



ASSOCIATION OF DOGS AND CATS HOMES

Impact survey of Coronavirus on animal rescue organisations in eight jurisdictions

Introduction

ADCH conducted four surveys to its members and non-members on Covid (April 2020, June 2020, January 2021, March 2022). The end of restrictions on Covid in March 2022 coincided in the same week with the Government's first energy assistance scheme. This survey on the cost of living was open September 30 - October 13 2022 to help ADCH and governments assess the term impact of the cost of living on the sector. Responses were obtained from 60 rescues all ADCH members across all eight jurisdictions that ADCH operates in.

Key findings

- The threat to member's sustainability was greater than under the fourth Covid survey which found rescues recruiting again and being confident about the future (68% of rescues were confident in March 2022). This found the average score for confidence about the future down from 3.9 in March 2022 to 3.4.
- Members were concerned about the double wammy of rising costs and increasing animals. 83% saw increased costs for animal products, 81% increased energy costs and 74% increased food costs; veterinary costs were also increasing whether for external veterinary costs (95%) or on inhouse veterinary costs (83%).
- 97% of rescues expected to see greater demand for services, 44% are concerned that they may have to withdraw some services.
- Trends noticed in 2021 and 2022 on dog and cat ownership have been reinforced - 61% report that dog intake is up compared to 56% on cat intake. This is because 92% are reporting that dog abandonment is now rising at a greater rate than in March 2022. Dog intake was rising in March as opposed to cats but cat intake is rising.
- 60% are reporting more dogs are being abandoned in October 2022 compared to March, 2021 and 2020, as 92% report people wishing to hand over their dogs compare to 14% wishing to rehome a dog.
- 96% of rescues are saying more dogs are coming in with behavioural issues (compared with 70% in March). 90% are seeing dogs with medical issues. This is in line with the studies of dog owners being inexperienced. 60% are seeing cats with behavioural issues.
- The sector is responding to the Cost of living crisis with 54% planning on opening food banks, 54% provide pet advice and 30% providing low cost neutering or veterinary services

Context

There are around 10.8 million cats¹ and 9.6 million dogs in the UK, around 40% of all households owning at least one pet, 26% of all households having a dog, 24% a cat.² This increased under Covid due to public demand for dogs, cats and rabbits to give company, exercise and promotion of mental wellbeing. Demand for puppies in particular increased with 14% of dogs being acquired in the first year of lockdown³ with a large number, 40%, going to new owners with no previous

¹ <https://www.cats.org.uk/about-cp/cats-report-2021>

² <https://www.pdsa.org.uk/what-we-do/pdsa-animal-wellbeing-report>

³ <https://www.pdsa.org.uk/what-we-do/pdsa-animal-wellbeing-report>



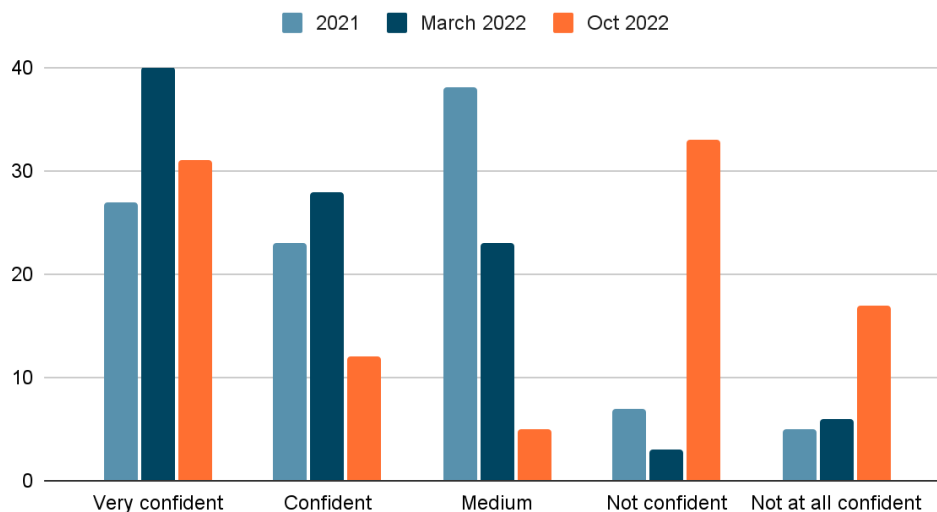
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experience of dogs⁴. Many of these puppies were sourced from overseas, bred in conditions illegal in the UK which could lead to behavioural problems such as separation anxiety⁵. ADCH fears this will lead to dogs being abandoned or given up once lockdown restrictions end, putting pressure on the sector. 17% of cats were acquired in the first year of lockdown² and 7% of cat owners got a cat under Covid restrictions¹. No stand-alone Covid financial grants were given to rescue charities in the UK, unlike some other sectors caring for animals, but some councils gave grants and in Wales some charities obtained money from the Wales Coronavirus Resilience Fund. 73% of the rescue sector say they now want a government support package. The rescue sector is looking at how it responds to this increased demand.

Survey results

In October 2022 31% of rescue said they would be operating at the same service level compared to 68% of rescues in March that were confident or very confident in their future and only 9% not very or not at all confident. The confidence rate has declined from 3.9 to 3.4 in six months. This is very worrying and highlights the combined increase demand for services with the loss of volunteers and the rise in energy, food and veterinary costs.

% rescues confidence in future



Impact of Cost of living on the dog and cat population

The 2022 surveys were the first to assess dogs with behavioural issues entering rescues and this has risen from 70% of rescues believing more dogs are coming in with behavioural issues to 92%, creating a range of operational challenges that must be managed. This is in line with the studies of dog owners being inexperienced. The trend in cats is less pronounced but 60% reported it compared with 40% in March.

⁴ <https://www.rvc.ac.uk/vetcompass/news/rvc-research-study-reveals-consequences-of-extreme-demand-for-puppies-during-covid-19-pandemic>

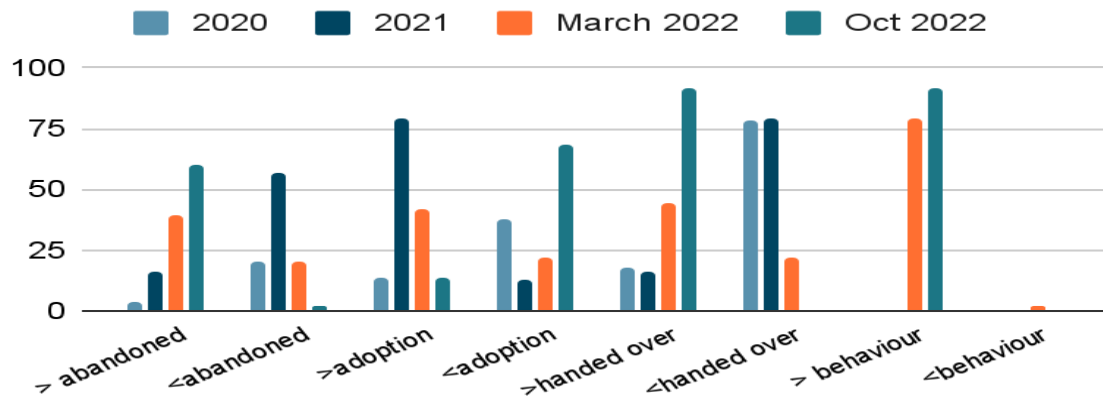
⁵ <https://www.rvc.ac.uk/vetcompass/news/new-rvc-study-reveals-consequences-of-2020-pandemic-restrictions-on-puppies>



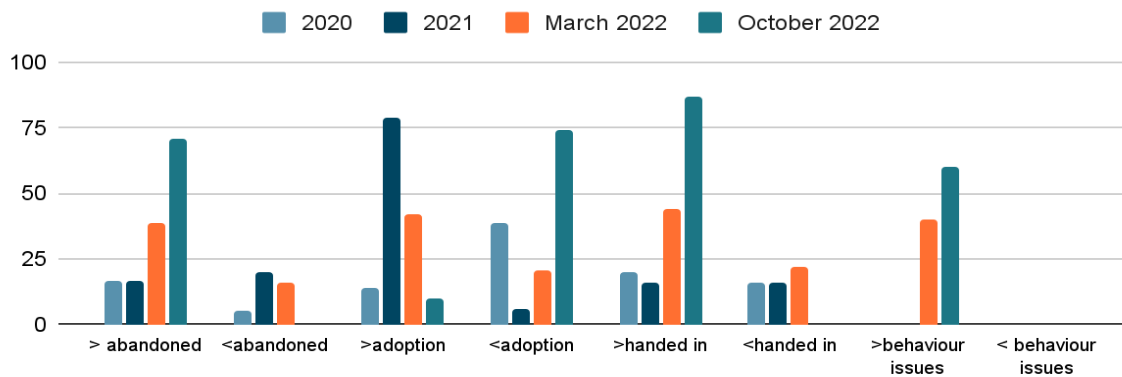
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Trends in dogs being abandoned or rehoming requests 2020-22.

Response of rescues on dogs

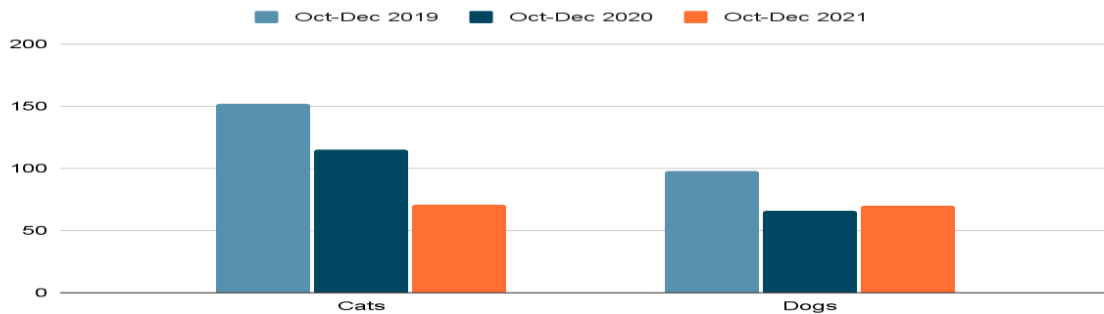


% rescues opinions on cats



The average number of dogs and cats entering rescues in Q4 is given below. This substantiates the opinions given above, showing a continued reduction in cats entering rescues but an uplift in 2022 in the number of dogs entering rescues. This seems to be the beginning of dog abandonment which has increased under Cost of Living. It can undoubtedly be put down to an increase in people buying dogs during 2020/21.

Actual numbers entering rescues



Trends in average rescue intake of cats and dogs Q 4 2019-2021