



## ASSOCIATION OF DOGS AND CATS HOMES

# Impact survey of Coronavirus on animal rescue organisations in eight jurisdictions in the UK and Ireland

### Introduction

The Association of Dogs and Cat Homes (ADCH) represent 150 member organisations in eight jurisdictions in the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland (England, Guernsey, Isle of Man, Jersey, Northern Ireland, Republic of Ireland, Scotland, Wales). To assess the long term impact of Covid-19 on the rescue sector ADCH conducted a follow up survey to its initial Easter week survey to assess the long term impact of the Covid-19 virus on animal welfare and on the rescue sector. **This survey was open May 13-22 2020** and was sent to 101 ADCH members alongside around 300 other rescues that are not ADCH members.

The aim of the survey was to help the Governments and administrations in each of the eight jurisdictions assess the long term impact of the Covid-19 on the rescue sector, analyse the impact of the rescue sector on the current effort to combat Covid-19 and the wider contribution of the animal rescue sector to society. The results of the survey will also assist the statutory agencies and grant funders, like the Government's Charity Fund and the National Lottery Fund, assess the impact that Coronavirus is currently having, and is expected to have, on the operations, funding and sustainability of animal rescue charities across the UK and Ireland.

**Responses were obtained from 142 rescues** compared to the April survey which had 134 responses. Responses were obtained across all eight jurisdictions that ADCH operates in. *80 ADCH members responded and 62 non-members*. This report summarises the responses and gives clear findings on the long term financial impact of Covid-19 on the sector.

### Key findings

The findings clearly show that Coronavirus is posing a huge threat to the sustainability of the UK's and Ireland's dog and cat rescue sector. The disease has impacted on 95% of ADCH members. Whilst the outbreak has yet to adversely impact the behaviour of the dog and cat owning population and indeed seems to be encouraging more interest in owning or fostering a dog or cat, there are concerns that fundraising for the sector has almost completely dried up and the short term financial sustainability of many rescues is in doubt. The main findings are:

- 97% of rescues report an impact from Coronavirus on their work or ability to operate with only 3% reporting no impact.
- Over 90% of rescues have to date taken contingency measures to deal with Coronavirus
- 71% of rescues have stopped rehoming animals and 58% have closed down their shelters to the public
- 77% of all rescues have stopped taking in animals, 23% of rescues still taking in animals
- Numbers of animals will continue to rise amongst rescues as dogs and cats continue to be accepted but rehoming has only just restarted. This increases costs



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the rescue organisations.

- Almost all 142 rescues that responded to the survey report restrictions have had a negative impact on fundraising: 57% report a drop in income of over 50%, 20% a drop of income between 20% and 50%
- 47% of members have closed their shops and 100% have cancelled fundraising events
- 17% have experience a drop in legacies
- 52% of rescues have reduced staffing levels under the Governments' furlough schemes, 12% by over half pre-lockdown staff levels
- 85% of rescues have seen a reduction in volunteers
- 20% of respondents have funds that will ensure they can continue to operate until the end of the year and 22% reported they did not know how long their funds would last.
- 65% of rescues have applied for grants but the vast majority are grants run by ADCH, NEWC and RSPCA – the Wales Government and various Councils have given grants and business grants have been given to shop in England and Wales
- Access to neutering and microchipping has been severely reduced: 78% of rescues reporting reduced access to neutering
- 54% report reduced access to essential veterinary treatments, 74% to non essential treatments
- 15% of rescues report more cats are being abandoned. This may be already the first signs of the impact of a reduction in cat neutering. A rise in the cat population due to reduced neutering is highly likely
- Impact on dogs more limited than anticipated. Only 15% of rescue organisations report an increase in dogs being abandoned with more 22% reporting fewer dogs being abandoned than normal. 20% of members report taking in less stray dogs
- Only 22% report that more people wish to hand over their dogs.
- 68% of rescues have reported more people wish to foster dogs or cats and 58% wish to rehome a dog or cat

### Context

There are around 7.5 million cats and 9 million dogs in the UK, around 40% of all households owning at least one pet, 26% of all households having a dog<sup>1</sup>, 17% a cat<sup>2</sup>. So cats and dogs have high importance to the population, particular from a social, exercise and companionship angle. At a time when self isolating and social distancing is applicable to all countries, the importance of cats and dogs to the population has inevitably increased.

The impact of Coronavirus legislation in all eight jurisdictions is broadly the same but has been in place for different periods of time. Ireland was the first to introduce measures closing schools and businesses on March 12 and England the first to start easing restrictions. These differences are

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.pfma.org.uk/pet-population-2019>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.pfma.org.uk/pet-population-2019>



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as they impact in particular on the ability of the rescue sector to rehome or get access to veterinarian non emergency assistance. <sup>important</sup>

Restrictions have been broadly introduced and eased as follows:

- Veterinary and pet businesses are seen as essential and can continue; essential veterinary work continues but non essential work such as neutering and microchipping dogs and cats was not seen as essential until April 14 and is now at the discretion of the veterinary practice so may continue to be reduced in certain areas
- Dog breeders, as an essential business, could always drop off dogs being commercially sold to purchasers
- Other dog businesses such as dog groomers were closed in England until business guidance was brought in on April 20 and revised May 18 in line with lockdown restrictions loosening in England; Wales brought out its business guidance on May 21 which is in line with the English framework as is the advice in Scotland; Ireland and Northern Ireland continue with previous restriction framework
- Front line rescue work is seen as a key worker status and has been interpreted by the SSPCA and RSPCA as permitting front line animal rescue and cruelty investigation work but this has been performed on an emergency only work since March 23.
- Non commercial dog walking has always been permitted providing certain distancing and health restrictions are followed and commercial dog walking started in England on April 7
- Remote pet rehoming started on April 20 in England and on May 15 in Wales following Government approval of guidelines drawn up by the sector; this was revised on May 22 to allow rehoming centres to reopen but this is being done on a case by cases basis by rescue organisations and is only applicable to England.

A number of financial packages have been made available as follows:

- financial packages are available to animal rescue organisations allowing them to furlough staff and claim back 80% of salaries from the Government in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland
- the Treasury made available £750 million of financial grants to charities providing front line work in England but to date no money has been released to for rescue charities;
- Grants are available through the Retail, Hospitality, Leisure Grant Fund for charity shops
- Some councils have given grants eg Staffordshire district Council and Suffolk Council
- In Wales some charities have successfully obtained money from the Wales Coronavirus Resilience Fund
- The rescue sector has established four grant funds for smaller rescues: ADCH has to date given £99,000 to 21 rescues in Ireland, England and Scotland; NEWC is giving out its first funding from its £80,000 fund to equine rescues in June; RSPCA has given out £1 million to 17 RSPCA local rescues and Cats Protection is due to fund its local rescues in June.
- The Wales Council for Voluntary Action has given out grants to rescues in Wales



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Specific Guidance on dogs and cats is available

- the UK Government has produced guidance on working with animals including advice around dog walking
- Guidance on running pet businesses under Coronavirus restrictions has been produced by the Westminster Government's scientific sector group advisors, the Canine and Feline Sector Group (CFSG) - this has provided advice for seven businesses including dog and cat breeding and dog kennelling. This advice is also being used in Scotland and Wales. The advice was updated on May 18 for English only businesses
- Guidance on remote rehoming was produced by CFSG and approved by the Westminster Government on April 20th; this is being used in Scotland as the Scottish Government signpost the Scottish SPCA website which has CFSG guidance on it; the Wales Government produced their guidance on May 15; the Guidance was changed to allow rehoming centres to reopen in England only on May 22
- Guidance on microchipping, advice to pet owners and tips on keeping your pet happy and healthy under lockdown restrictions have also been produced



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Table 1

Summary

of impact of restrictions on dog and cat rescues in eight different jurisdictions

	Restrictions started and eased	Next assessment	Impact of restrictions on animal rescue	Advice on animal rescue
England	21 March Stage 2 May 11	June 2020	Travel restrictions eased; pet and veterinary services classed as essential businesses; charity front line workers classified as key workers (eg RSPCA inspectors) None of £750 million grants for animal rescues Remote and centre rehoming allowed	Government advice on pets & dog walking <sup>3</sup> CFSG advice: pet businesses <sup>4</sup> , dog walking <sup>5</sup> , pet advice <sup>6</sup> , rehoming <sup>7</sup>
Ireland	12 March 2020	June 2020	Non essential travel prohibited; pet and veterinary services are essential businesses;	
Northern Ireland	28 March 2020	No date	Non essential travel prohibited; pet and veterinary services classed as essential businesses; charity front line workers classified as key workers	
Scotland	21 March Phase 2 May 28	Jun2 2020	Travel restrictions eased; pet and veterinary services classed as essential businesses; charity front line workers classified as key workers eg SSPCA Remote rehoming allowed	SSPCA has the CFSG advice
Wales	21 March	No date	Non essential travel prohibited; pet and veterinary services classed as essential businesses; Grants available for animal rescues; Remote rehoming allowed	AWNW Advice ratified by the Government for businesses <sup>8</sup> and rehoming <sup>9</sup>
Jersey	20 March	No date	Non essential travel prohibited; veterinary services classed as essential businesses;	
Guernsey	18 March	No date	Non essential travel prohibited; pet and veterinary services classed as essential businesses;	
Isle of Man	27 March	No date	Non essential travel prohibited; pet and veterinary services classed as essential businesses;	

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-for-people-with-animals>

<sup>4</sup>

<http://www.cfsg.org.uk/coronavirus/SiteAssets/SitePages/Home/14th%20May%202020%20CFSG%20Animal%20Business%20Guidance.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.cfsg.org.uk/coronavirus/SiteAssets/SitePages/Home/Dog%20Walking%20and%20COVID%2019%20.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.cfsg.org.uk/coronavirus/SiteAssets/SitePages/Home/COVID%2019%20and%20Pets.jpg>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.cfsg.org.uk/coronavirus/SiteAssets/SitePages/Home/Pet%20Rescue%20Guidance%20Updated%2022nd%20May.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.awnwales.org/guidance-for-animal-related-businesses/>

<sup>9</sup> <https://gov.wales/animal-businesses-rescue-and-rehoming-coronavirus-guidance>



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## Survey results

142 responses were obtained. The proportion of member organisations in the eight jurisdictions is given in Figure 1. Some organizations will operate in multi jurisdictions. The respondents deal with a mixture of animals, those dealing with just dogs and cats (31%), 7% dealing only with cats and 40% only with dogs (Figure 2).

Figure 1 Proportion of members responding in the eight jurisdictions

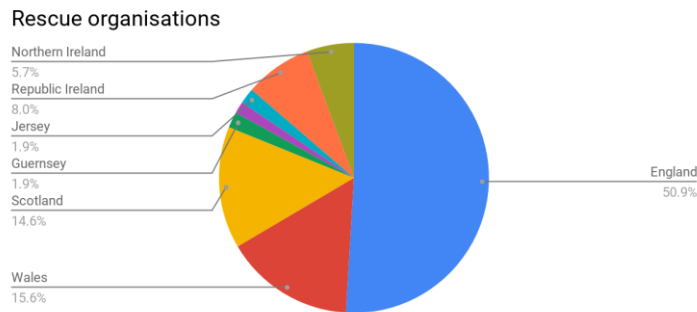
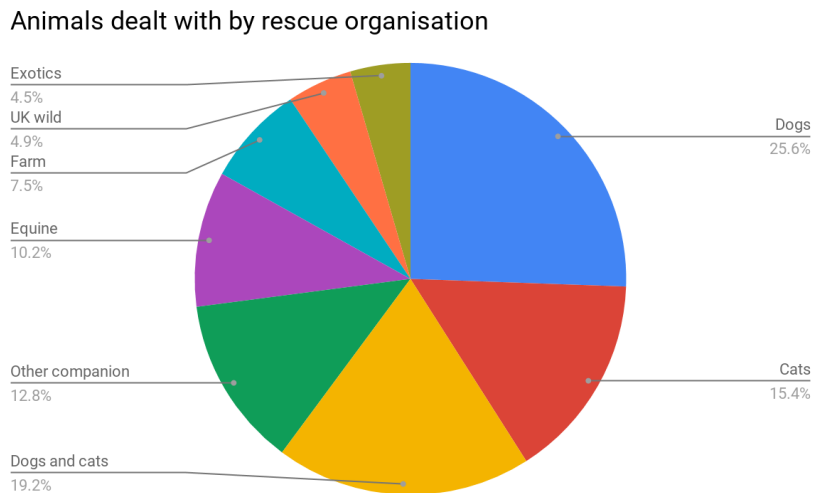


Figure 2





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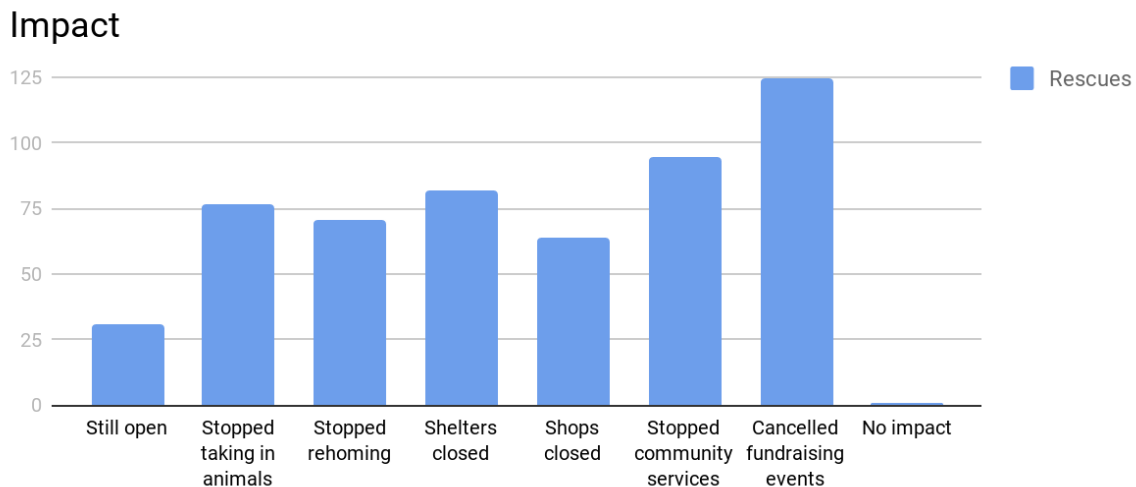
## Impact of Coronavirus

97% of all rescues reported an impact from Coronavirus on their work or ability to operate. This impact can be divided into impact on rehoming and intake, impact on fundraising, impact on staff and volunteers and impact on veterinary work.

## Impact of restrictions on intake and rehoming

Figure 3 shows the impact of restrictions on operations by the 142 rescues that responded to the survey. Only one rescue reported Covid-19 had had no impact on it. The impact on others showed 52% of rescues stopped taking in animals and 50% of organisations have stopped rehoming, a slight reduction on the 81% reported in April and linked to the start of rehoming approved by the Governments in England, Wales and Scotland. 58% have closed their shelters, again down from 67% from the April survey. Government advice in England on rehoming animals changed on April 20 when rehoming electronically to abide by the social distancing requirements of the Coronavirus restrictions restarted. This advice is the same in Scotland and from May 15 in Wales.

Figure 3 Impact of restriction on operations by dog and cat rescues



## Impact on community services

68% of rescues reported that they had stopped community services such as low cost neutering. However 12 rescues reported support to local food banks, two to homeless organisations and eight organisations were involved in taking pet from domestic abuse situations. Some were giving free boarding to key workers and four were working with social services on taking peoples' pets when they were admitted to hospital due to Covid-19.

## Impact of restrictions on income

Nearly all the rescues that responded to the survey reported that restrictions have had a negative impact on fundraising (Figure 4). 47% of rescues report a drop in income of over 50%, 30% a drop of income between 20% and 50% and only 20% a drop of below 20% in income. This is broadly in line with the April survey. For the first time we asked rescues



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what losses they were now modelling for 2020. The total predicted loss from all the rescues was £101.4 million for the year (an average of £998,000 and a range from minimal to £41 million).

Figure 4 Impact on income for dog and cat rescues

### Impact of restrictions on income of 65 rescues

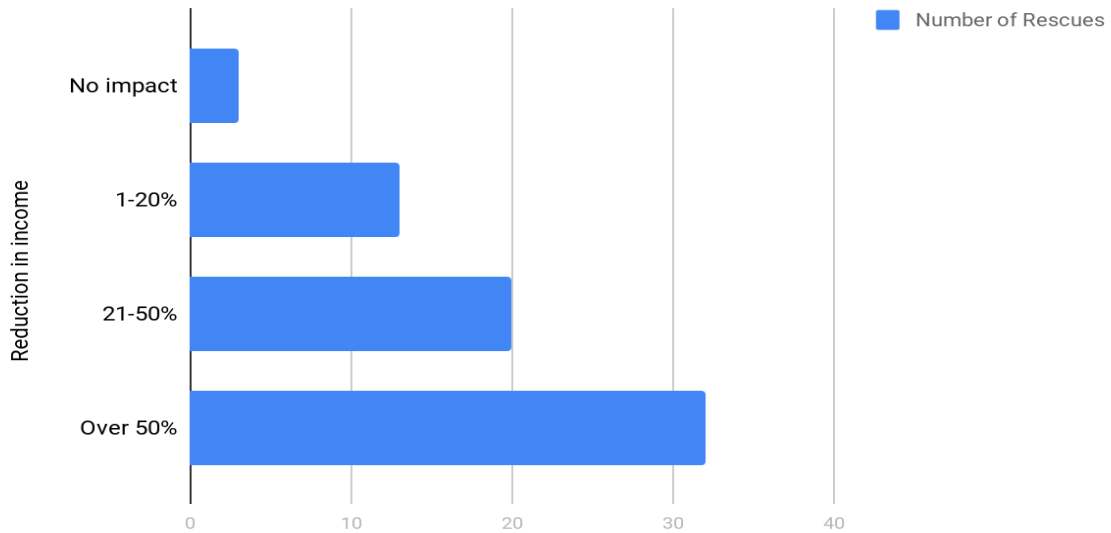
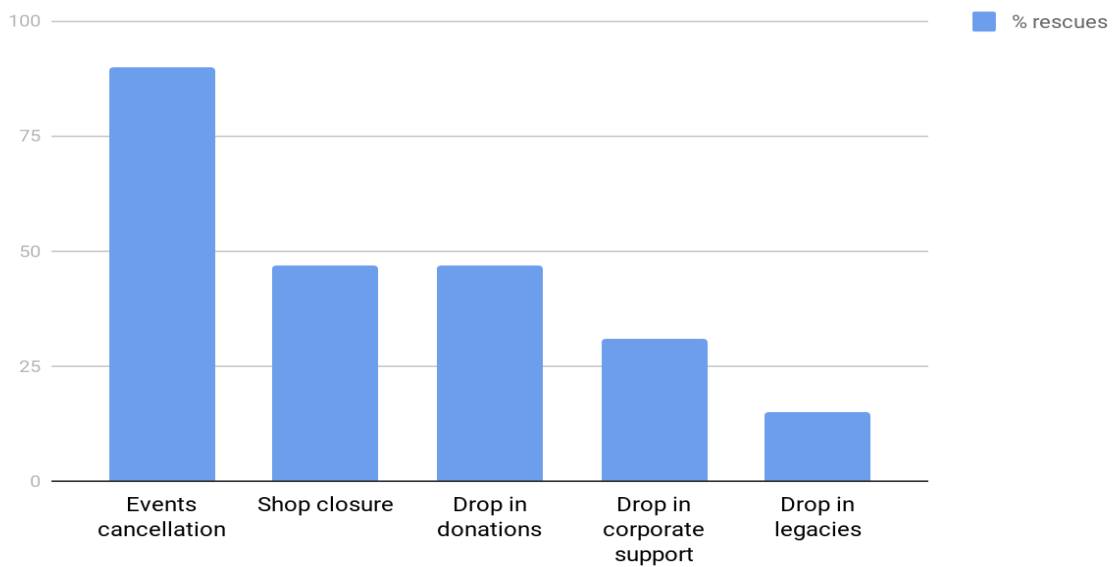


Figure 5 Contributing issue to loss of income



As 50% of rescues have stopped rehoming, and rehoming has only just restarted the income from rehoming and adoption fees will be minimal. For many rescues, particularly





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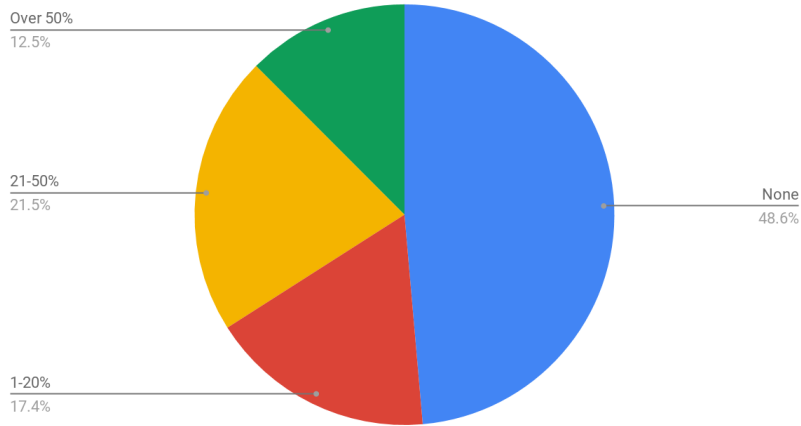
smaller ones, adoption fees make up a large part of their income. Income also comes from fundraising events such as street collections, open days and fairs. All of these have been cancelled under the Covid-19 restrictions and 90% specifically referred to this as having a major impact on income. This is well up on the previous survey and is connected to the smaller size of rescues responding to this where events play a proportionally larger role in income (Figure 5). All rescues have closed their shops, an income stream vital to many of the smaller rescues. Only 15% report a drop in legacies as important but this again reflects the number of smaller rescues in the survey. For the larger rescues which rely more heavily on legacies the drop in income could represent over half their annual income and be over £50 million.

Those responding employ an average of 38 staff but these will range from 0 to 1600. To try and balance the huge reductions in income compared to the smaller reductions in animals coming in to rescues, many rescues have furloughed staff (52% of rescues) (Figure 5). The furlough scheme has been available for applications in most countries and over half the rescues that responded have used the scheme. 12% of rescues have reduced staff by at least half the pre coronavirus levels. Other grant funds are now available. In England charity shops can get grants under the Retail, Health, Leisure Grant Fund and a number of rescues have got financial assistance. A number of Councils eg Stafford DC, Scottosh Borders Council and Suffolk Council have given grants to local rescues and in Wales funding is available from the umbrella voluntary organisation the Wales Council for Voluntary action and the Wales Coronavirus Resilience. No money has been given directly from central Government to animal rescues outside of Wales. 65% of those responding have applied for grant funds, a huge increase from 20% in April but this is due to the ADCH, NEWC and RSPCA grant funds being available. Only two organisations have received Government funds in Wales - funding in England is not yet available. Around 30% of rescues have applied to their banks or creditors for loan deferrals aor payment holidays.

Figure 5 Impact of Coronavirus on staffing levels in dog and cat rescues.

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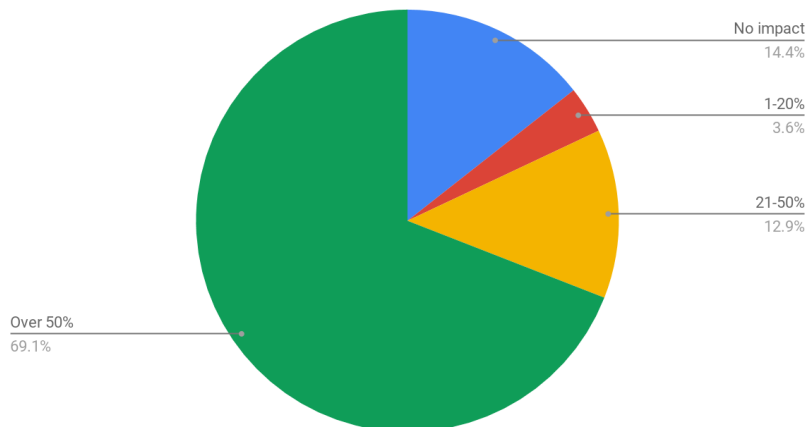
Numbers of staff furloughed as % of total staff



Alongside the reduction in paid staff, over 85% of rescues have seen a reduction in volunteers working for them, mainly as volunteering would not be seen as an essential journey under the coronavirus restrictions (Figure 6). As just under 50% of rescues responding to this survey were volunteers with no paid staff, any reduction in volunteering levels will hit those small rescues hardest and may see many of them reducing their work on dogs and cats. The vast majority of rescues (around 70%) had seen a drop of over 50% and the vast majority of these were not allowing volunteers on to site.

Figure 6 Impact of Coronavirus on levels of volunteers

Reduction in volunteers



### Impact of restrictions on access to veterinary work

Although veterinary work is considered an essential business and veterinarians as key workers, emergency work was permitted until 14 April<sup>10</sup> but has now been widened to

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.rcvs.org.uk/news-and-views/news/coronavirus-bva-and-rcvs-statement-on-changes-to-veterinary/>



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include neutering, microchipping, flea treatments and vaccinations<sup>11</sup>. Over half respondents (54%) reported that they had limited access to veterinary treatments, 74% no access to no emergency treatments such as vaccination or microchipping and 78% no access to neutering. This figure has not reduced since the April survey suggesting that the change in what veterinary work is permitted is not being felt by animal rescues. It is also too early to tell the impact of reductions in neutering especially on the cat population. A 92% neutering level for cats is required to ensure a stable cat population and with pre coronavirus neutering levels of owned cats standing at around 86%<sup>12</sup>, any reduction in neutering will negatively impact on the cat population, particularly as veterinary restrictions are occurring at the same time as the traditional kitten season in April-June. A rise in the unowned and stray cat population could be expected and a corresponding increase on the demands of cat rescues in particular.

### **Impact of Coronavirus on the dog and cat owning population**

Despite social media being awash with rumours of the negative impacts of Coronavirus on cats and dogs, the impact to date on dog and cat owners are more limited than anticipated.

Only 15% of rescue organisations report an increase in dogs being abandoned with more 22% reporting fewer dogs being abandoned than normal. 20% of rescues report taking

in less stray dogs with only 6% reporting taking in more, a reassuring trend highlighting that if anything has improved since April. This may be that dog owners are taking their responsibilities seriously despite the restrictions as less than a quarter (22%) report that more people wish to hand over their dogs or cats.

This is in contrast to the number of cats being abandoned, with 15% reporting more cats being abandoned but only 11% reporting fewer cats being abandoned. This may be already the first signs of the impact the reduction in cat neutering can have on the cat population.

On the other hand 68% of rescues have reported more people wish to foster dogs or cats and 58% wish to rehome a dog or a cat, a reassuring number which may be an optimistic sign for rescues when the restrictions on rehoming start to ease. It also highlights the important role cats and dogs can play in peoples' lives particularly at a time when they are self isolating.

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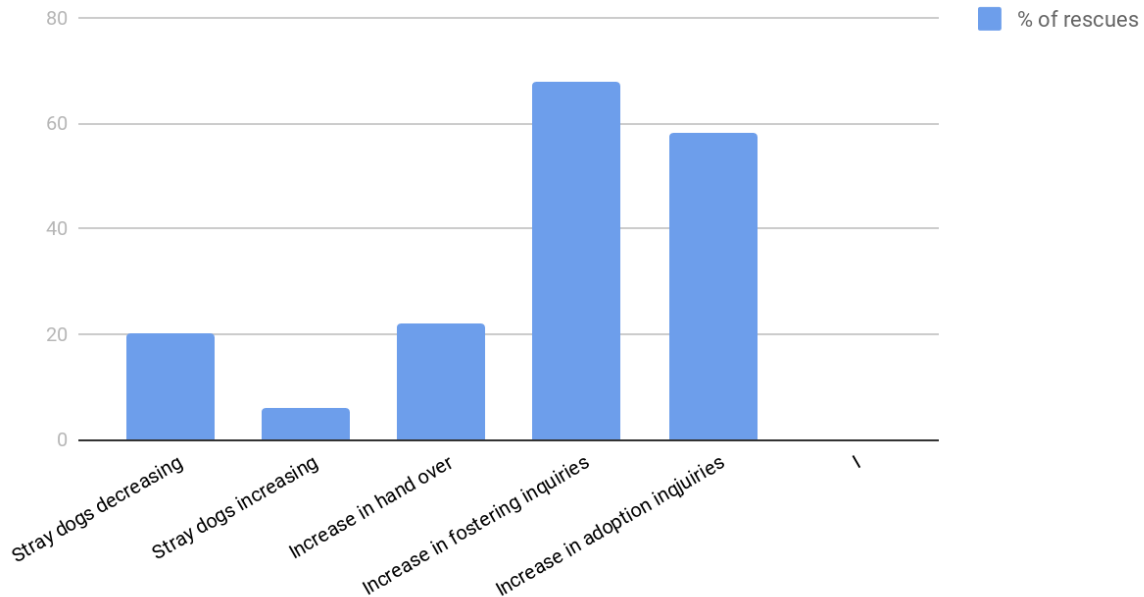
<sup>11</sup> <https://www.bva.co.uk/coronavirus/coronavirus-advice-for-veterinary-professionals/>

<sup>12</sup> RSPCA. 2014 Tackling the cat crisis: a collaborative approach to neutering

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Figure 7

### Reports on impacts on dog and cat owners



### Pet food supply

Concern on supply of pet food seems to have eased since April. On 23 May a scheme to distribute donated pet food was started by ADCH to alleviate these concerns and distributed from nine centres across England and Scotland.

### Links to human welfare

Eight organisations continue their service to help those with pets in a domestic violence abuse and report their work has increased since lockdown, in line with what domestic abuse charities are reporting with the increase in domestic violence<sup>13</sup>. Twelve organisations are regularly giving to their local food banks and two are working with homeless organisations. One organisation has donated medical equipment to its local hospital and four are helping social services with animals from people who have gone into hospital due to Covid-19. A number of rescues are giving free boarding to key workers.

### Confidence in the future

Over 90% of rescues have to date taken contingency measures to deal with Coronavirus and what is clear is the negative impact of Covid-19 on members' sustainability.

Whilst all charities should have at least three months reserves which is widely seen as a charity benchmark, it is concerning that only 20% of members have funds that will ensure they can continue until the end of the year (Figure 8) and a further 22% reported they did not know how long funds would last.

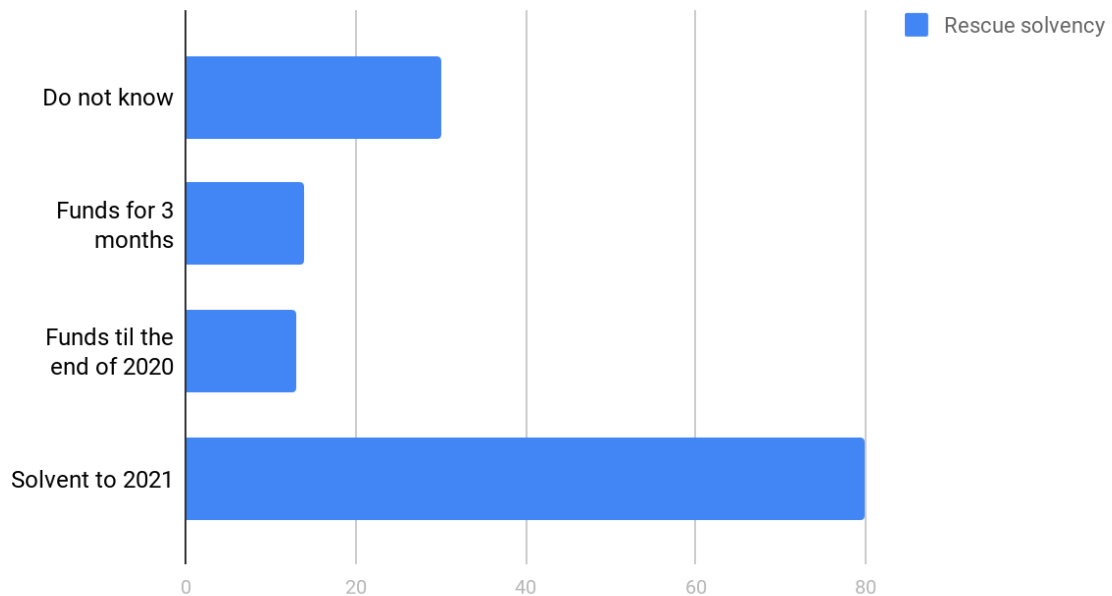
<sup>13</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2020/apr/12/domestic-violence-surges-seven-hundred-per-cent-uk-coronavirus>



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Figure 8 Rescues confidence in financial ability to continue

### Number rescues



Most rescues have taken contingency measures. For instance nearly half have furloughed staff, compared with only 5% that have made redundancies and 12% looking at voluntary wage cuts (Figure 9).

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### Contingency measures taken

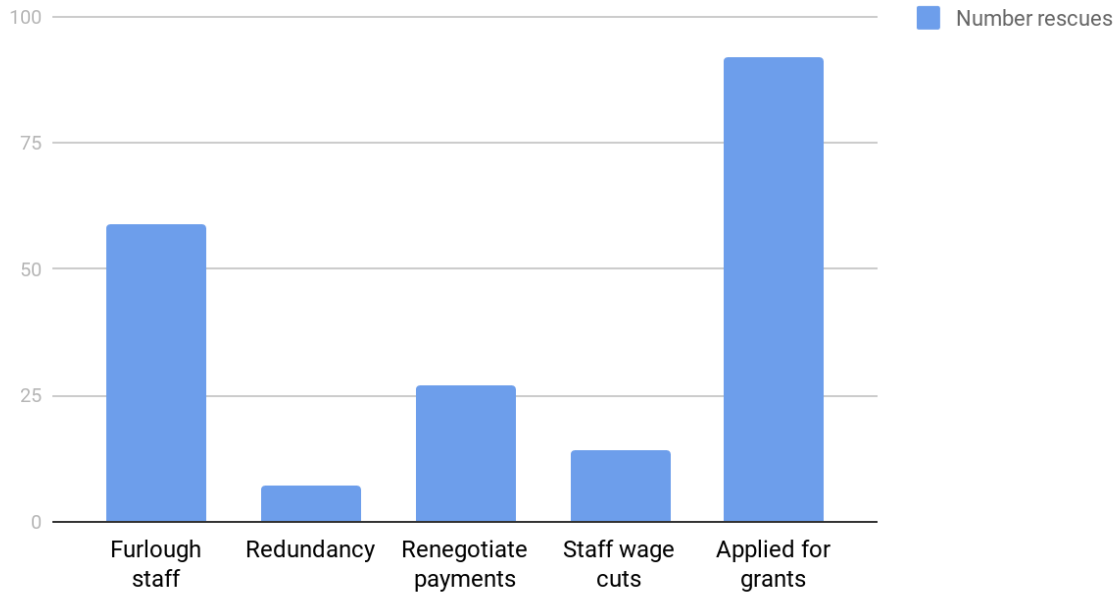


Figure 9 Contingency measures undertaken by rescue organisations.

To ease financial concerns 70% have introduced new fundraising techniques such as online auctions, online dog shows Facebook auctions and increased digital fundraising.

Looking forward 29% wanted an increase in the furlough scheme, 70% easier access to grants, 15% access to more staff or volunteers and 12% access to more boarding facilities for animals.

Over half all rescues (55%) have reforecast their budget, 40% have done a full financial review and 33% introduced new ways of working or operational models and 3% are looking at merging with other rescues.

### Recommendations

- All Governments should release funds for animal rescue organisations
- The Governments should speed up notifications in the legacy system to reduce the backlog once restrictions ease would assist. As animal charities receive over £400 million annually in legacies, and are concerned that any impacts from a slowdown in legacy due to the lockdown will negatively impact on our cash flow at a time when cash flow from other sources is drying up due to Covid-19 economic impacts.
- The UK and Irish Governments should lift the €800k limit under the COVID-19 EU Temporary Framework for State Aid so that charities can claim the business support permitted under the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund for all of their charity shops - at present the €800k limit means that charities with more than around 30 shops will reach the financial ceiling and so be financially penalised as this funding will be unavailable.



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- The Governments should clarify in the Covid-19 safety employer guidelines which guidelines apply equally to volunteers; over 30,000 members of the public volunteer at shops and centres and clear guidance will alleviate complex interpretations.
- The Governments should give a temporary uplift in the rate of Gift Aid.
- The Governments to introduce business rate relief for veterinary practices which would benefit animal rescues who run their own clinics for the public and those that are reliant on private veterinary practices for much of their rescue work. Preferential VAT rates on services and access to cheaper veterinary medicines would assist veterinary provision. To put this into context, we believe this could, for example, be the equivalent of running three hospitals or rehoming centres for a year.
- Foundations and other grant giving bodies should not penalize charities for having more than three months reserves
- Banks and mortgage lenders should not penalize animal rescue organisations for having reserves when applying for grants or other measures such as mortgage holidays
- Change in RCVS and BVA policy to allow non emergency procedures such as microchipping and neutering on cats and dogs is welcomed and should be taken up by veterinary practices
- Association of Business Insurers to clarify if Coronavirus is a permitted claim under policies such as for shops and businesses