



ASSOCIATION OF DOGS AND CATS HOMES

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

The Association of Dogs and Cat Homes (ADCH) represent 153 member organisations in eight jurisdictions in the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland. These results of a Survey of 107 rescues conducted in **January 2021** six months after the previous one, assess the long-term impact of Covid-19 on the rescue sector. Of the 107 responses 42% only deal with dogs, 31% with dogs, cats and other animals, 16% with dogs and cats and 11% only with cats. 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.

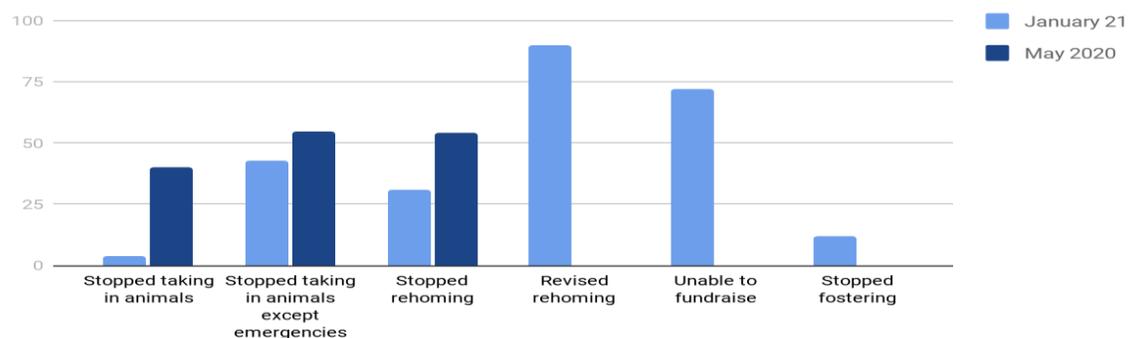
Key findings

Whilst Coronavirus has impacted on rescue's ability to fundraise, the threat to the sustainability of the UK's and Ireland's dog and cat rescue sector has slightly improved in the past nine months. Whilst lockdown restrictions have impacted on all of rescues, the ability to access furlough and ADCH grants has improved financial sustainability. In addition, a number of rescues have already made staff redundant. Trends noticed in April and May on dog and cat ownership have been reinforced - dog abandonment is still down and both cat and dog intake into rescues has declined year on year due to an increase in ownership, in particular of dogs.

Impact of restrictions on intake and rehoming

Figure 1 shows since May there has been a reduction in rescues that stopped taking in animals and stopped taking in animals in emergencies.

Figure 1 - Impact of restriction on operations by dog and cat rescues (% rescues)



More rescues are now rehoming under the new remote rehoming guidance. These changes are probably due to clearer Government and ADCH advice that animals can be taken in and rehomed under certain conditions.

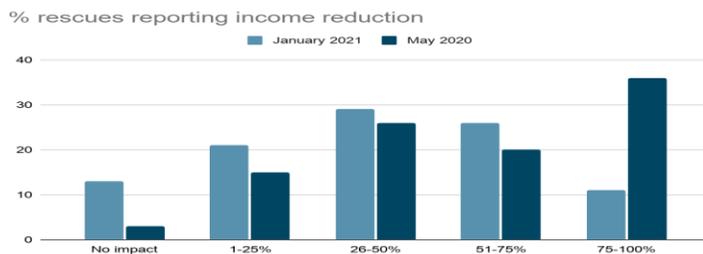


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Impact of restrictions on income

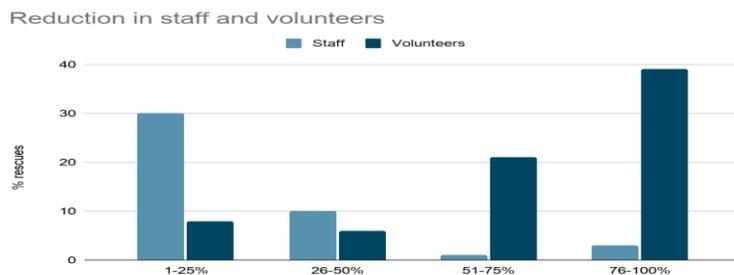
A change in reported impact of income reduction occurred with around 33% of rescues reporting a continued ability to fundraise. More rescues now state that they have experienced no impact to their income from Covid-19 but financial viability remains a concern. 36% of rescues report a drop in income of over 50% compared to 47% in May and 13% saw no impact to income compared to only 3% in May 2020. This suggests that rescues have adapted to the new situation either through fundraising in different ways or taking advantage of the ADCH and other grants on offer.

Figure 2 - Changes in impact on income for dog and cat rescues in last nine months



Although the number of rescues that are rehoming has increased, all fundraising events and charity shops are currently closed. This has had a large impact on rescues who have had to make staff redundant. 33% have now made staff redundant compared with only 5% in May, though only 3% of rescues have lost between 76% and 100% of their paid staff. 40% of rescues lost between 76% and 100% of their volunteers and only 25% reporting no reduction in volunteers (Figure 3).

Figure 3 - Impact reduction in staff and volunteers on rescues



Over half of rescues (61%) have furloughed staff. No money has been given directly from central Government to animal rescues outside of Wales. 54% of those responding have applied for Government grant funds, and 62% for other grants, a huge increase from 20% in April but some of this is due to the ADCH, NEWC and RSPCA grant funds being available.



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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,¹ but has now been widened to include neutering, microchipping, flea treatments and vaccinations.² Only 13% of rescues said that they had limited access to essential veterinary treatments, down from 56% in May. Access to treatments including vaccination or microchipping has improved.

Impact of Coronavirus on the dog and cat population

Two sets of data were collected: the opinions of rescues (Figure 4) on trends in dogs and cats, and actual numbers of animals entering rescues. The April and May reports on fewer dogs being abandoned has continued with 63% of dog rescues reporting fewer dogs being abandoned compared to 22% in May 2020. The increase in people seeking to rehome or foster a dog has continued with 79% of rescues reported more people wishing to rehome a dog compared to 58% in May. This underlines the trend for increasing demand for dogs which has resulted in more dogs being imported as the numbers in rescues and breeders could not supply the demand. However, one concerning note is the number of rescues reporting an increase in dogs being abandoned is rising (12% in January 2021 compared to 3% in May). The picture is more mixed for cats with 15% reporting more cats being abandoned and 21% fewer. The actual numbers of dogs and cats entering rescues is given in Figure 5. This substantiates the opinions given above, showing a 34% year-on-year reduction of cat intake and a 32% reduction in dogs entering rescues of 32%. This can undoubtedly be put down to an increase in people buying dogs and a decrease in abandoned dogs.

Figure 4 - Trends in dogs abandoned or rehoming requests

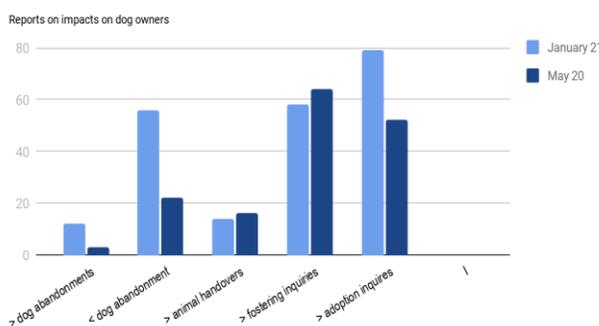
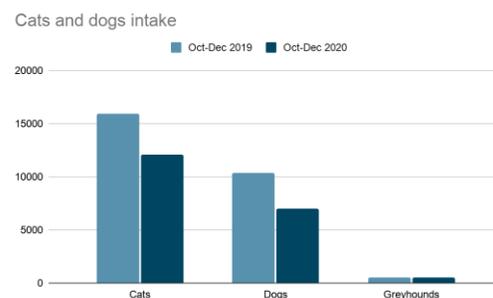


Fig 5 Difference in cat and dog intake Q4 2019-20



Cat intake is also down, albeit at a lower level than for dogs, and may be levelling off as data from other organisations show that cat intake increased after the immediate lockdown in June but has since increased. In contrast to the general downward trend in dog intake, rescues that specialise in Greyhounds saw intake rise by 8% year-on-year when comparing Q4 2019 to Q4 2020.

¹ <https://www.rcvs.org.uk/news-and-views/news/coronavirus-bva-and-rcvs-statement-on-changes-to-veterinary/>

² <https://www.bva.co.uk/coronavirus/coronavirus-advice-for-veterinary-professionals/>



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Confidence in the future

Half respondents said they were confident or very confident in the future of their rescue and only 15% that were not that confident or not at all confident. This is reassuring and may be due to measures organisations have made with restructuring and diversification of fundraising since the initial shock of lockdown in March.

Confidence on future operation

