



## Blue Cross Briefing for Members of the Scottish Parliament

There are more pets than people in the UK: Britain is a nation of animal lovers, and over the last ten years we've seen real progress being made on animal welfare, but much more needs to be done to make sure pets are happy and healthy. This briefing sets out the key findings from our 'Unpicking the Knots' report.

### ABOUT US

Blue Cross is an animal welfare charity dedicated to improving animal welfare standards in the UK. Our mission is to find happy homes for abandoned or unwanted pets, and we keep pets healthy by promoting welfare and providing treatment. Our core services include:

- **Rehoming:** We find homes for unwanted cats, dogs, small pets and horses across the UK and our tailor-made service lets us help each pet find the right home. Last year we helped nearly 8,000 homeless pets.
- **Clinical:** Our four animal hospitals and network of clinics treat sick and injured pets when their owners cannot afford private fees. Last year we treated more than 27,000 pets.
- **Behaviour:** We help pets who arrive at Blue Cross with behavioural issues and offer ongoing support to anyone who rehomes a pet from us. Our Behaviour Team carried out 3,582 consultations, assessments, telephone calls and site visits in 2015.
- **Education:** We promote animal welfare to the pet owners of the future by giving talks and offering advice. Last year we reached more than 86,000 children and young people.
- **Pet bereavement:** Our Pet Bereavement Support Service is available 365 days a year to help people who are struggling to cope with the loss of a pet. Our trained volunteers handled over 8,000 confidential calls last year.

### ENFORCEMENT OF PET WELFARE LEGISLATION BY LOCAL AUTHORITIES

#### Overview

Local authorities are responsible for running a licensing system for pet shops and dog breeding establishments. They should also provide a service for the collection and reunification of stray dogs by law. However a lack of personnel and appropriate training, together with slashed budgets within government agencies, has left many of them without the resources and confidence to deal with animal welfare legislation suitably and effectively.

#### National picture

Last year Blue Cross undertook research to try and ascertain an accurate picture of enforcement of pet welfare legislation across the UK. The aim of this research was to highlight problem areas and inform a number of recommendations not only for local and central government but also for the third sector.

The statistics below show information for the whole of Scotland and compare the figures with those of Wales and England.

### Licensing

- Average number of licensed pet shops for a Scottish local authority is eight.
- Average number of licensed dog breeders for a Scottish local authority is three, this compares to an average of nine for Wales.
- On average a Scottish local authority has to licence eight premises.

### Dog Warden Services

- Whilst the annual average spend on dog warden services across Scotland has remained largely the same, some local authorities have lost as much as 67% of their budget since 2013.
- On average a local authority dealt with 728 call outs to their dog warden service in 2015. The most common call out is related to stray dogs.
- None of the Scottish local authority respondents provided a 24hr dog warden service.

### Regional picture

The chart below shows the break down for each of the Scottish regions, looking at the average number of pet shops, dog breeders and investigations by local authorities into unlicensed premises.

Region	Average number of pet shops	Average number of dog breeders	Average number of investigations into unlicensed premises (2015)	Blue Cross evidence of unlicensed sellers operating in the region *
Central Scotland	10	6	4	Yes (across 3 local authorities)
Glasgow	14	7	1	Yes (across 2 local authorities)
Highlands & Islands	3	0	0	No
Lothian	6	1	1	Yes (across 4 local authorities)
Mid Scotland and Fife	7	3	1	Yes (1 local authority)
North East Scotland	5	5	1	Yes (across 3 local authorities)
South Scotland	7	6	1	Yes (across 4 local authorities)
West Scotland	4	1	0	Yes (across 4 local authorities)



\*\*Information obtained by Gumtree who are able to track repeated advertisers by looking at the phone numbers and device IDs used to place the adverts.

## Recommendations

Blue Cross is calling for:

- A registration and licensing system for anyone breeding or selling animals through any means, from home breeders to large-scale breeding establishments, pet shops and online sellers
- An easily accessible database of anyone breeding and selling pets to reduce pressure on local authorities, improve animal welfare and boost consumer power
- Urgent review and updating of the Pet Animals Act 1951, to make specific mention of internet pet sales
- Introduction of standardised ways of working to ensure the quality of licensing and enforcement of welfare laws across the country, as well as regular and appropriate training for all licensing officers to enable them to carry out their duties to a high standard.

**Further Information:** For further information please visit our website ([www.bluecross.org.uk](http://www.bluecross.org.uk)) or get in touch with Becky Thwaites, Head of Public Affairs ([becky.thwaites@bluecross.org.uk](mailto:becky.thwaites@bluecross.org.uk) / [0207 932 4075](tel:02079324075)).