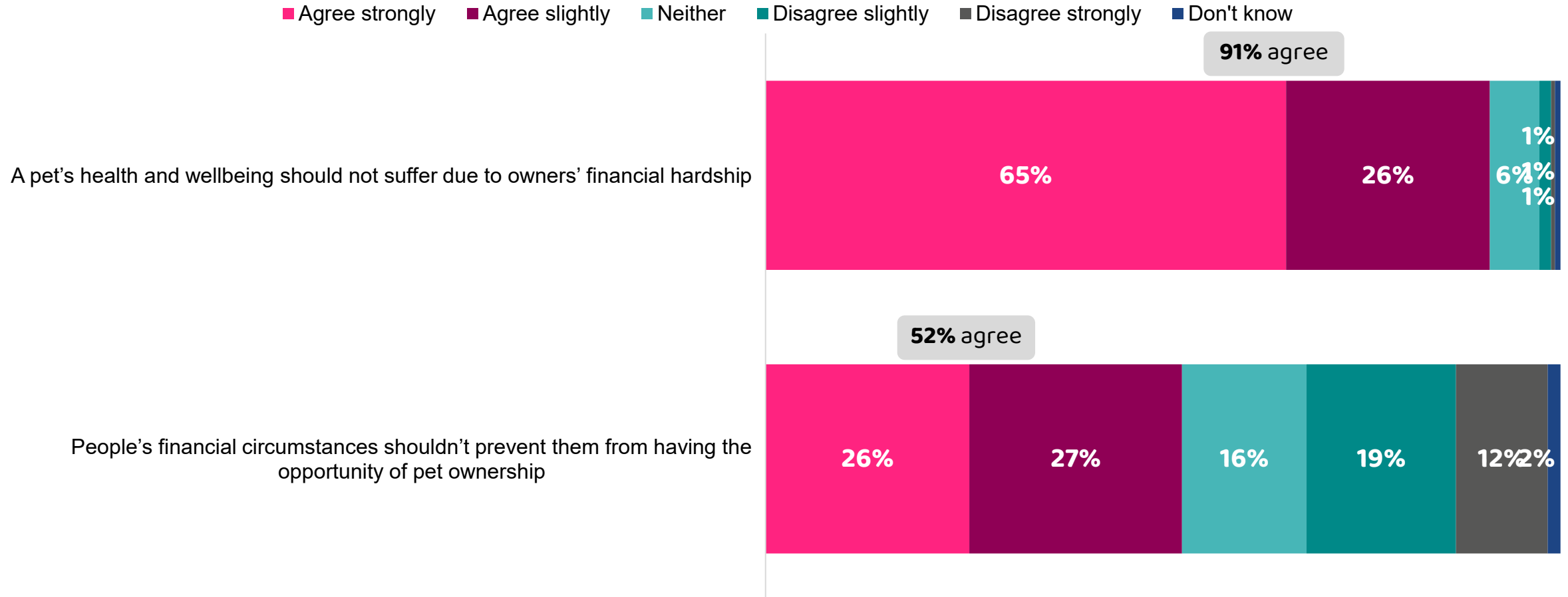
Since 2020, rabbit owners have been the most likely to say ownership is more expensive than they expected

Rabbit owners



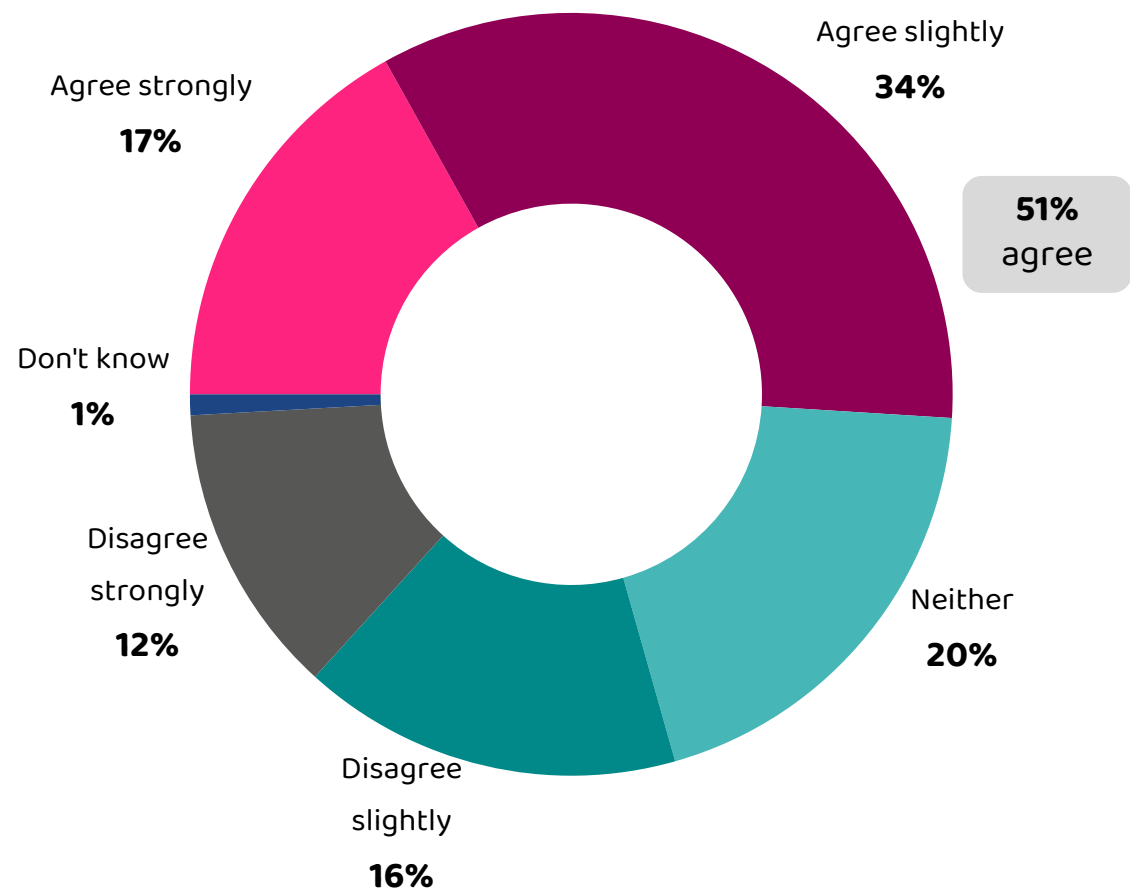
While nearly all agree that a pet's health and wellbeing shouldn't suffer due to owners' financial hardship, people are more split around whether financial circumstances should prevent people from owning pets.

Agreement with statements



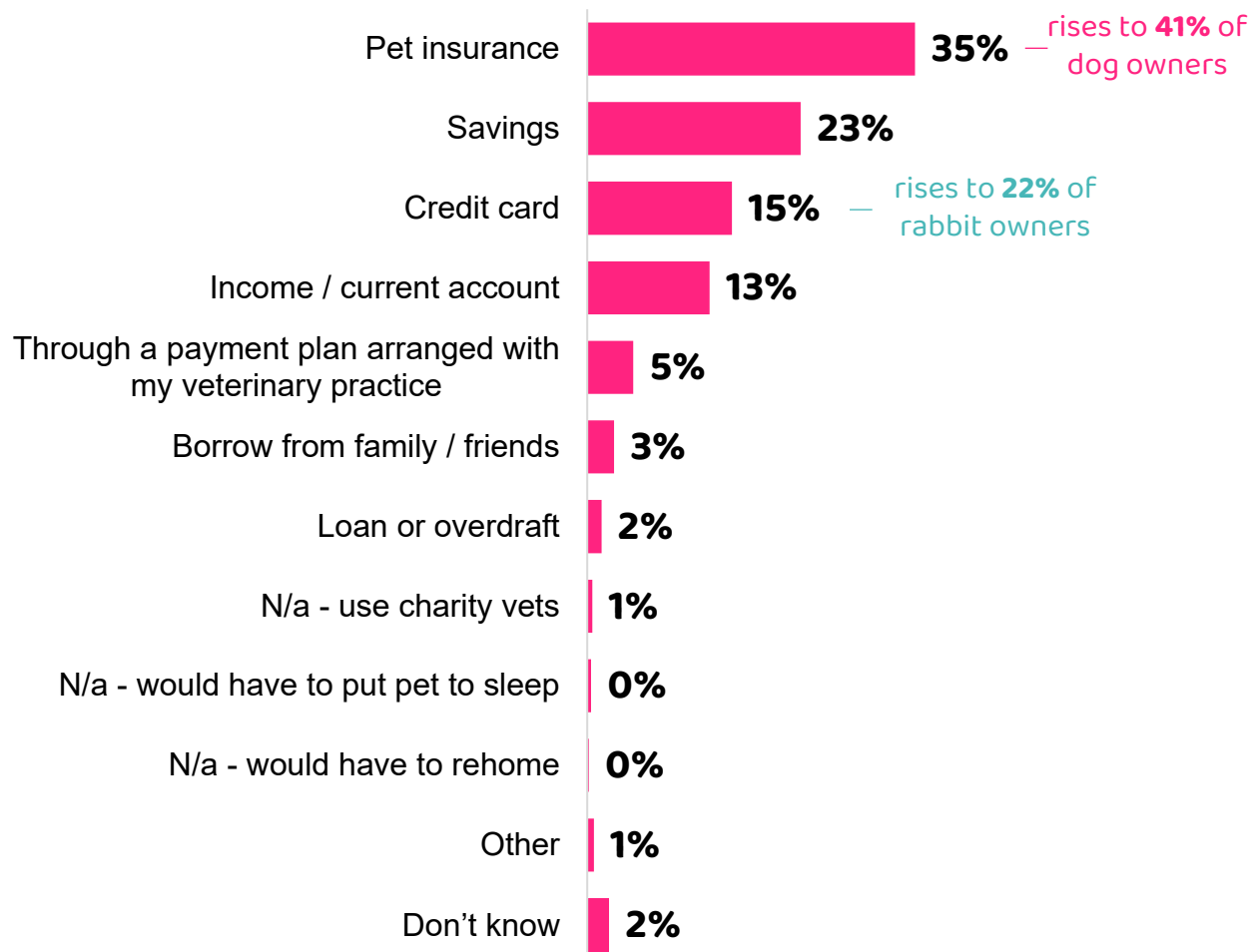
Half of pet owners are worried about the cost of vet care for their pet, and if faced with a bill, a quarter would pay via savings, while 15% would use a credit card.

"I am worried about being able to afford the cost of veterinary care for my pet"



Q236. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about \$Q2?
Base: All pet owners (5387)

Main way to pay unexpected vet bill

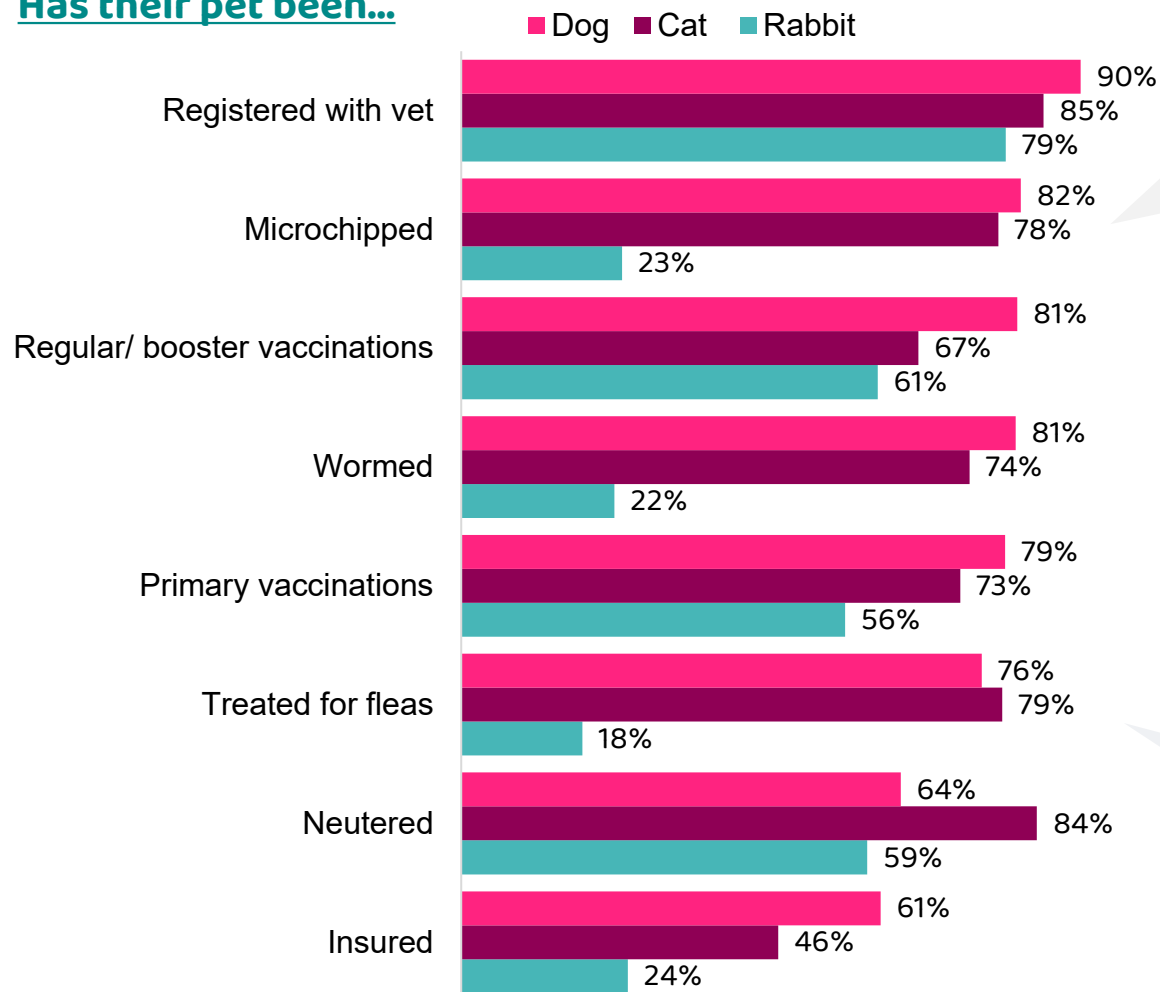


Q111. If you were to receive an unexpected vet bill, what would be the main way by which you would be most likely to pay for it? Please select one option.
Base: All pet owners (5387)

Ownership behaviour

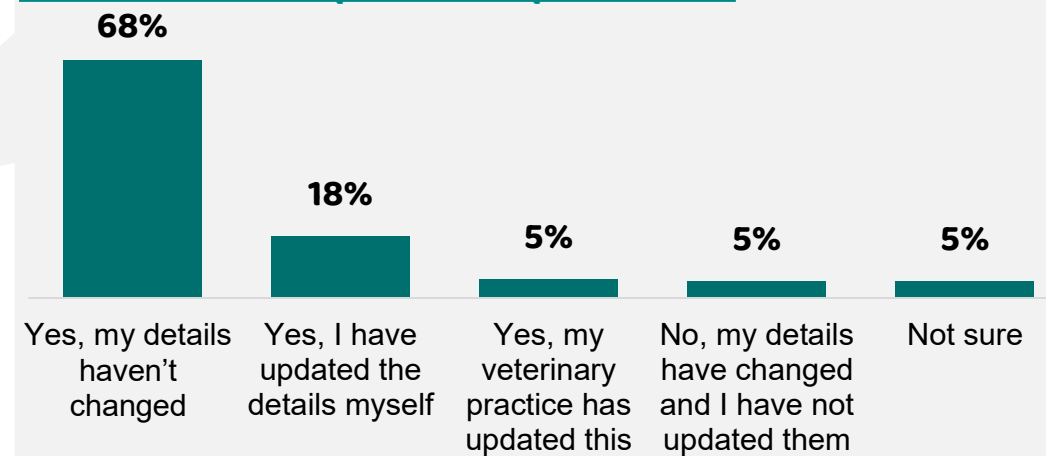
Most owners have undertaken preventive care, and most microchips are up-to-date.

Has their pet been...



Q55. Which, if any, of these has your pet had done?
Base: All pet owners (dog owners=2556; cat owners=2587; rabbit owners=234)

Are the microchip details up-to-date?



91% say contact details are up to date

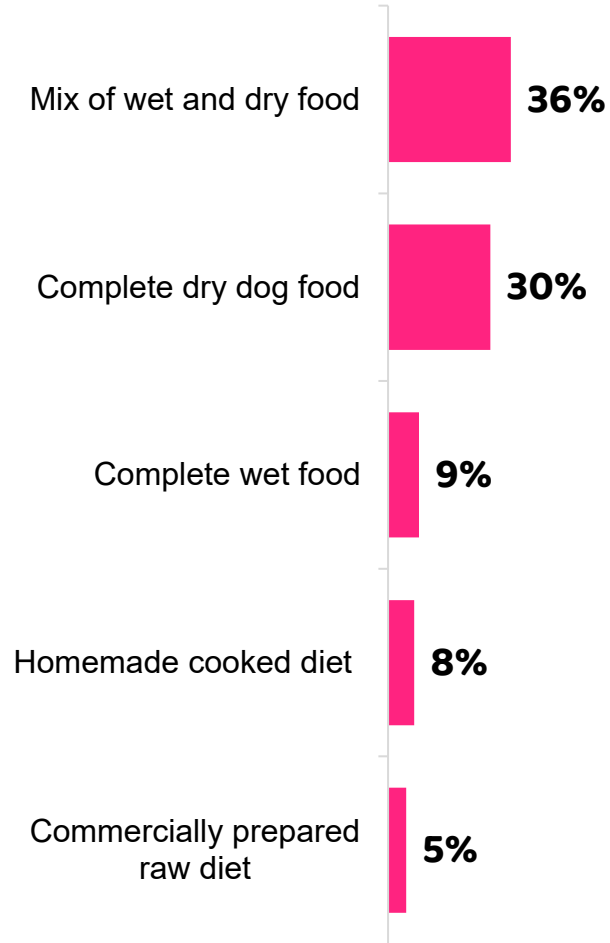
In 2024, the most common sources for worming/ flea treatment were:

- Vet practices (**60%**)
- Pet shops (**23%**)
- Online pharmacies (**17%**)

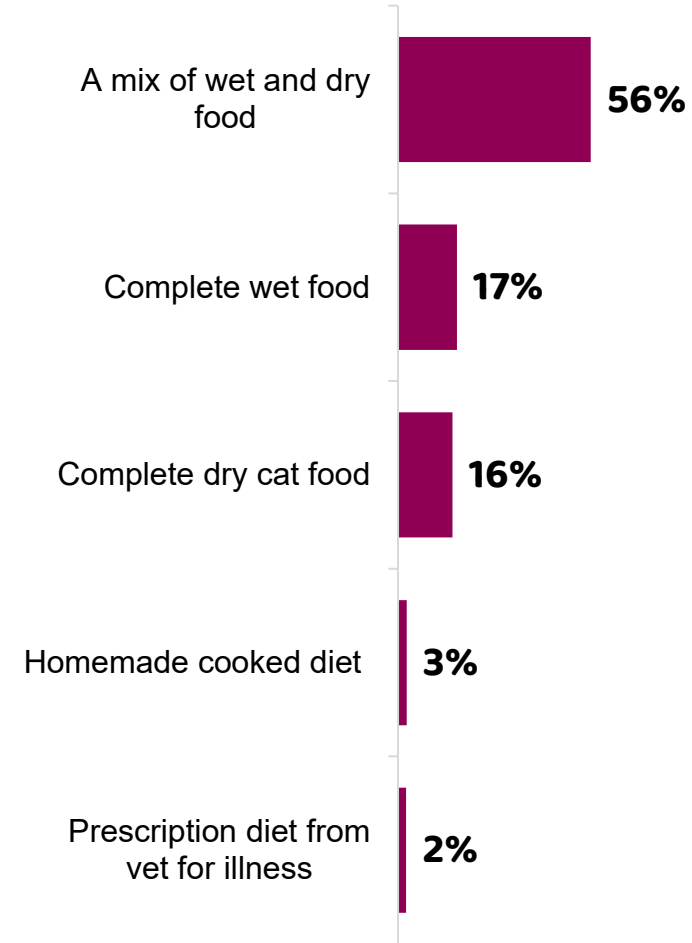
Q104. Do you know if your contact details are up to date on the microchip database where \$Q2 is registered?
Base: All whose pet is microchipped (4239)

More than half of cat owners feed a mix of wet and dry food, while dog owners are more split, with three in ten mainly feeding their dog complete dry food.

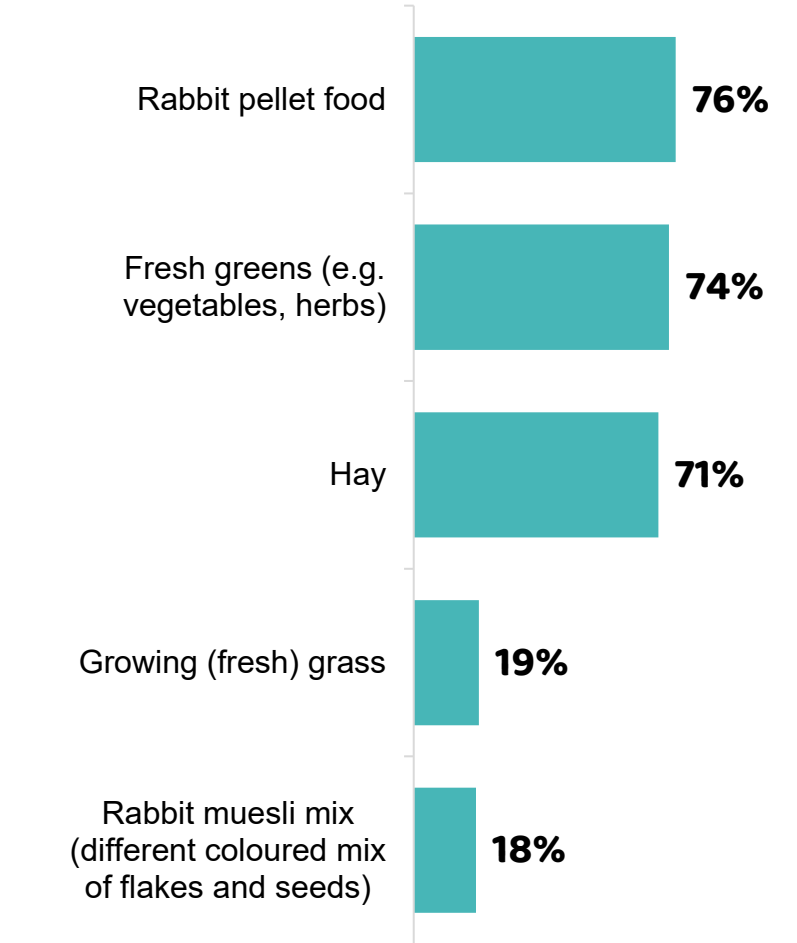
Main dog food (top 5)



Main cat food (top 5)



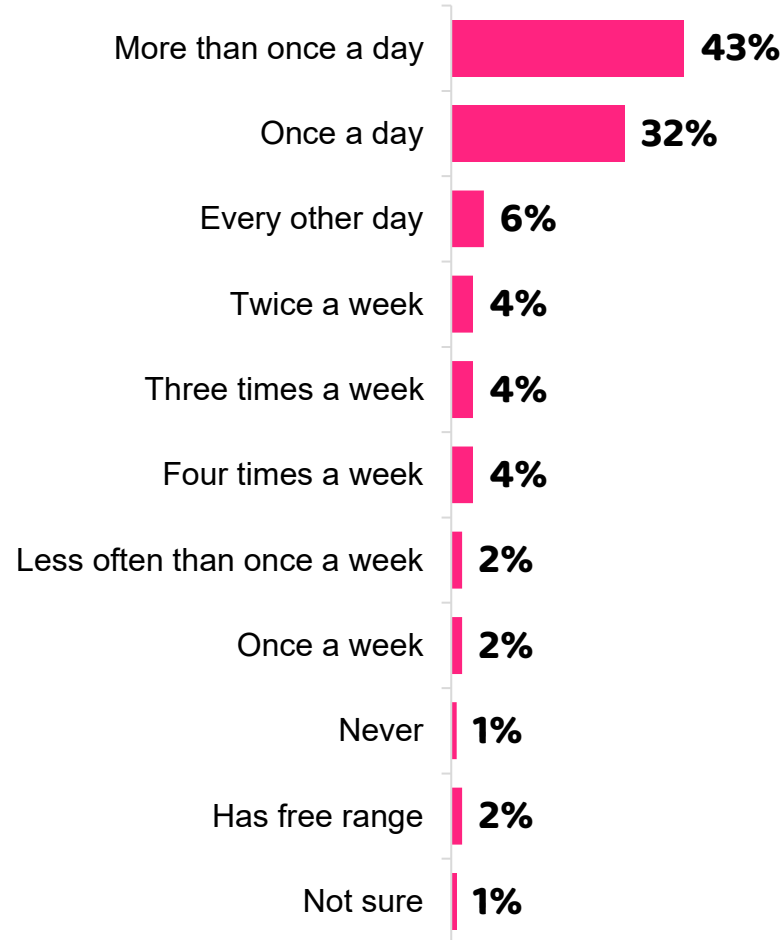
Three main rabbit foods



Pet enrichment

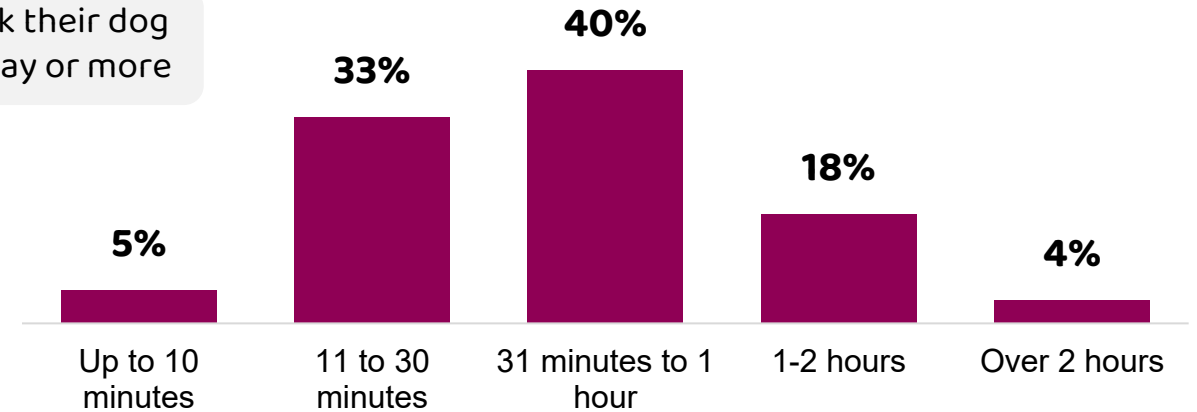
While three-quarters walk their dog once or more times a day, almost two in five walk their dog for half an hour or less.

Dog walking frequency



75% walk their dog once a day or more

Total duration of dog walks per day



38% walk their dog for 30 minutes or less

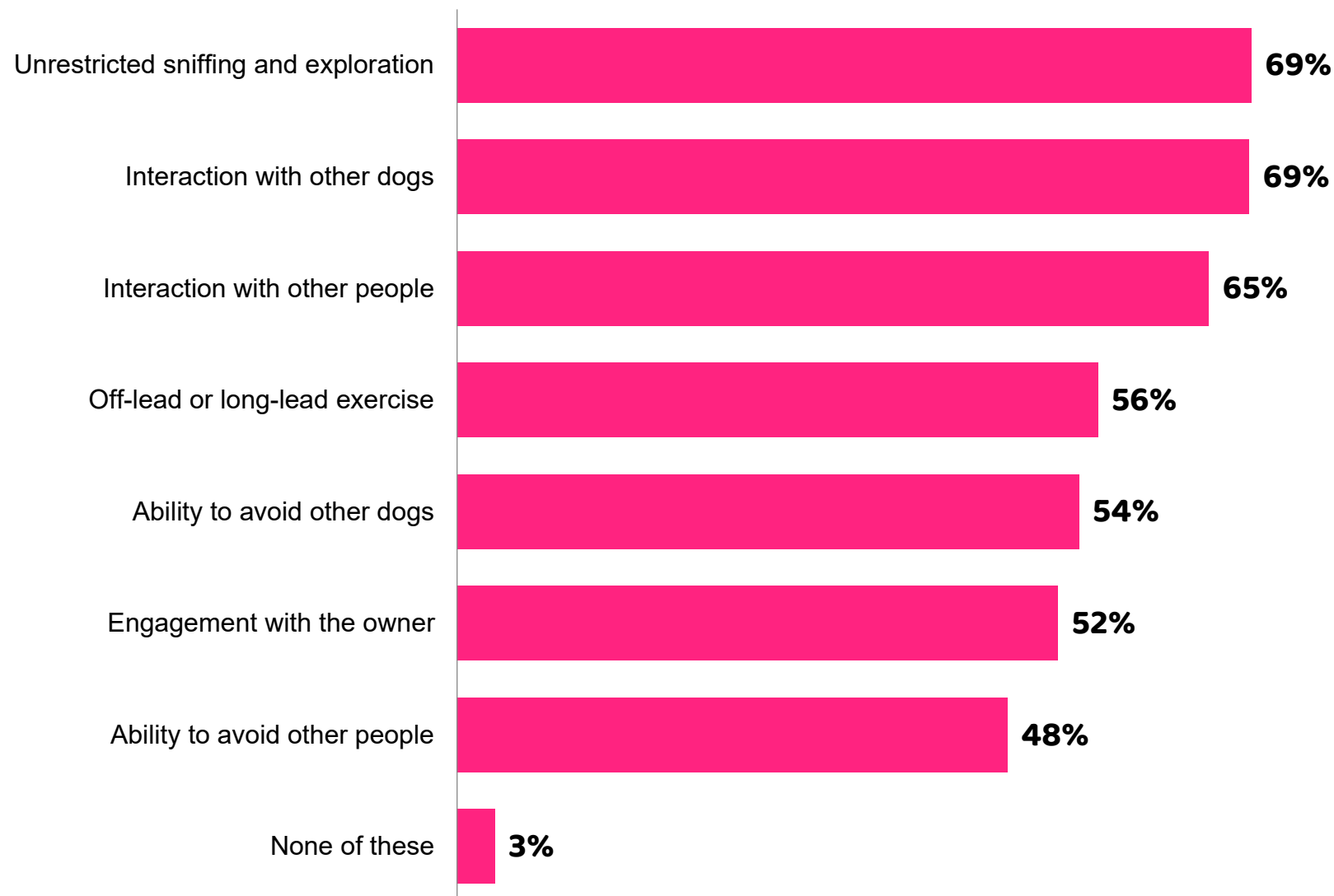
The most common reasons for going on short walks are:

- The garden is big enough for exercise (30%)
- Don't think my dog needs any more exercise (28%)
- They have more than one walk every day (24%)

Even in ten say their dog walks have unrestricted sniffing/ exploration or interaction with other dogs

- Two-thirds (**65%**) say that their dog walks include interaction with other people, while just under half say they can avoid other people (**48%**).
- Dog owners in urban areas are less likely to say their dog has the opportunity for each activity (except “engagement with owner”, which is consistent with rural owners).

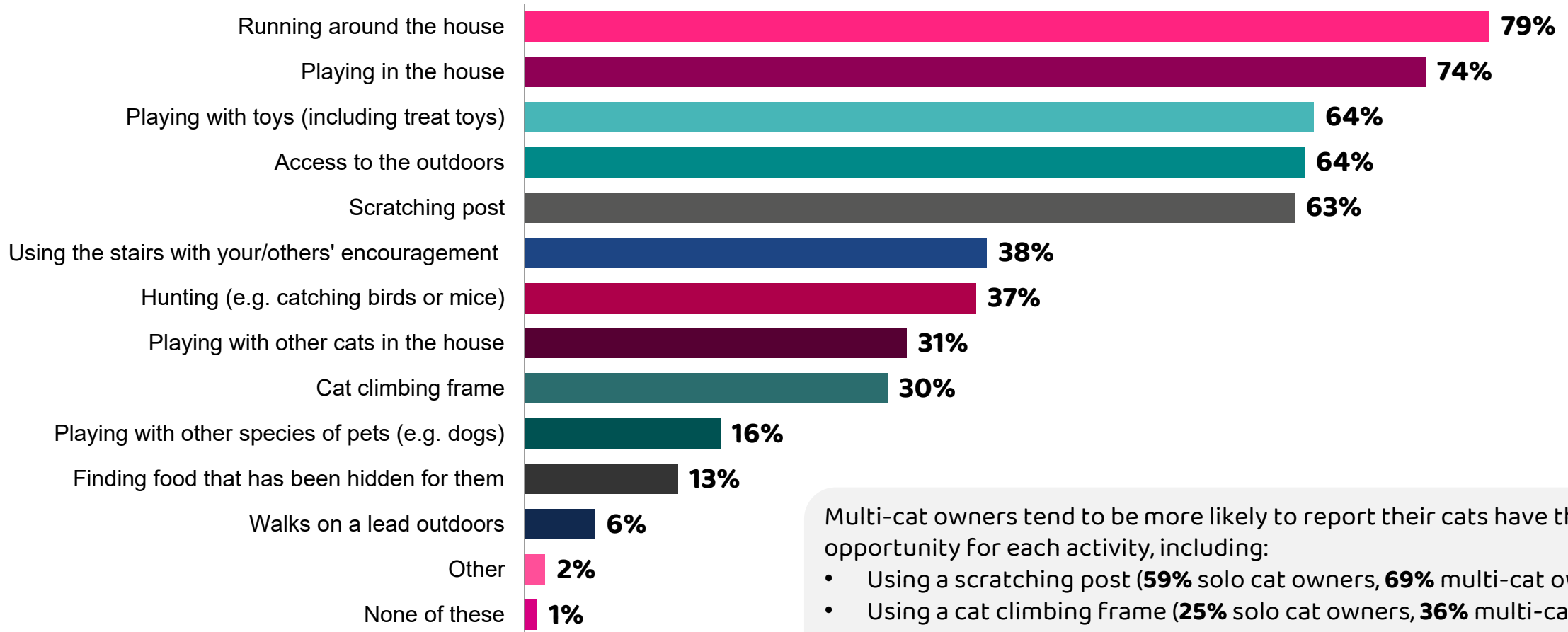
Enrichment activities during a dog walk



Q228a. On a typical walk, does your dog have the opportunity to have/ do any of the following? Please select all that apply.
Base: All dog owners (n=2566)

Cat owners report that their pet exercises by running or playing around the house

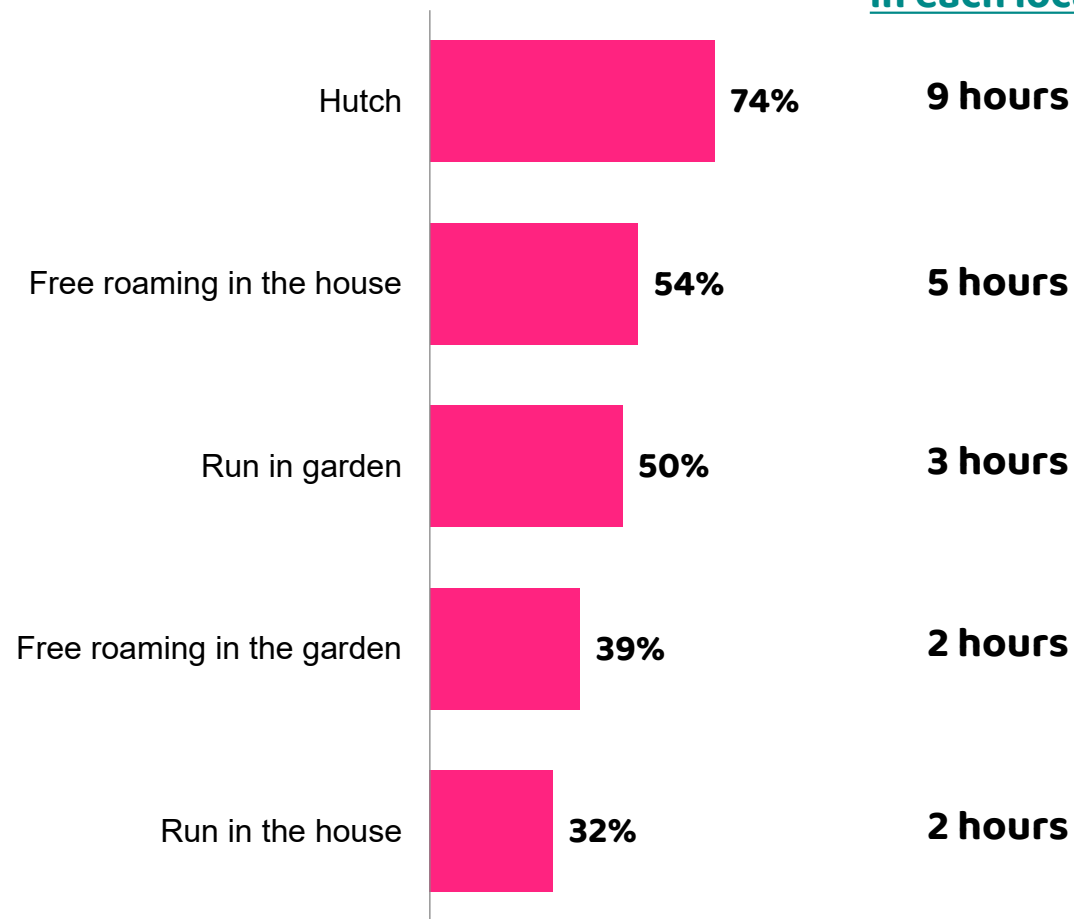
Cat exercise opportunities



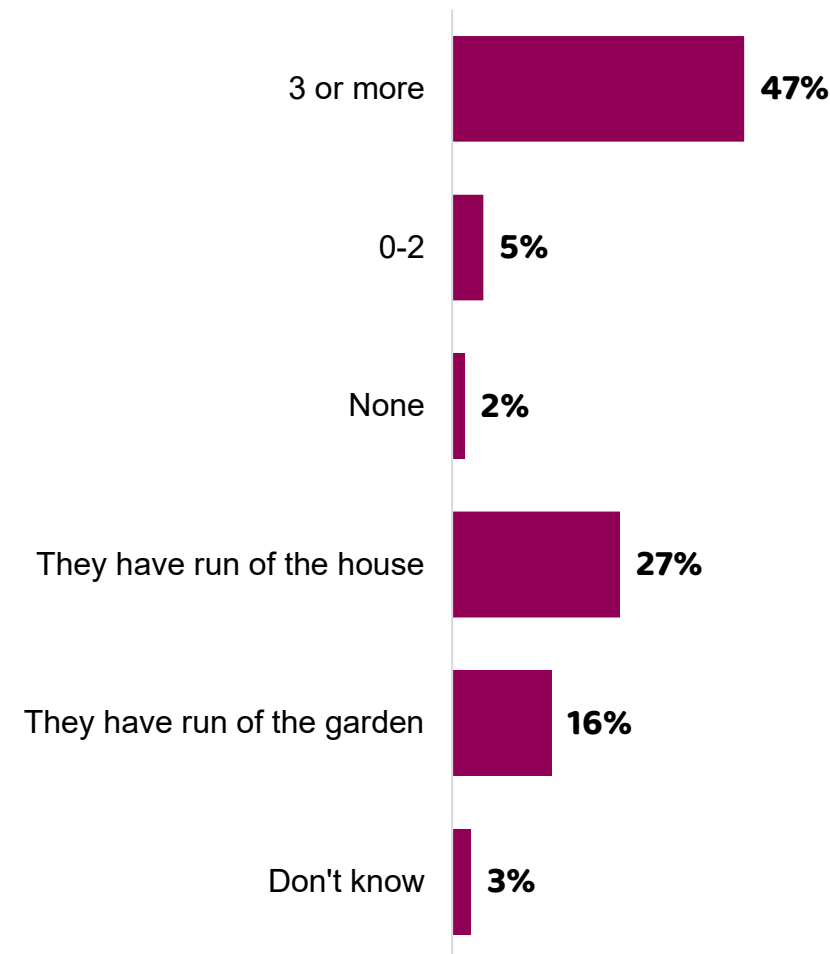
Rabbit owners report that their pet spends most of their time during the day In a hutch with space to make three or more hops

Spend any time in during a day

Mean time spent in each location



Number of hops across hutch/living space



Q_rabbit hours. In a 24-hour period, typically how many hours does \$Q2 spend in each of the following areas? Please type a number between 0 and 24 into the box below to your best estimate.

Base: All rabbit owners (234)

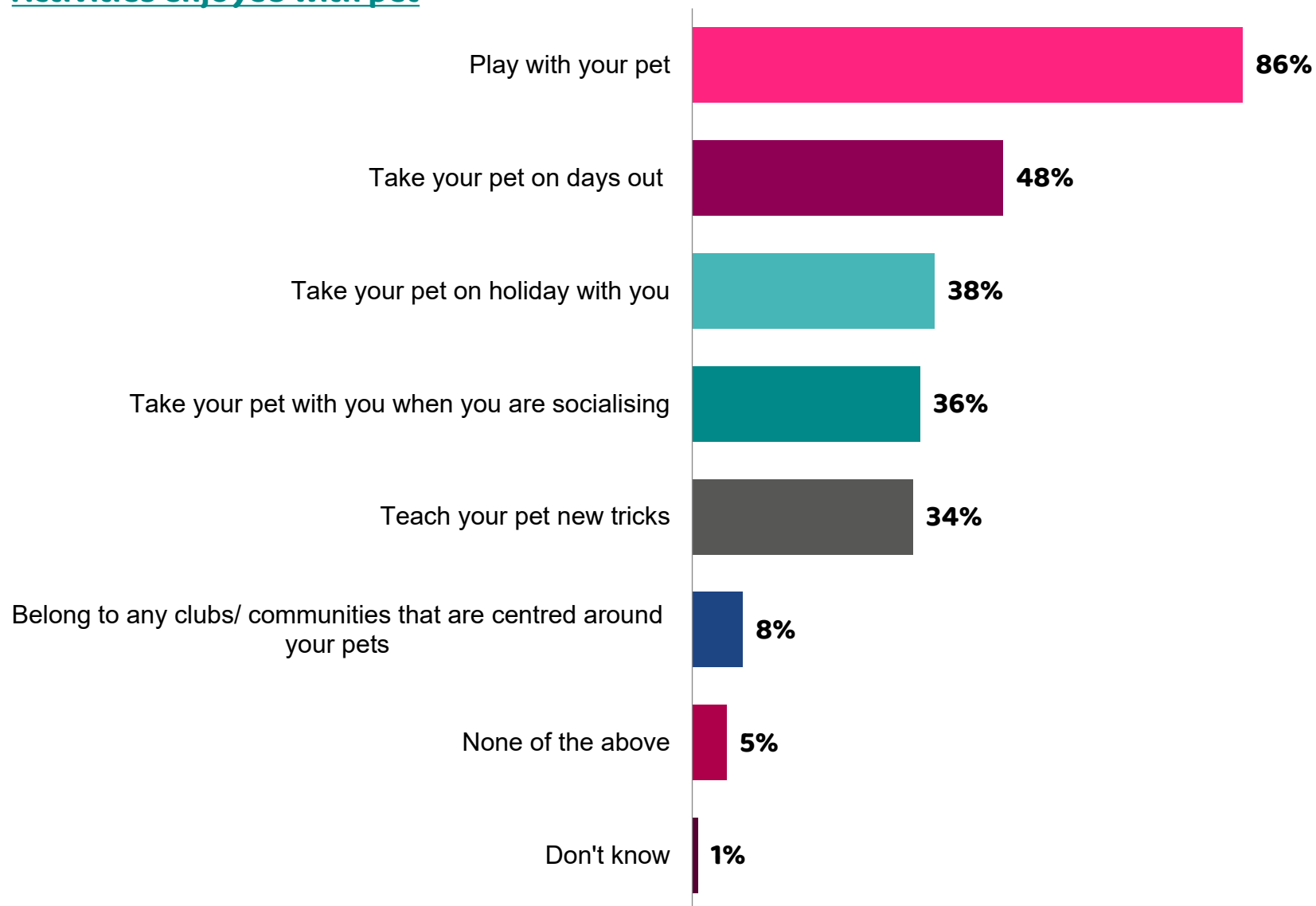
QRAB_hops. Approximately how many hops can your rabbit do across the widest part of his/her living quarters? By living quarters, we are referring to the area of their hutch or other living space in which they spend their time when awake.

Base: All rabbit owners (234)

Nearly all pet owners say they like playing with their pet

- Dog and rabbit owners are more likely than cat owners to teach their pet tricks (**43%** dog owners, **37%** rabbit owners, **24%** cat owners).

Activities enjoyed with pet



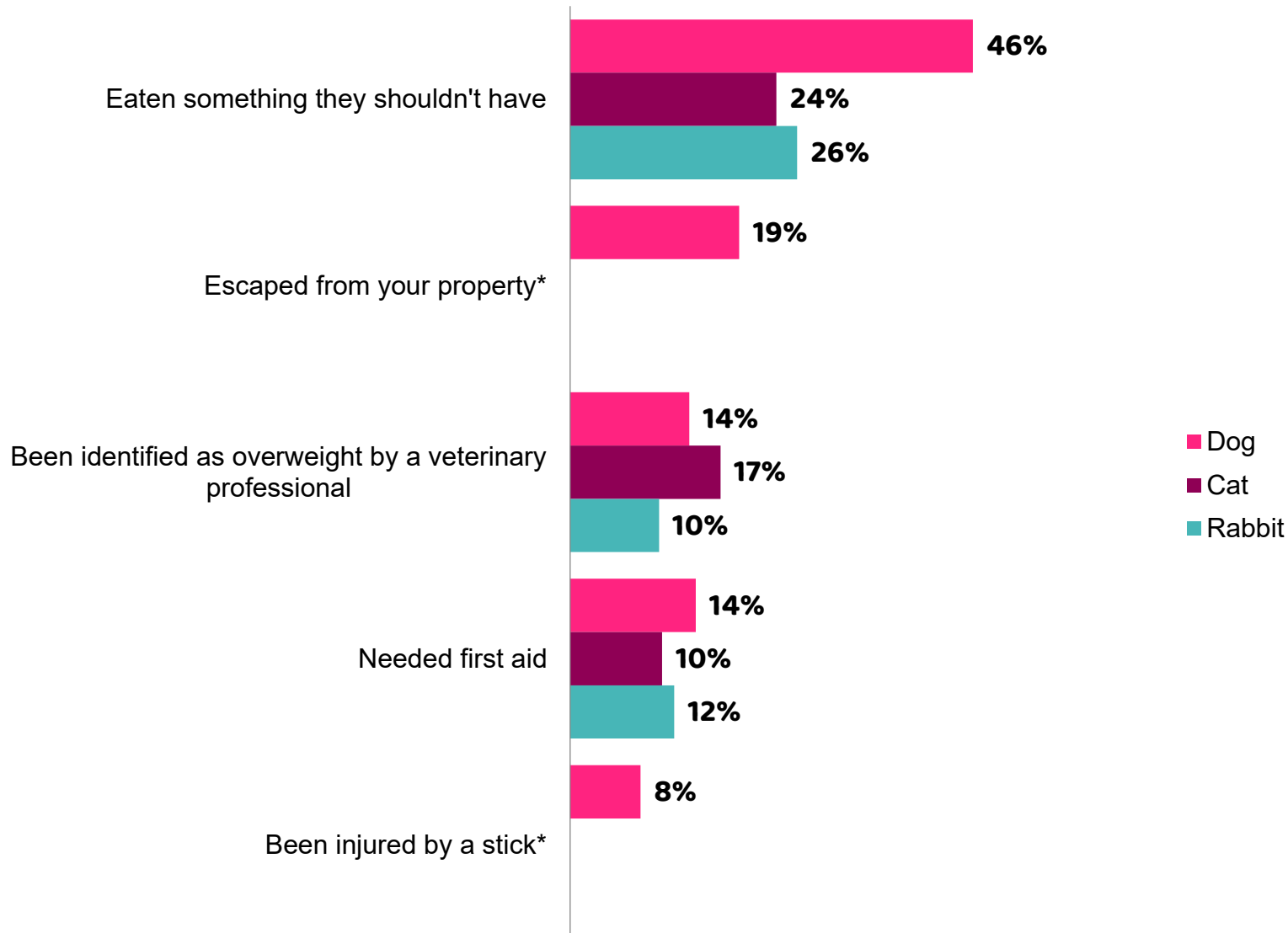
OT11_N25. Which, if any, of the following do you like to do? (Please select all that apply)
Base: All pet owners (5387)

Pet first aid/ health

A quarter of cat and rabbit owners report their pet eating something they shouldn't have

- Nearly half of dog owners report their pet eating something they shouldn't have, while cat owners are more likely to say their pet is overweight.

Pet problems experienced



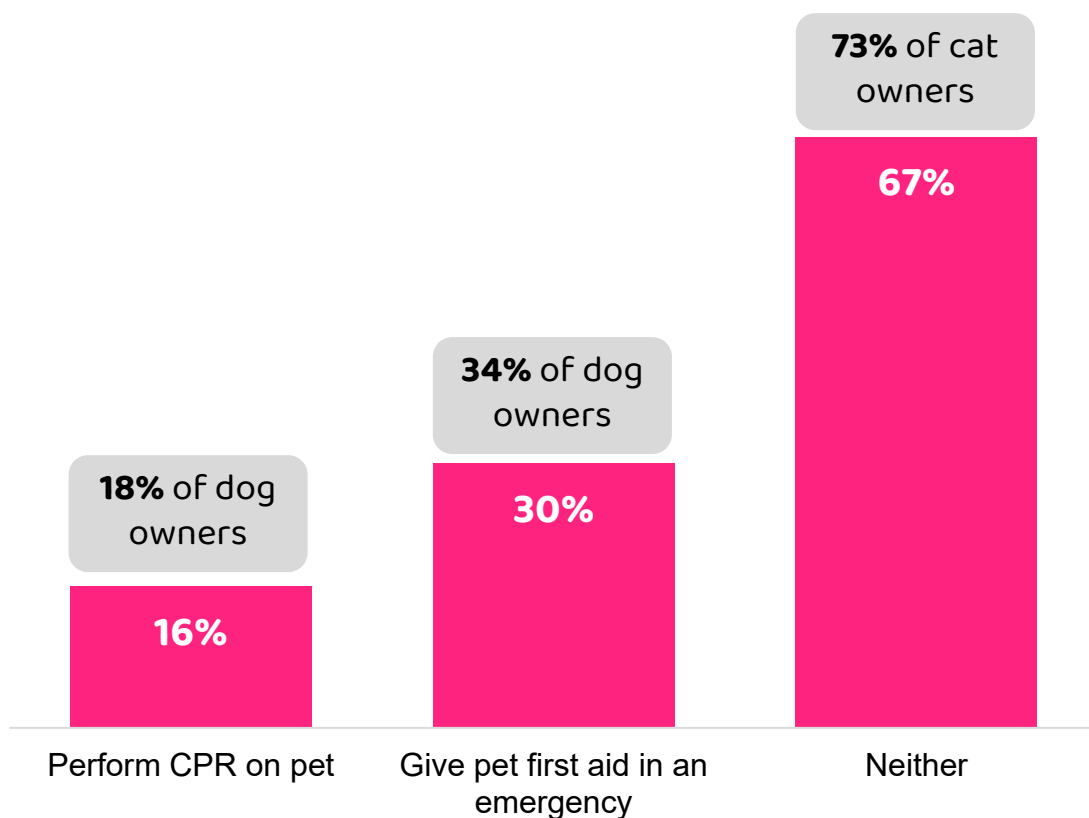
OT4_N25. Which, if any, of the following apply to you? Please select all that apply.

Base: All pet owners (dog owners=2566; cat owners=2587; rabbit owners=234)

*"Escaped from property" and "Injured by a stick" option only included for dog owners; 19% of dog owners say their pet has escaped, 8% of dog owners say their pet has been injured by a stick

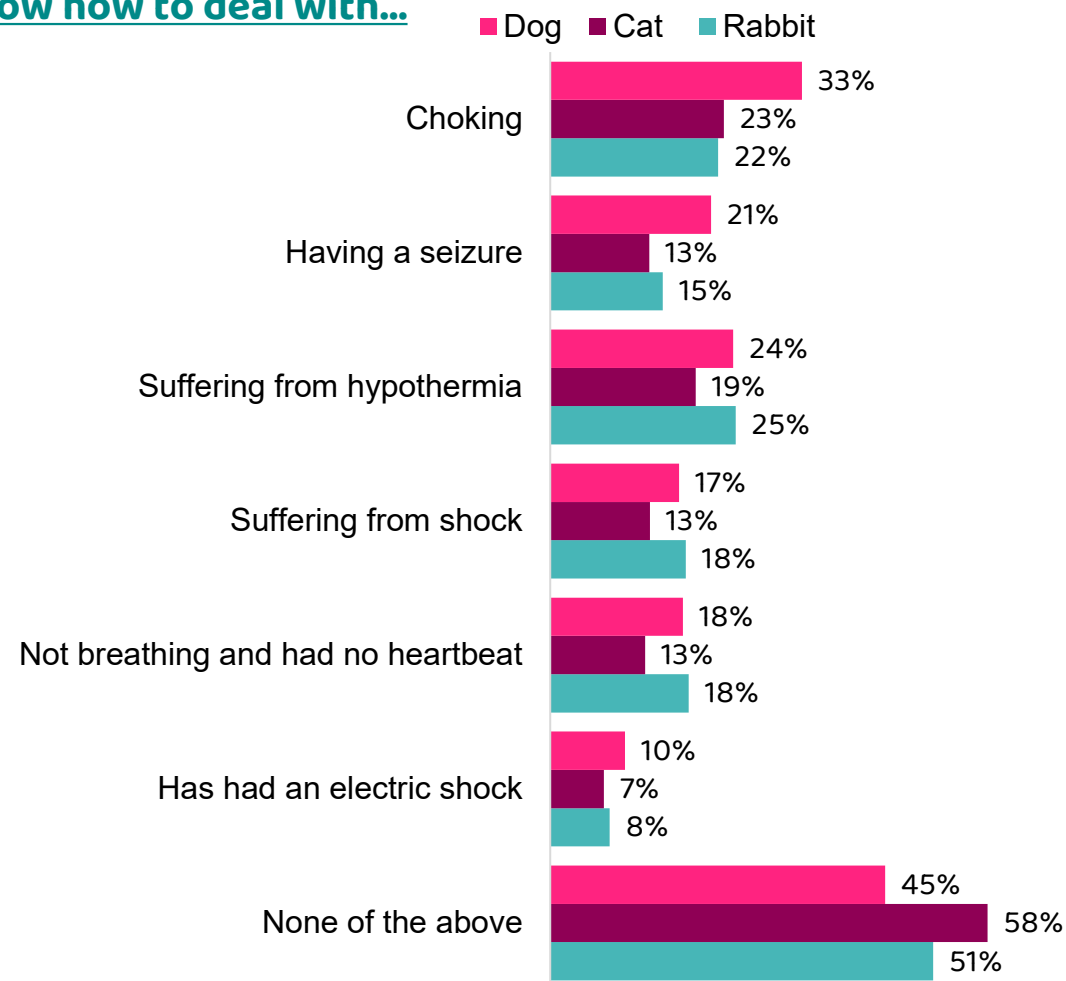
Overall, three in ten think they know how to give emergency first aid.
But when asked about specific scenarios, most don't know what to do.

Know how to give first aid/perform CPR...



OT1_N25. Do you know how to do either of the following?
Base: All pet owners (5387)

Know how to deal with...



OT2_N25. If a pet was experiencing the below, which would you know how to give pet first aid for? (Please select all that apply)
Base: All pet owners (dog owners=2566; cat owners=2587; rabbit owners=234)

Dog owners tend to be the most informed about how to protect their pets

- Except for the toxicity of plants – cat and rabbit owners are more likely than dog owners to understand which plants are toxic.

Know how to protect pet

I know how to tell if it is too hot to take my dog for a walk*

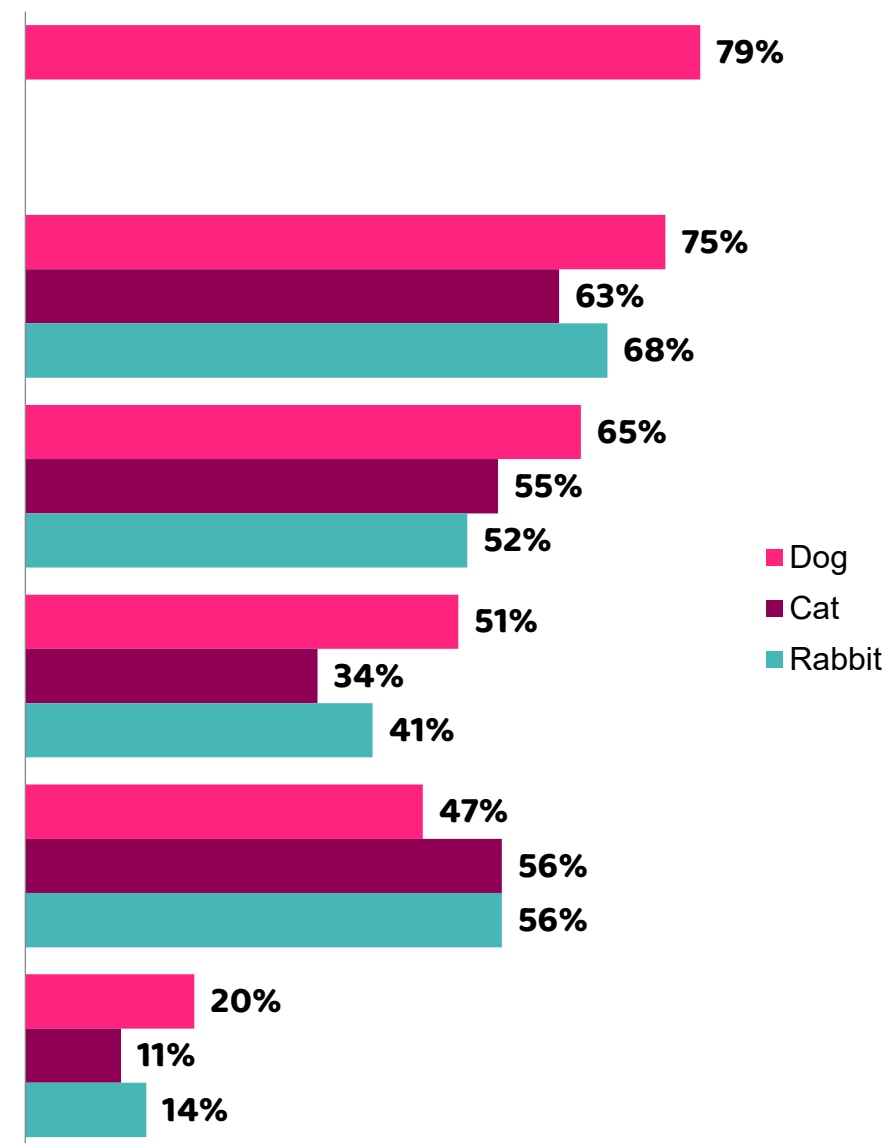
I know which foods are poisonous to pets

I know what to do if I saw a dog in a hot car

I know the signs of heatstroke in pets

I know which plants are toxic to pets

I own a pet first aid kit



OT3_N25. Which, if any, of the following apply to you? Please select all that apply.

Base: All pet owners (dog owners=2566; cat owners=2587; rabbit owners=234)

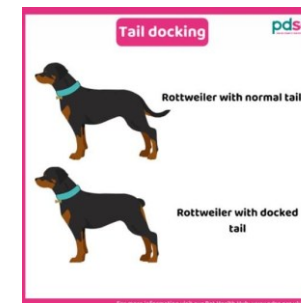
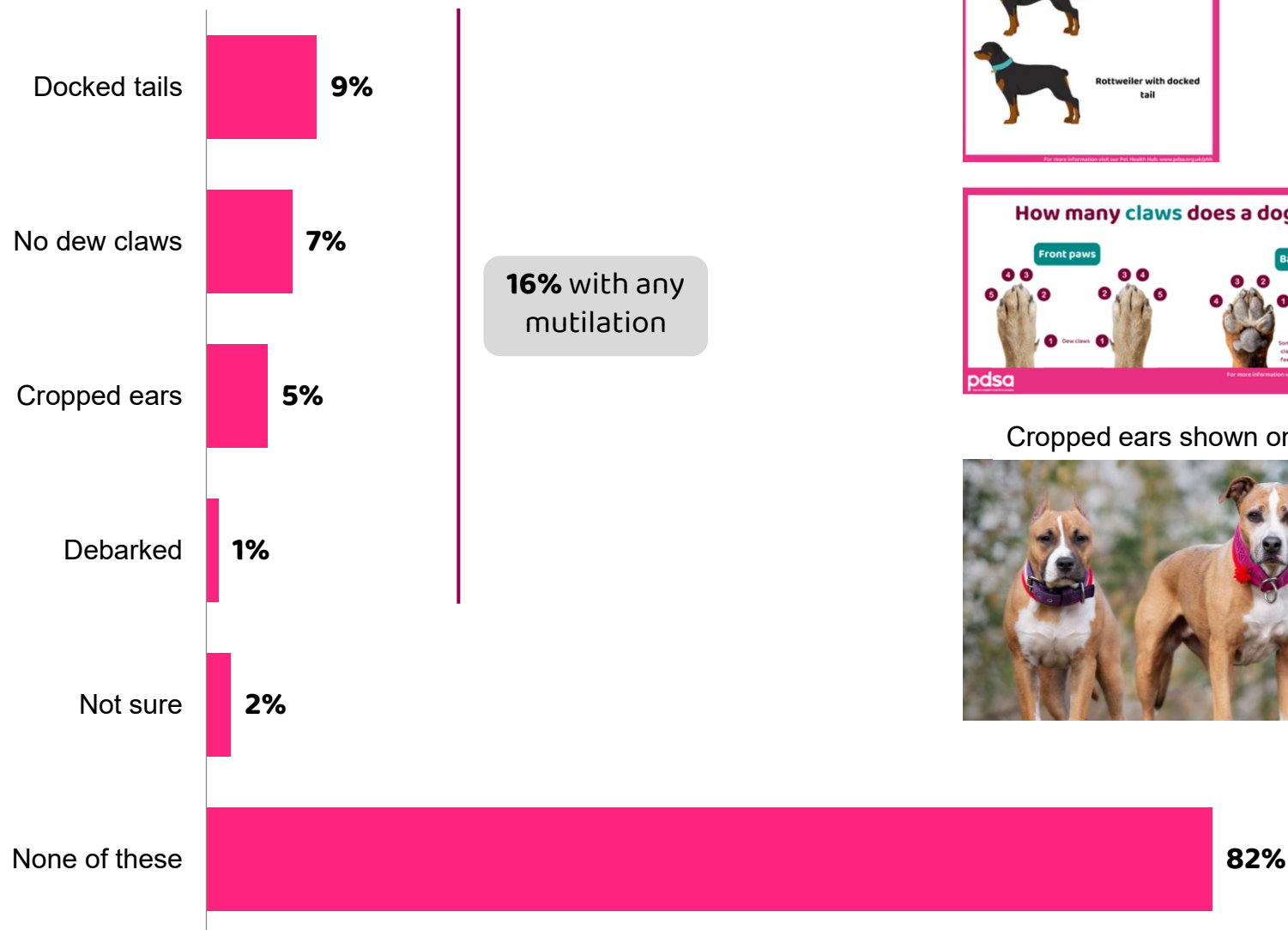
*"Tell if it is too hot to take my dog for a walk" option only included for dog owners; 79% of dog owners report knowing how to do this

Dog aesthetics

One in seven reports that their dog has at least one type of listed mutilation

- Note: this is self-reported data. Pictures were provided to assist owners with an understanding of what each mutilation looks like.

Dog mutilations

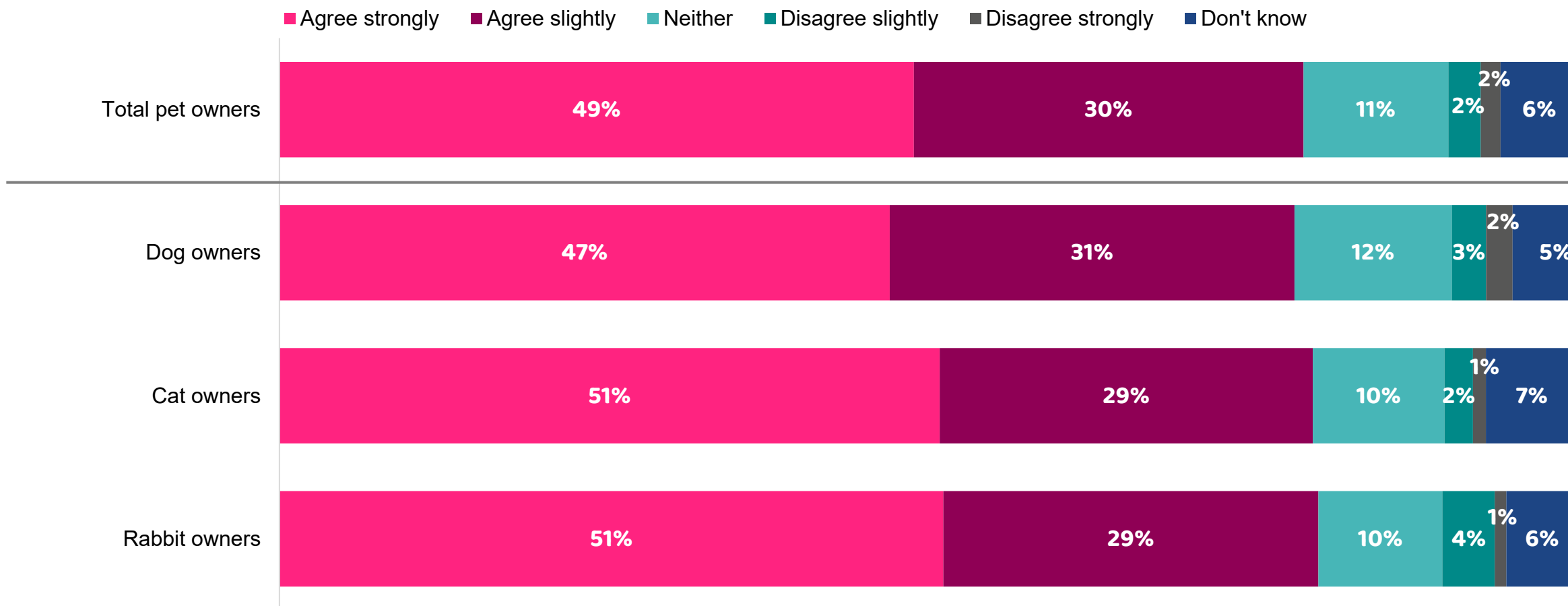


Cropped ears shown on left



The vast majority agree that a dog having a flat face negatively impacts their welfare, but dog owners are slightly less likely to strongly agree that this is the case.

Agreement that having a flat face negatively impacts a dog's welfare



ea1_n25_1. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the statement: - Having a flat face (e.g. breeds such as Pugs, French Bulldogs, English Bulldogs) negatively impacts a dog's welfare

Base: All pet owners (dog owners=2566; cat owners=2587; rabbit owners=234)

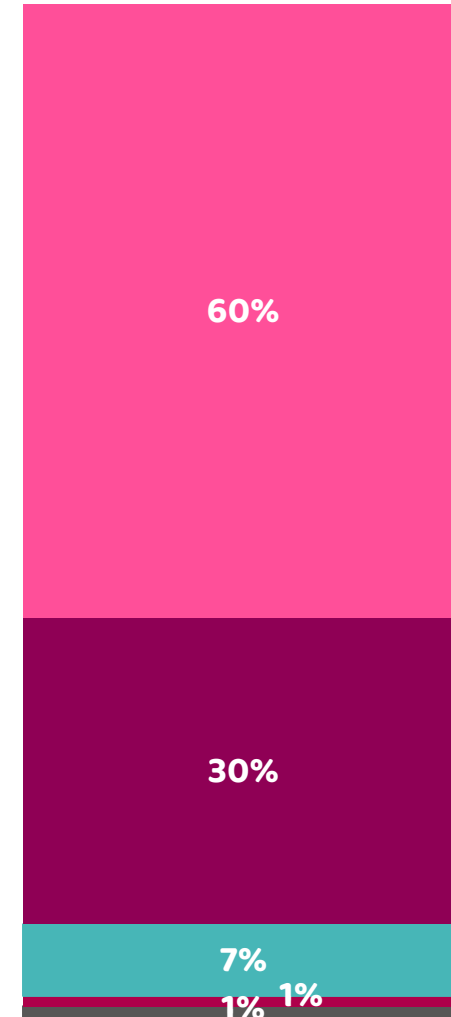
Charitable giving and legacy

Page 58

vast majority agree that a charity providing free veterinary treatment for those in financial hardship is important

Agreement that “a charity providing free and reduced cost veterinary treatment to the most vulnerable in society, is important in helping people and pets in times of financial hardship”

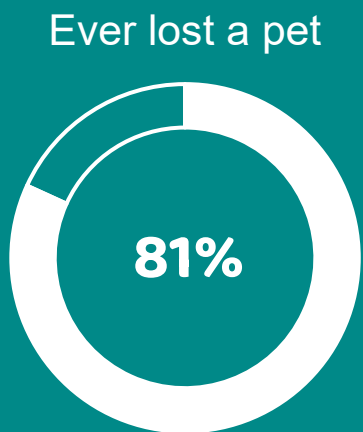
- Agree strongly
- Agree slightly
- Neither
- Disagree slightly
- Disagree strongly
- Don't know/ Not applicable



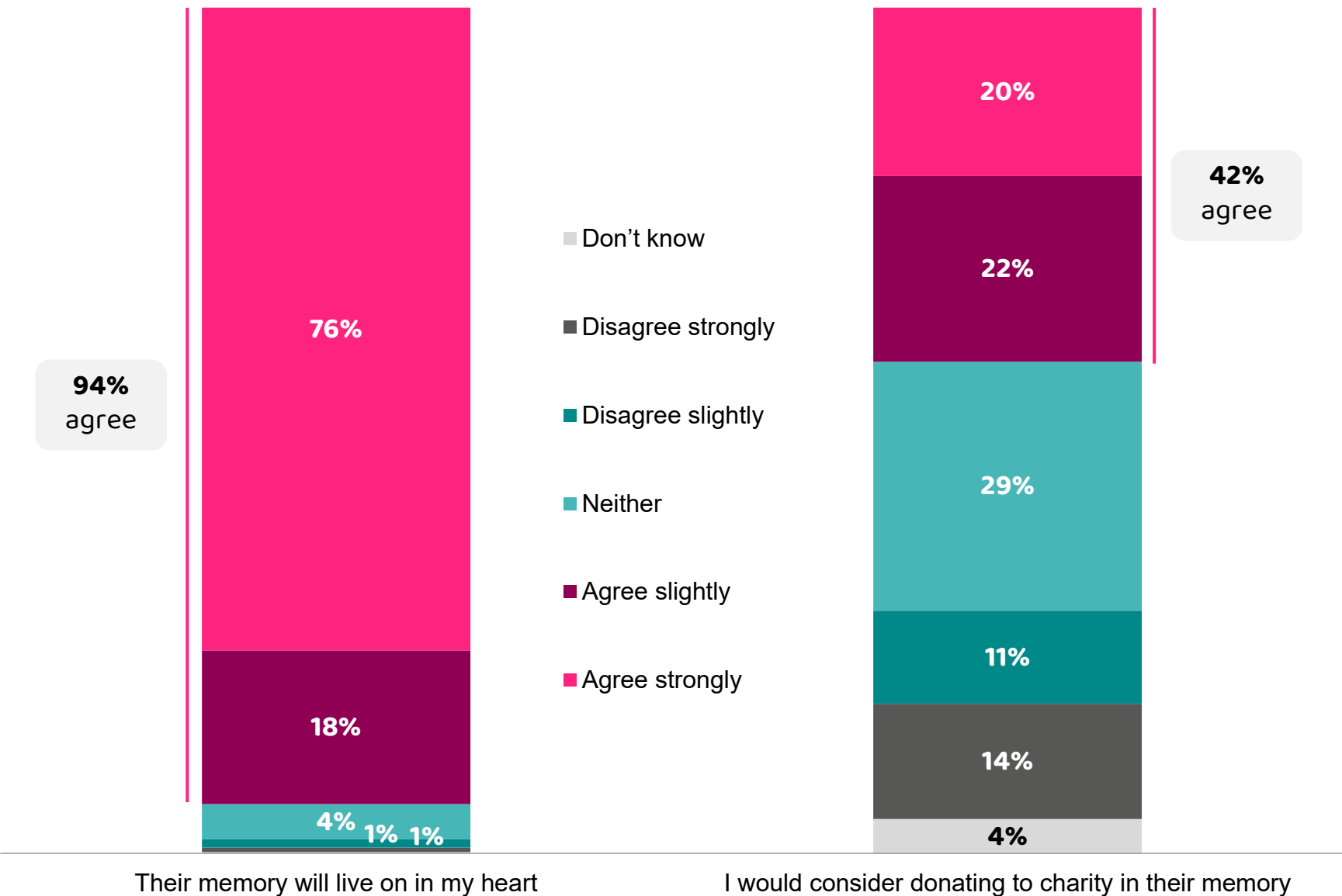
90% agree

- Dog and cat owners are more likely than rabbit owners to agree:
- Cat owners (**90%**)
 - Dog owners (**90%**)
 - Rabbit owners (**85%**)

While most agree that their pet's memory will live in their heart, a smaller proportion would donate to a charity in their memory.



Agreement about statements



OT7_N25. Have you experienced the loss of a pet?
 Base: All pet owners (5387),.
 OT8_N25 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?
 Base: All those who have lost a pet (4497)

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North East Local Authorities Animal Welfare Services

Summary

The report outlines the responses received from questioned sent to all North East Local Authorities regarding their provision of Animal Welfare Services.

Detail

1. As requested in the scope and project plan, information has been gathered from other North East Local Authorities (LA's) to consider how Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council's (SBC) service compares and if there are any areas of best practice that SBC can learn from.
2. The following questions were emailed to all 11 North East LA's in July 2026:
 - What services above the statutory duties do you provide, if any?
 - Do you carry out any services that generate an income?
 - Has there been an increase in demand for animal welfare services and, if so, what changes have you put in place to meet the demand?
 - What training do you provide for staff?
3. Five responses have been received and are set out in **appendix 1**.
4. The responses show that only one responding LA is providing an animal welfare service, similar to SBC. The remaining LA's who responded reported carrying out statutory duties only, although one LA noted it operates longer hours than other areas. The LA providing additional animal welfare services also operates a Green Dog Walker service to tackle dog fouling, whereby residents pledge to clean up after their dogs and encourage other dog owners to do the same. Residents receive a badge to wear and free poop bags.
5. Two of the LA's stated that they contract out their out-of-hours service. One LA also has arrangements with one of their rescue shelters and a 24-hour practice for members of the public to drop off dogs they have found.
6. One LA indicated that it previously had a joint procurement arrangement with a neighbouring for the kennel provision, however, now procure this separately. They also noted that the provision they contract is used by three local authorities, including themselves.
7. None of the LA's that responded reported generating an income from their animal welfare provision. Release fees are charged to recover kennelling costs, similar to SBC, and one LA had operated a microchipping service which generated a small income, but this has now ceased. Another LA has considered a chargeable dog transport service linked to health and social care needs to cover costs, but it has not been used.

8. Several LA's reported an increase in the number of calls received relating to animal welfare. Most refer concerns to the RSPCA or working closely alongside them.
9. All LA's provide some form of training, ranging from basic dog handling skills, health and safety and COSHH training, personal safety, and training with senior staff. Staff have also completed accredited training including the CTSI Animal Health and Welfare training course, Diploma in Animal Welfare and BTEC Level 3 Certificate for Animal Inspectors. At SBC new staff receive on the job training and all staff are offered training on short courses as and when needed. Training staff have undertaken include:
 - Dangerous Dog Legislation training
 - Animal Microchipping training
 - Pet Shop Licensing training
 - Dog Handling training
 - Police Wildlife Crime Training
 - Mental Health First Aid

Name of Contact Officer: Michelle Gunn

Post Title: Scrutiny Officer

Telephone number: 01642 524987

Email address: michelle.gunn@stockton.gov.uk

Appendix 1: Local Authority Responses

Response	What are your current arrangements for stray dogs and what services are provided?
Response 1	Stray dog collection/transport service provided via Neighbourhood Wardens service during the below hours – Mon – Thur 9am – 7pm Fri - up until 9pm Sat/Sun - 4.45pm – 9pm
Response 2	Investigate and respond to stray dog services in house Monday - Friday. We offer an out of hours service and kennel provision that is sub-contracted.
Response 3	We have one dog warden (in house). The pound is provided by a charity that carries out animal rehoming. It was, until recently, jointly procured. It is contracted, separately, by three authorities.
Response 4	We have 4 full time Animal Welfare Officers and 1 Senior Animal Welfare Officer who work Monday to Friday. We also provide an out of hours service which runs 5pm-10pm Monday to Friday and 8am-10pm on weekends and covers most bank holidays minus Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Years Day. The out of hours service is contracted out to a self-employed person. We have a drop off facility contract with one of our rescue shelters and a 24 hour veterinary practice also where members of the public can drop off directly should they wish to do so or if there is no service at the time of finding the dog. All calls are handled by our call centre, during out of hours this goes to Fire Control who work 24/7.
Response 5	Stray dogs service is provided by Animal Care Services.

Response	What services above the statutory duties do you provide, if any?
Response 1	Our Neighbourhood Wardens operate longer hours than many other local authority dog warden services offer.
Response 2	We provide statutory services only; stray dog service and animal licensing
Response 3	None. We used to offer to take surrendered dogs. We only deal with livestock welfare.

Response 4	We also provide an animal welfare service on top of the stray dog statutory duties. This includes investigating animal welfare offences, seizing animals, applying for warrants through the magistrates courts, preparing court files and PACE interviews. We also provide a Green Dog Walker Service to help with dog fouling issues within the area, we hold regular events around this.
Response 5	We do not provide duties above what is statutorily required.

Response	Do you carry out any services that generate an income?
Response 1	No – although we have suggested a dog transport service for social services/health care when dogs need to be housed somewhere whilst owners are in hospital etc this has been offered with costs for staff and mileage fees but not yet used.
Response 2	Release fee's of stray dogs to owners and animal licensing
Response 3	In the area of animal services, no.
Response 4	We have just stopped our microchipping service which did create an income.
Response 5	We do not carry out animal services that generate income.

Response	Has there been an increase in demand for animal welfare services and, if so, what changes have you put in place to meet the demand?
Response 1	Yes – a lot more calls reporting issues to wardens – however as we are not animal welfare experts we inform clients to report matters to RSPCA or Police – we will assist with transport if dogs are to be seized
Response 2	We do not provide an animal welfare service – all concerns raised are redirected to RSPCA.
Response 3	Not known, as we generally refer companion animal welfare reports to the RSPCA.
Response 4	Yes our figures for welfare concerns have substantially grown over the last 5 years. We now work closely with RSPCA and World Horse Welfare for assistance.
Response 5	There has been an increase in animal welfare demand however the local authority only get involved with significant welfare concerns such as abandonment.

Response	What training do you provide for staff?
Response 1	Basic dog handling skills (also use of dog grab poles for aggressive dogs – any dangerous dogs are reported to police
Response 2	Dog handling training, banned breed awareness. General health and safety and COSHH around decontamination of kennels and transportation of vehicles. Also Animal Licensing training (BTEC Level 3 Certificate for Animal Inspectors)
Response 3	The dog warden has a diploma in animal care. They are trained in-house on health and safety and personal safety. Some external legal training is also provided.
Response 4	Staff are provided with the initial induction to the Authority and the role, internal training with Senior and experienced staff until they're signed off to investigate on their own with the support where needed. We have a team who have been here for many years and all have an animal welfare diploma. However, this course does not exist anymore. I have a new member of staff who is currently working through an 18 month online Animal Welfare Diploma.
Response 5	Staff have recently undertaken CTSI Animal Health and welfare training course.

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REPORT TO PLACE SELECT COMMITTEE

14 SEPTEMBER 2026

Kennel Site Visits

Summary

The report summarises observations from the site visits that took place on 14 August 2026 and 4 September 2026.

Detail

1. Four members of the Committee visited two kennels on 14th August, the Council's holding kennels and partner kennel. The Chair and Vice Chair also visited the kennels Adult Social Care utilise on 4th September.
2. The visits gave a fuller understanding of the space at the kennels and an opportunity to discuss operational issues with those running the kennels.

Holding Kennels

3. There are nine kennels in the compound within the security centre, four with runs which can be opened by the Animal Welfare Officer at the kennel door to reduce the need to enter the kennel, and five without runs. The kennels are clean, well-maintained, and fit for purpose. Animal Welfare Officers are on site during the day, 365 days a year, and there are security cameras within the kennels for the security centre to observe out of hours.
4. The Police also used the kennels on occasions before dogs are transferred to their own kennelling provision.
5. There is a recharge for the cost of kennelling stray dogs, however if the dog is only in the kennel for a short period this waived as the Service does not wish to deter people from being reunited with their pet.
6. Dogs are only at the kennels for a short period of 24/48 hours before they are transferred to the partner kennels. At the time of the visit, there was only one dog in the kennels which had been brought in as a stray and had an eye infection. The dog was showing aggressive behaviour, possibly due to being in pain with the infection. It had been microchipped and officers had contacted the registered owner. However, the contact information was for a previous owner, who was attempting to contact the person they had sold the dog onto. Animal Welfare had were awaiting a response.
7. The Animal Welfare team will be moving from their base at 16 Church Road to security centre and a section of the car park will be fenced to give more space for the service and the animals they look after.

Partner Kennels

8. The partner kennels have 15 kennels in a purpose-built block separate and at a distance to the daycare kennels they also operate onsite. The 15-kennel block are for sole use of

Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council. The kennels are clean and well maintained, and all have runs which can be opened by staff outside of the kennels.

9. The dogs taken to the kennels can be aggressive and volatile, often with an unknown history. The positioning of the kennel block allowed for vans to be driven to the door and dogs transferred straight into the block with minimum walking distance. Quieter dogs can become distressed by the noise of the aggressive dogs, and the kennel tries to house the different temperament of dogs in different parts of the kennels to reduce their stress, but this is not always possible.
10. There is no provision for dogs to exercise outside their individual kennel. It was explained that this was due to the significant investment required to adapt the outdoor space into a safe and suitable exercise area, together with concerns regarding staff safety when exercising some of the dogs accommodated at the kennels. The owner also noted that the use of an external area would create a significant risk of disease transmission due to the unknown vaccination status of stray dogs.
11. The dogs are held at the kennels until assessed by Dogs Trust at their centre. This assessment then determines whether they are suitable for rehoming or determined that they needed to be put to sleep. Dogs that are put to sleep included prohibited breeds and, due to the number of traits to check for these breeds, it can be challenging to determine the breed of a dog.
12. Once a dog has been assessed for rehoming, it may remain at the partner kennel until a kennel space becomes available at the Dogs Trust facility. Pressure on kennels is created when the Dogs Trust are unable to take dogs straight away and in exceptional circumstances dogs can remain in the partner kennel for three months, which has an impact on their health and behaviour, however this is not the norm. The partner kennel explained that the Dogs Trust have behavioural specialists who work with the dogs at their facilities before rehoming them.
13. At the time of the visit there was one dog in the kennel, which was aggressive. However, there were periods where the kennels are full. Busy periods highlighted were after Covid when dogs bought in lock down were abandoned or handed in and when the banned breeds legislation was extended.

Adult Social Care Kennels

14. Since the proprietor could not accommodate a larger contingent, Place Select Committee Chair and Vice Chair visited these kennels used under contract by Adult Social Care. Indeed, it was confirmed that the layout would have made it difficult for a larger visiting group.
15. The site has a total of 28 kennels, 5 of which are now contracted to the Council, albeit 8 dogs were currently accommodated. Dogs have stayed from 2 weeks to over a year. The proprietor understands that over 90% of the dogs requiring care come from owners who have mental health issues; most of these dogs present with behavioural issues and often come in poor physical state; this can create difficulties in any eventual rehoming via the Dogs Trust. All "SBC dogs" are vaccinated and receive necessary treatments from a Stockton vet service. Further, it was proposed that, if legally possible, an earlier deadline,

sat after 6 months, for a decision about rehoming would be beneficial to the dogs' long-term futures.

16. The proprietor is a very experienced ex-military dog handler and appears passionate about and committed to the care of the dogs in his charge. Good relationships exist with SBC Adult Social Care whose support is readily accessible and given if needed – comparing favourably to some other local authorities using the kennels. Similarly, there is a good working relationship with SBC Animal Welfare.
17. The kennels are on land leased by the proprietor who recognises that the facilities need upgrading in the near future. It was stated that they were “not the most beautiful kennels” but that they do a good job with the dogs in their care.

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Response from Adult Social Care regarding the suggestion made at the September site visit to make a decision about rehoming earlier.

Pets are generally regarded as the property of their owner, where an individual has mental capacity to make decisions regarding their pet, the council cannot make a decision to permanently rehome the animal without the owner's consent, regardless of the length of time the pet has been bordered. Under the Mental Capacity Act adults must be presumed to have capacity unless it's established otherwise, and individuals are entitled to make their own decisions, including decisions that others may consider unwise.

Where a person lacks capacity to make a decision about their pet, any decision concerning the animal must be made on an individual basis and in accordance with the Mental Capacity Act best interest framework. This requires consideration of the person's wishes, feelings, beliefs and values and consultation with those involved in their care and welfare, and consideration of the least restrictive option available. An arbitrary six-month deadline would risk undermining the statutory requirements, as each person's circumstances differ.

In practise, a decision to rehome may be appropriate where there is clear evidence that the owner will be unable to resume care of the pet, for example following a permanent move into 24-hour residential care or following death. However, where the owner retains capacity or where a person lacking capacity may reasonably be expected to return home or retain a meaningful interest in the pet, the council would need to carefully consider whether permanent rehoming is lawful, proportionate and in the individual's best interests..

For this reason, the council's approach is to consider each case on its individual circumstances rather than applying a fixed time, after which rehoming would automatically occur. This ensures compliance with the mental capacity act 2005 whilst also recognising the pets remain an important personal asset and source of emotional attachment for many people.

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Place Select Committee
Review of Animal Welfare, Kennelling, and the Protection of Pets
Outline Scope

Scrutiny Chair (Project Director): Jim Beall	Contact details: Jim.beall@stockton.gov.uk
Scrutiny Officer (Project Manager): Michelle Gunn	Contact details: Michelle.gunn@stockton.gov.uk
Departmental Link Officer: Marc Stephenson	Contact details: Marc.stephenson@stockton.gov.uk
Which of our strategic corporate objectives does this topic address? The review will address the following priority of the Stockton-on-Tees Plan: Priority Two – Healthy and resilient communities: we will ensure that our diverse communities can live happy and healthy lives, that we support those who are experiencing poverty. We will strive to ensure that our residents are resilient, independent and where ever possible, economically active. We will support residents to be safe and connected to each other in their homes and communities. Animal Welfare also has direct links into both the Partnership and Regeneration Missions of the 'Powering our Future' program.	
What are the main issues and overall aim of this review? As part of the Council's Environmental Health Service, the Animal Welfare Team performs several critical functions and interventions to protect the public, ensure the welfare of animals, and promote animal wellbeing, including the statutory control over stray dogs. The service has a strong track record of high-quality provision, receiving the RSPCA Gold Standard award annually since its inception and recently one of only a few local authorities nationally to receive the platinum award for continual excellent. In addition to our Council responsibilities, there is a short-term kennelling facility at the Security Centre, which is also utilised by the Police for housing dogs involved in daily operations, such as the arrest of suspects with dogs or the detention of dangerous dogs. The service currently receives an average of 700 requests per year with the demand for animal welfare services rising, both in the number of animals handled and the complexity of cases. This national trend is mirrored in Adult Social Care Services, where rehoming animals, particularly dogs, presents significant challenges for staff. In addition, the length of time that dogs are required to stay in long term kennelling provision is increasing while at the same time, the availability of long-term kennelling is becoming more limited, and the associated costs are escalating. This reflects similar issues faced by local authorities nationwide. The increasing costs are driven by factors such as rising operational expenses, stricter regulations, increase in veterinary costs and higher demand for kennelling services.	

The review will therefore assess the long-term challenges and consider options for the future provision of animal welfare services, kennelling, and property protection. Key areas for consideration include:

1. **Financial Sustainability:** Exploring funding options and cost-saving measures to ensure the continued provision of high-quality animal welfare services.
2. **Capacity and Infrastructure:** Assessing the need for additional kennelling facilities or partnerships to accommodate the growing number of animals.
3. **Staffing and Training:** Ensuring our officers are adequately trained and supported to handle the increasing complexity of cases.
4. **Collaboration with External Agencies:** Strengthening partnerships with the Police, private kennelling providers, and other local authorities to share resources and best practices.
5. **Community Engagement:** Raising awareness and encouraging responsible pet ownership to reduce the number of stray and abandoned animals.

The overall aim of the review will be to address the challenges to the long-term sustainability and cost of services and thereby continue to provide excellent care for animals and ensure the safety and well-being of the community.

The Committee will undertake the following key lines of enquiry:

What is the minimum (statutory) service that the Council must provide?
 What services are the Council providing above the minimum required and why?
 What is the current position on “put to sleep”?
 How effectively does the current service safeguard animal welfare?
 How long are animals at council funded facilities?
 How has demand for the service changed, e.g. number/complexity of cases, and what impact is this having on the service?
 What support is given to help vulnerable/homeless individuals to care for their pets?
 How is the service funded?
 Are there any income-generation opportunities?
 What current partnership arrangements are in place and how effective are these?
 What are the options for increasing capacity to meet an increased demand? E.g. additional facilities, shared provision, alternative models?
 What training is required for animal welfare officers?
 Is additional training or support required to manage more complex and/or sensitive cases?
 What public engagement is being carried out to promote responsible pet ownership and reduce abandonment and dangerous dog incidents? How effective are these?

Who will the Committee be trying to influence as part of its work?

Cabinet, Council, key partners e.g. police, other local authorities, public

Expected duration of review and key milestones:

7 months, reporting to Cabinet in January 2027

Scope and Project Plan –18 May 2026

Evidence gathering June 2026 – October 2026 Draft recommendations – 9 November 2026 Final Report – 14 December 2026 Submission to Cabinet – 21 January 2027
What information do we need?
Existing information (background information, existing reports, legislation, central government documents, etc.): • Statutory requirements • Existing policy/service New information: • Best practice from across the country

Who can provide us with further relevant evidence? (Cabinet Member, officer, service user, general public, expert witness, etc.)	What specific areas do we want them to cover when they give evidence?
Animal welfare officers	Council responsibilities regarding animal welfare The current service offer including short-term kennelling facility and long-term kennelling arrangements The demand on the service Veterinary arrangements and cost Training received Funding of the service
Police	Police responsibilities regarding animal welfare The number of animals/dogs they deal with and kennel What happens in the long term to dangerous dogs and the animals of suspects they seize
Other local authorities	Best practice in providing animal welfare services and meeting demand for services Training provided for staff
Local Veterinary Services and PDSA	Health implications for long term kennelling Veterinary costs Veterinary support for vulnerable/homeless pet owners
Dogs Trust	Demand for pets and issues with rehoming Partnerships with private kennels and Council
RSPCA	View on Council Animal Welfare provision Partnerships with private and Council kennels
Communications Officers	The communication strategies for promoting responsible pet ownership
Licensing	To understand how the Licensing regime supports and ensures high standards of animal welfare
Adult Social Care	Support given to look after/rehome pets of individuals going into hospital or care

How will this information be gathered? (e.g. financial baselining and analysis, benchmarking, site visits, face-to-face questioning, telephone survey, survey) Committee meetings, reports, case studies
How will key partners and the public be involved in the review? Attendance at meetings, information submissions
How will the review help the Council meet the Public Sector Equality Duty? The Equality Act 2010 protects everyone from discrimination on grounds of nine Protected Characteristics (including – but not limited to – age, gender, disability, ethnicity), and advance equality of opportunity for those with Protected Characteristics. Providing an effective animal welfare service ensures public safety of all residents by controlling stray and dangerous dogs, which reduces the risk of attacks and injuries. This fosters a sense of security and well-being among residents.
How will the review contribute towards the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, or the implementation of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy? By reducing the risk of attacks and injuries and fostering a sense of security and well-being contributes to Focus Area 3: Everyone lives in healthy and sustainable places and communities.
Provide an initial view as to how this review could lead to efficiencies, improvements and/or transformation: The review will be seeking to explore funding options and cost-saving measures, ensuring officers are adequately trained and supported, and strengthening partnerships to ensure the continuation of high-quality animal welfare services that is able to respond to the increasing complexity of cases. It will also seek to raise awareness with residents and encourage responsible pet owners to reduce the number of stray and abandoned animals.

Project Plan

Key Task	Details/Activities	Date	Responsibility
Scoping of Review	Information gathering	April 2026	Scrutiny Officer Link Officer
Tri-Partite Meeting	Meeting to discuss aims and objectives of review	17.04.26	Select Committee Chair and Vice Chair, Cabinet Member(s), Director(s), Scrutiny Officer, Link Officer
Agree Project Plan	Scope and Project Plan agreed by Committee	18.05.26	Select Committee
Publicity of Review	Determine whether Communications Plan needed		Link Officer, Scrutiny Officer
Obtaining Evidence		15.06.26 13.07.26 14.09.26 12.10.26	Select Committee
Members decide recommendations and findings	Review summary of findings and formulate draft recommendations	09.11.26	Select Committee
Circulate Draft Report to Stakeholders	Circulation of Report	November/December 2026	Scrutiny Officer
Tri-Partite Meeting	Meeting to discuss findings of review and draft recommendations	November/December 2026 TBC	Select Committee Chair and Vice Chair, Cabinet Member(s), Director(s), Scrutiny Officer, Link Officer
Final Agreement of Report	Approval of final report by Committee	14.12.26	Select Committee, Cabinet Member, Director
Consideration of Report by Executive Scrutiny Committee	Consideration of report	19.01.27	Executive Scrutiny Committee
Report to Cabinet/Approving Body	Presentation of final report with recommendations for approval to Cabinet	21.01.27	Cabinet / Approving Body

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Agenda Item 7

Place Select Committee Work Programme 2026-2027

Date (4pm unless stated)	Topic	Attendance
Monday 20 April 2026	Scrutiny Review of Governance of Capital Projects – Final Report Overview - Town Centres Development - Inclusive growth & Development	Iain Robinson, Neil Bramma & Andy Corcoran Cllr Richard Eglington, Tracey Carter, Iain Robinson, & Chris Renahan
Monday 18 May 2026	Monitoring: Progress Update - Scrutiny Review of Affordable Housing Scrutiny Review of Animal Welfare, Kennelling and Protection of Pets – Scope and Project Plan	Jane Edmonds Marc Stephenson & Stephen Donaghy
Monday 15 June 2026	Monitoring: Action Plan – Scrutiny Review of Governance of Capital Projects Scrutiny Review of Animal Welfare, Kennelling and Protection of Pets Evidence Gathering	Iain Robinson, Neil Bramma & Andy Corcoran Marc Stephenson & Stephen Donaghy Polly Edwards, Kirsty Wannop, Graham Lyons & Sarah Garside
Monday 13 July 2026	Monitoring: Progress Update - Scrutiny Review of Domestic Waste Collections, Kerbside Recycling and Green Waste Collections Scrutiny Review of Animal Welfare, Kennelling and Protection of Pets Evidence Gathering	Dale Rowbotham Marc Stephenson & Stephen Donaghy PC Chris Lambert
Monday 14 September 2026	Scrutiny Review of Animal Welfare, Kennelling and Protection of Pets Evidence Gathering	Marc Stephenson & Stephen Donaghy PDSA

Place Select Committee Work Programme 2026-2027

Date <u>(4pm unless stated)</u>	Topic	Attendance
Monday 12 October 2026	Scrutiny Review of Animal Welfare, Kennelling and Protection of Pets Evidence Gathering Monitoring: Progress Update – Muslim and Faith Burials	Marc Stephenson & Stephen Donaghy Dogs Trust and RSPCA Dale Rowbotham & Darren Robinson
Monday 9 November 2026	Monitoring: Progress Update - Scrutiny Review of Affordable Housing Overview & Performance - Community Services - Environment, Leisure & Green Infrastructure - Housing and A Fairer Stockton-on-Tees	Jane Edmends Cllr Nigel Cooke, Cllr Paul Rowling, Cllr Richard Eglington, Reuben Kench, Craig Willows, Neil Mitchell, Carolyn Nice, & Jane Edmends
Monday 9 November 2026 (Informal)	Scrutiny Review of Animal Welfare, Kennelling and Protection of Pets Summary of evidence	Marc Stephenson & Stephen Donaghy
Monday 14 December 2026	Monitoring: Progress Update - Scrutiny Review of Burial Provision Scrutiny Review of Animal Welfare, Kennelling and Protection of Pets Final Report	Chris Renahan Marc Stephenson & Stephen Donaghy
Monday 11 January 2027	Monitoring: Progress Update - Scrutiny Review of Governance of Capital Projects	Iain Robinson, Neil Brama & Andy Corcoran
Monday 15 February 2027		
Monday 15 March 2027		