



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 impact of Coronavirus on the rescue sector ADCH conducted a survey of all its members in Easter week 2020.

The aim of the survey was to help the Governments and administrations in each of the eight jurisdictions assess the impact of the Coronavirus disease on the rescue sector. 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.

The survey was open from 7-10 April 2020 and reminders chased 15-20 April. Responses were obtained from 134 members (89% of all members) across all eight jurisdictions that ADCH operates in. This report summarises the responses and gives clear findings on the impact of the Coronavirus 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:

- 95% of rescues report an impact from Coronavirus on their work or ability to operate with only 5% reporting no impact.
- Over 90% of rescues have to date taken contingency measures to deal with Coronavirus
- 87% of rescues have stopped rehoming animals and 71% have closed down their shelters to the public
- 54% of all rescues have stopped taking in animals, 46% of rescues still taking in animals
- Numbers of dogs and cats will continue to rise amongst rescues as dogs and cats continue to be accepted but rehoming has only just restarted. This increases costs on the rescue organisations.
- All 134 rescues that responded to the survey report restrictions have had a negative impact on fundraising: 55% report a drop in income of over 50%, 20% a drop of income between 20% and 50%
- 57% of members have closed their shops and 100% have cancelled fundraising



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events

- 32% of rescues have reduced staffing levels under the Governments' furlough schemes
- 85% of rescues have seen a reduction in volunteers
- Only 52% of members have funds that will ensure they can continue to operate for over three months. 32% had less than three months funds, 5% less than a month and 13% reported they did not know how long their funds would last.
- 20% of rescues have applied for grants but some are being penalized by having three months reserves in place, widely seen as a minimum level for a charity
- Access to neutering and microchipping has been severely reduced: 80% of rescues reporting reduced access to non essential veterinary treatments such as neutering and microchipping
- 48% of report reduced access to essential veterinary treatments
- An increase in illegal non microchipped dogs seems inevitable
- 17% 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 17%, reporting fewer dogs being abandoned than normal. 16% of members report taking in less stray dogs
- Only a quarter of members report that more people wish to hand over their dogs.
- 66% of rescues have reported more people wish to foster dogs or cats and 35% 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 dog¹, 17% a cat². 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, with Ireland being the first to introduce measures closing schools and businesses on March 12 and all by March 28 (Table 1). No date has yet been set to end these restrictions though the UK will review the restrictions on 16 April and Ireland on May 5.

Restrictions have been broadly introduced 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 so may be reduced
- Dog breeders, as an essential business, can continue to drop off dogs being commercially sold to purchasers
- Front line rescue work is seen as a key worker status and has been interpreted by the SSPCA and RSPCA are permitting front line animal rescue and cruelty investigation work

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

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



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- Dog walking is permitted providing certain distancing and health restrictions are followed
- Non essential journeys include collecting dogs or cats being sold
- Rehoming by ADCH members could only start on April 20 following Government approval of guidelines drawn up by the sector but has been introduced patchily

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
- financial grants have been made available to charities providing front line work in England and a bid has been made by Defra to DCMS for £2.4 million but it is unclear when and how much of this bid will be made available for animal rescue charities

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.
- Guidance on rehoming was produced by CFSG and approved by the Westminster Government on April 20th; it has yet to be ratified by other Governments although in Scotland the Government signpost the Scottish SPCA website which has CFSG guidance on it
- Guidance on microchipping, advice to pet owners and tips on keeping your pet happy and healthy are being produced



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Table 1

Summary

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

	Restrictions started	Next assessment	Impact of restrictions on animal rescue	Advice on animal rescue
England	21 March 2020	6 May 2020	Non essential travel prohibited; pet and veterinary services classed as essential businesses; charity front line workers classified as key workers (eg RSPCA inspectors) 8 April £750 million announced for frontline charities	Government advice on pets & dog walking ³ CFSG advice: pet businesses ⁴ , dog walking ⁵ and pet advice ⁶
Ireland	12 March 2020	5 May 2020	Non essential travel prohibited; pet and veterinary services classed as 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 2020	No date	Non essential travel prohibited; pet and veterinary services classed as essential businesses; charity front line workers classified as key workers eg SSPCA	
Wales	21 March 2020	No date	Non essential travel prohibited; pet and veterinary services classed as essential businesses;	
Jersey	20 March 2020	No date	Non essential travel prohibited; veterinary services classed as key workers and essential businesses;	
Guernsey	18 March 2020	No date	Non essential travel prohibited; pet and veterinary services classed as essential businesses;	
Isle of Man	27 March 2020	No date	Non essential travel prohibited; pet and veterinary services classed as essential businesses;	

Survey results

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

⁴ <http://www.cfsg.org.uk/coronavirus/SiteAssets/SitePages/Home/CFSG%20Animal%20Business%20Guidance%2007.04.20.pdf>

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

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

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136 of the 150 ADCH members responded to the survey. The proportion of member organisations in the eight jurisdictions is given in Figure 1. Some organizations will operate in multi jurisdictions. The majority of members responding deal with dogs and cats, 7% dealing only with cats and 40% only with dogs (Figure 2).

Figure 1 Proportion of members responding in the eight jurisdictions

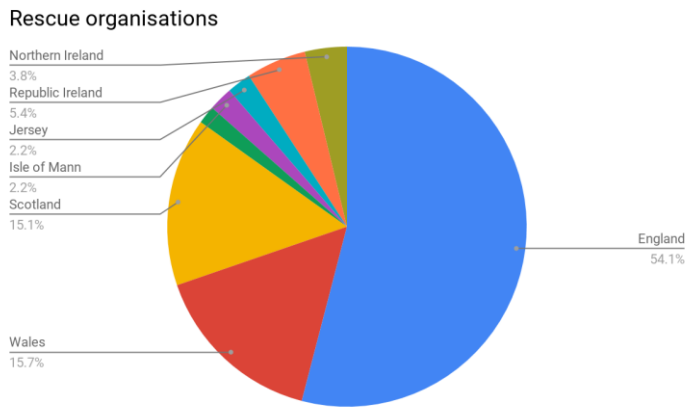
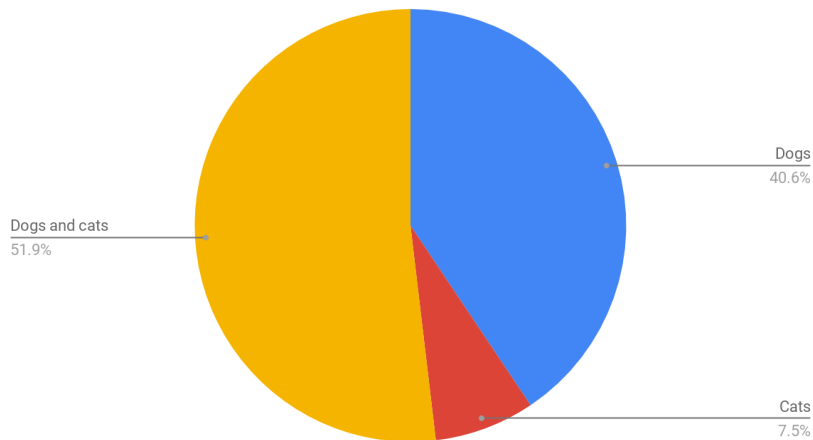


Figure 2

Animals dealt with by rescue organisation



Impact of Coronavirus



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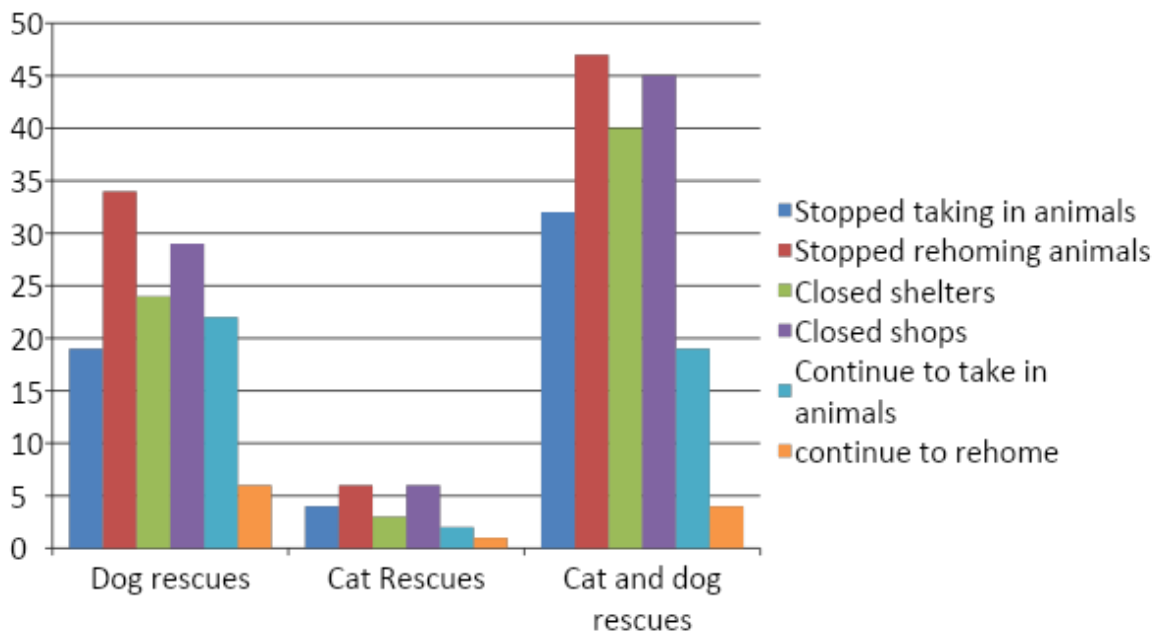
95% of all rescues reported an impact from Coronavirus on their work or ability to operate. This impact can be divided into impact on rehoming and intake, impact on fundraising, impact on staff and volunteers and impact on veterinary work.

Impact of restrictions on intake and rehoming

Figure 3 shows the impact of restrictions on operations by the 134 ADCH members that responded to the survey. Half of all rescues had stopped taking in animals a figure that reduced during April as rehoming restarted. These will include those dog rescues still honouring their stray dog contacts with their local authority and those that are still taking in emergency cases. In 2019 ADCH members had 97 stray contracts with local authorities.

However the vast majority of members (81%) have stopped rehoming animals but this figure changed during the month as rehoming started again under Government advice. 67% have closed down their shelters to the public. 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, but shelters remain closed to the public. This advice is followed in Scotland but in Ireland and Wales no advice has yet been given. Many report that they are increasingly reliant on fosterers and private boarding to take care of animals. However as we show later the number of volunteers has also been reducing dramatically.

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



Impact of restrictions on income

All 134 rescues that responded to the survey report Coronavirus restrictions have had a negative impact on fundraising (Figure 4). The vast majority (55%) report a drop in income of over 50%, 20% a drop of income between 20% and 50% and only 25% a drop of below 20% in income. The reasons for this are clear. As 81% of members have stopped rehoming, and rehoming has only just restarted the income from rehoming and



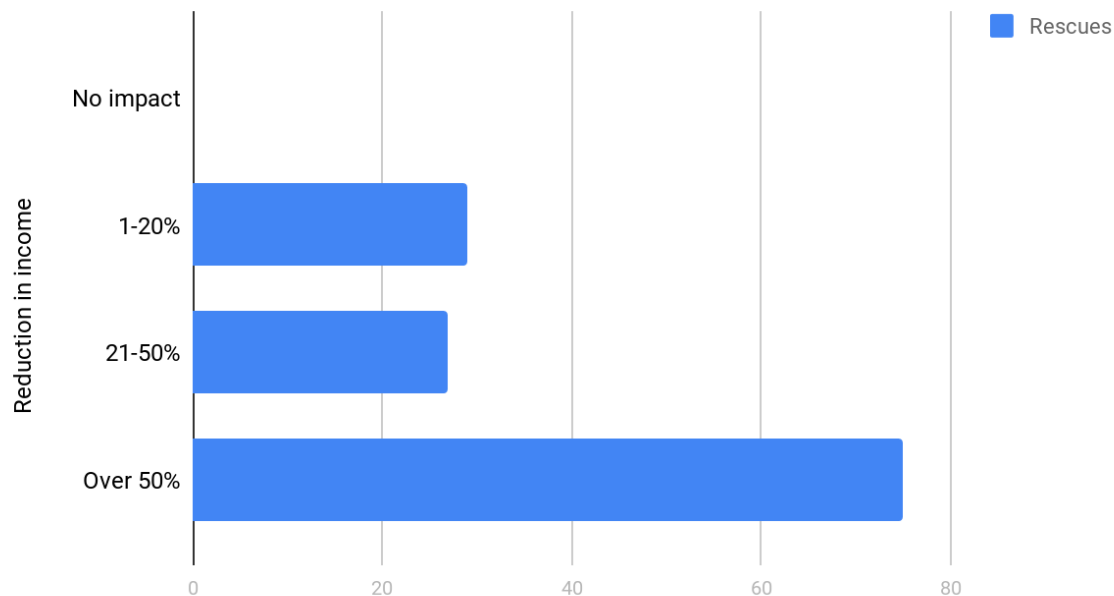
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adoption fees will be minimal. For many rescues, particularly the smaller ones, adoption fees make up a large part of their income. Income also comes from fundraising events such as street collections, open days and fairs. All of these have been cancelled under the Coronavirus restrictions. Finally some rescues have businesses such as private dog boarding and dog grooming, all of which have drastically reduced or stopped altogether.

20% of ADCH members specifically referred to the cancellation of fundraising events as having a major impact on their income. 57% of members have closed their shops, an income stream vital to many of the smaller rescues. Other income streams such as cafes attached to centres are defined as non essential business under the Coronavirus restrictions. Two of ADCH members report this as having a major impact on their income. Finally those rescues that have a hospital or clinic have closed it to non essential operations, reducing the income they normally would receive from members of the public bringing in their dogs and cats to be treated as outpatients.

Figure 4 Impact on income for 134 dog and cat rescues in the UK

Impact of restrictions on income



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 (32% of rescues) (Figure 5). Many Governments have now made available a grant system to pay up to 80% of income of those staff being furloughed by an animal rescue. Other Government funds are now becoming

available. 20% have applied for Government funds with two organisations already receiving Government funds in Wales - funding in England will probably only be available next month and it is not clear if fundings will be available in other jurisdictions.

The furlough scheme is now available for applications in most countries although it is unclear if



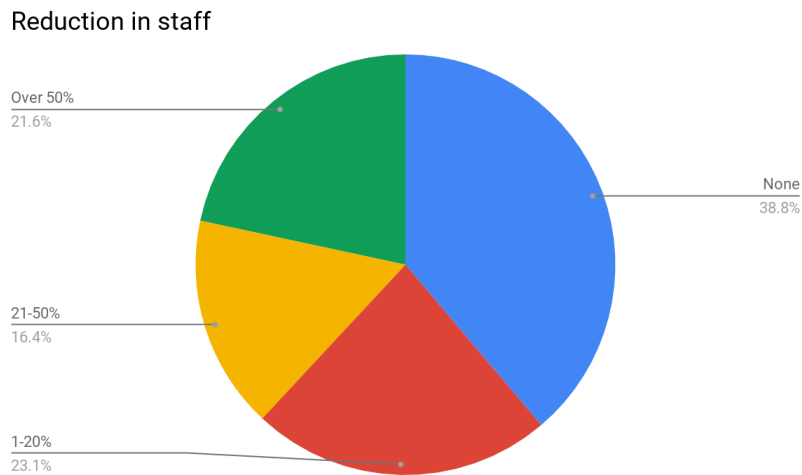
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furloughing means those staff cannot volunteer for the same organisation, a measure which many members want clarified.

61% of all rescues that responded reported that they had reduced their staffing levels, with 22% of rescues having reduced staff by at least half the pre coronavirus levels. The reassuring sign is that the vast majority of staff that are being reduced are being furloughed rather than been made redundant. 39% of rescues report no staff reductions.

ADCH members employ over 6,200 full time and 2,100 part time staff. Though three organisations employ over 500 staff, the majority of rescues (56%) employ less than 50 staff⁷. The smaller rescues have proportionally more of their staff working with animals in rehoming, kennelling or veterinary work, and if a quarter of these small rescues have laid off over half their staff, this will have a major impact on their ability to undertake dog and cat rescue work.

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



Alongside the reduction in paid staff, over 82% 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 17% of ADCH members are 100% volunteer based with no paid staff⁷, this reduction in volunteering levels will hit those small rescues hardest and may

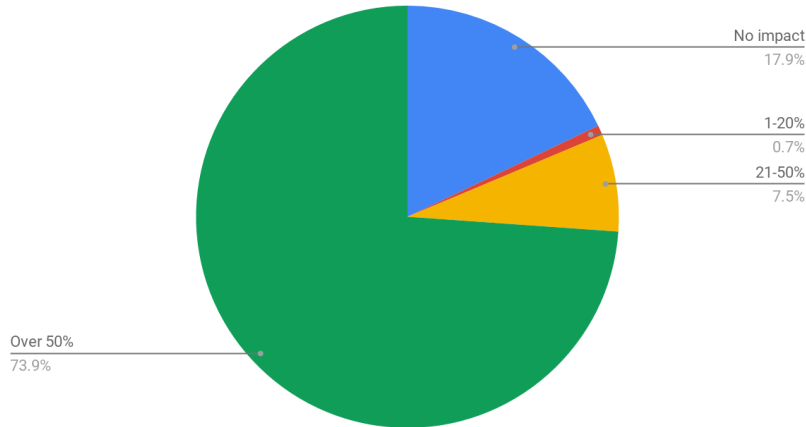
see many of them reducing their work on dogs and cats

Figure 6 Impact of Coronavirus on levels of volunteers

⁷ ADCH. 2019 Member Annual Return

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Reduction in volunteers



Impact of restrictions on access to veterinary work

Although veterinary work is considered an essential business and veterinarians as key workers, the restrictions were interpreted by the RCVS and BVA as only being for emergency work⁸. This has impacted on ADCH members. So the change in policy announced effective from 14 April is welcomed as it allows non essential work such as neutering, microchipping, flea treatments and vaccinations⁹.

All ADCH members that provide veterinary work through clinics and hospitals now only open to outpatients with dogs and cats that require emergency treatments, reducing income.

Access to neutering and microchipping has been severely reduced with 80% of all rescues reporting that they have reduced access to non essential veterinary treatments such as neutering and 48% reporting reduced access to essential veterinary treatment. The outcome of these restrictions on other laws remains untested. For instance dog microchipping has been a legal requirement in all jurisdictions for any dog over 8 weeks over four years but without veterinarians to undertake this procedure the numbers of dogs that do not comply with the law will inevitably increase.

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%¹⁰, 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.

⁸ <https://www.rcvs.org.uk/news-and-views/news/coronavirus-bva-and-rcvs-statement-on-changes-to-veterinary/>

⁹ <https://www.bva.co.uk/coronavirus/coronavirus-advice-for-veterinary-professionals/>

¹⁰ RSPCA. 2014 Tackling the cat crisis: a collaborative approach to neutering



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The changes announced by the BVA from April 14 to allow neutering, microchipping, vaccination and flea treatments whilst still observing Coronavirus restriction is welcomed⁹.

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 17%, reporting fewer dogs being abandoned than normal. 15% of members report taking

in less stray dogs with only 8% reporting taking in more, a reassuring trend highlighting that

dog owners are taking their responsibilities seriously despite the coronavirus restrictions.

Less than a quarter of ADCH members (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 17% reporting more cats being abandoned but only 7% 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.

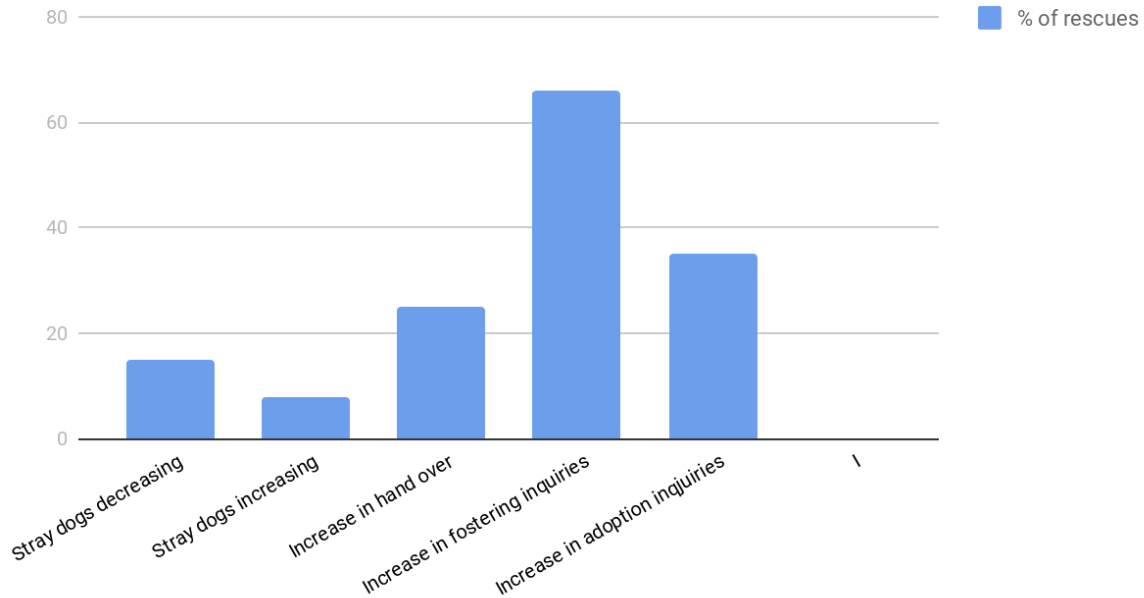
On the other hand 66% of rescues have reported more people wish to foster dogs or cats and 35% wish to rehome a dog or a cat, a reassuring number which may be an optimistic sign for rescues when the restrictions on rehoming start to ease. It also highlights the important role cats and dogs can play in peoples' lives particularly at a time when they are self isolating.

Figure 7



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Reports on impacts on dog and cat owners



Other impacts

Two members report that donations of dog food have stopped and it is likely that many of ADCH members that rely partly or wholly on donated food will have seen a decrease in those donations and a rise therefore in their feed costs. On 20 April a scheme to distribute donated pet food was started by ADCH to alleviate these concerns.

Three of ADCH members have reported members of staff, volunteers or trustees having died from Coronavirus with a unsurprising huge subsequent impact on the organisations' operations and morale. Given the increasing trend in deaths in the UK and Ireland this number can only be unfortunately expected to grow.

Confidence in the future

Over 90% of rescues have to date taken contingency measures to deal with Coronavirus and whilst most ADCH members have stated that it is too early to assess the impact of Coronavirus on their sustainability or the impact of any changes in the pet owning population there are some optimistic signs.

It is reassuring that more people wish to foster or adopt a dog or cat and the numbers of dogs being handed over is decreasing and the number of dogs being abandoned and picked up as strays decreasing. Whether this is an overly optimistic snapshot of the impact of lock down on people remains to be seen and this picture may change when lock down is reversed or eased.

What is clear is the negative impact of Coronavirus on members' sustainability. ADCH members range from around 20% being all volunteer to three members having over 500 staff¹¹.

¹¹ ADCH 2019 Annual Return



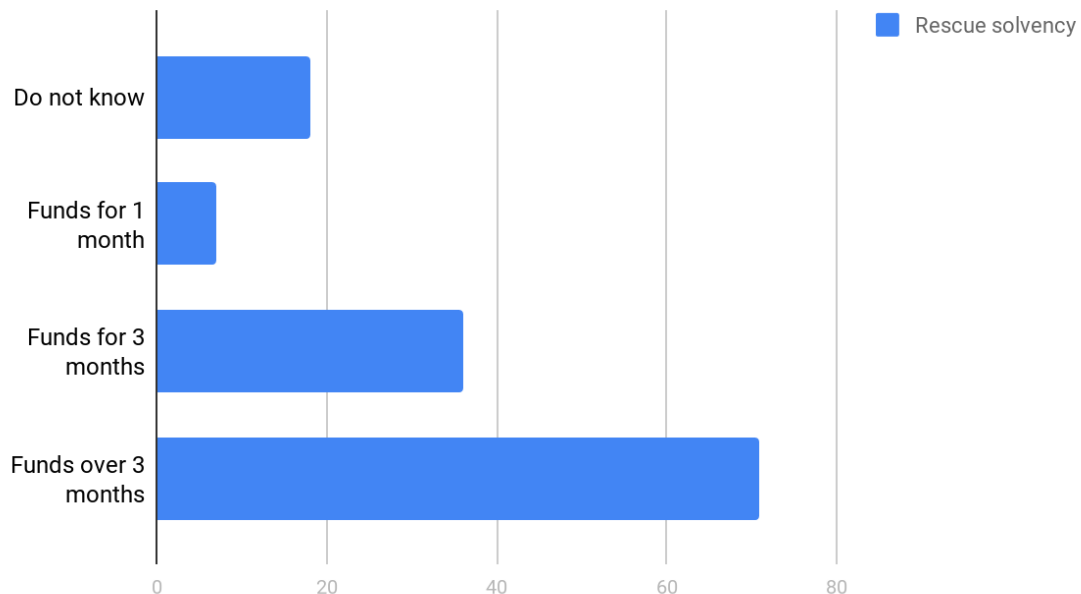
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Whilst all are charities and so have at least three months reserves which is widely seen as a charity benchmark, it is concerning that only 53% of members have funds that will ensure they can continue to operate for over three months (Figure 8). 32% had less than three months, 5% less than a month and 18% reported they did not know how long funds would last. Even of those charities with over three months reserves some stated that they were being denied access to grants or access to mortgage holiday payments on property as the levels of reserves counted against them.

To ease financial concerns 75% said they wanted quicker and better access to grants, particularly Government grants which to date have only been issued in Wales. ADCH has now started its own grant scheme and grants will be available to members from May 1st. 21% wanted an increase in the furlough scheme. A number look towards pet food manufacturers to provide grants or access to low cost dog and cat food and these have now responded by donating food which ADCH is distributing to its members. Some want clarity from the Association of Business Insurers (ABI) that Coronavirus is a permitted claim under policies.

Figure 8 ADCH members confidence in financial ability to continue

Number rescues



Recommendations

- The Governments in Wales and Ireland should provide clearer guidance on rehoming animals under Coronavirus restrictions
- The Governments in Scotland and Ireland need to provide access to Government grants
- The Governments need to provide clearer guidance if furloughing means those staff cannot volunteer for the same organisation, a measure which many members believe



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would help

the organisations' sustainability.

- 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
- Government to clarify if animal rescues and veterinarian practices qualify for small business rates reduction on their business side such as boarding, dog grooming or veterinary services
- Association of Business Insurers to clarify if Coronavirus is a permitted claim under policies such as for shops and businesses