



ANIMAL WELFARE IN THE UK: PART 2

Enforcement & Oversight in Practice
December 2024

Animal Welfare in the UK: Enforcement & Oversight in Practice

A report by the UK Centre for Animal Law (A-LAW)

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Executive Summary

The report, prepared by the UK Centre for Animal Law (A-LAW), examines animal welfare enforcement and oversight across the United Kingdom between 2015/16 and 2022, focusing on data published by statutory regulators and private bodies. Key findings and trends are categorised into farmed animals, animals used in research, wild animals, companion animals and general animal welfare crimes.

Key findings:

1. Animal welfare crimes:

- England and Wales averaged 3,214 prosecutions annually, with a 63% conviction rate. Prosecution rates fell significantly during the pandemic and remain below pre-2020 levels.
- Regional disparities in convictions are unexplained by population alone.
- Northern Ireland recorded 280 convictions and over 1,374 animal welfare seizures from 2016-2021. Scotland lacks public annual crime data on animal welfare.

2. Farmed animals:

- Between 2016 and 2022, over 35,000 serious or critical non-compliance incidents were recorded at UK slaughterhouses, predominantly affecting poultry (88% of cases).
- Scotland observed a 30% decrease in incidents over six years, primarily among cattle.
- A growing percentage of breaches were detected during farm inspections in Northern Ireland, while enforcement actions in response have declined.
- Transport-related welfare data has been sparse since Brexit.

3. Animals used in research:

- The number of procedures on live animals has steadily declined, especially with genetically altered animals, yet non-compliance cases have tripled since 2016.
- Most non-compliance cases involve self-reported breaches, with mice, fish and birds most affected.

4. Wildlife crimes:

- England and Wales recorded over 9,600 wildlife crime incidents, with badgers and marine mammals accounting for the majority.
- Scotland observed an increase in fish poaching and hunting-related crimes, with inconsistent data on outcomes.

5. Companion animals:

- England issued over 15,000 animal activity licenses annually (2022-2024), with significant variation in welfare conditions across businesses.
- Northern Ireland maintained a steady dog licensing rate, while stray dog complaints and humane destruction rates declined sharply.

Recommendations:

The report proposes actionable strategies to improve transparency, enforcement consistency, and data availability, including:

- **Standardised reporting:** Introduce annual national animal welfare crime reports and consistent data collection across devolved governments.
- **Improved enforcement:** Prioritise high-risk areas such as on-farm welfare and farmed animal transport, slaughterhouse compliance and marine wildlife crimes.
- **Data-driven actions:** Analyse trends in non-compliance and sentencing post-2023 updated animal welfare sentencing guidelines.

1. Introduction & summary

In the UK, there are various statutory regulators and private bodies that are responsible for, oversee and monitor animal welfare compliance. This report analyses the publicly available data published by those bodies, predominantly (but not exclusively) from 2015/16 to 2022, in order to identify trends that have occurred in recent years and opportunities for improved reporting about animal welfare enforcement and oversight across the UK. What follows includes analysis of enforcement and oversight data relating to farmed animals, animals used in science, wild animals, companion animals and criminal justice data about animal welfare offending more generally. Wherever possible, we have included analysis across the UK to provide as complete a picture as possible; however, parts of animal welfare are devolved and there are differences in how and what each nation reports. This introduction summarises the most notable trends that have been identified and our recommendations.

Animal welfare crimes

England and Wales

Ministry of Justice data shows that over the period 2016 to 2022 there were, on average, 3,214 prosecutions per year in relation to offences involving animals.¹ Prosecutions fell sharply in 2020 and are yet to recover to pre-pandemic levels. The average conviction rate across the period was 63%, but there is significant variation in the number of convictions by geographic area. Most individuals convicted for offences involving animals were sentenced to either a fine, community sentence, suspended sentence or conditional discharge.

Enforcement by the RSPCA

Between 2016 and 2021, the RSPCA received over a million calls to its reporting hotline each year. Between 2016 and 2019, the RSPCA reported 6,254 convictions under the Animal Welfare Act 2006, more than half of which related to dogs. During the same period, in relation to sentencing outcomes under all legislation, it reported 2,419 disqualification orders, 2,254 sentences (custodial, community or suspended) and 850 fines.

Scotland

Criminal justice data relating to animal offences in Scotland is not currently available. We recommend this be corrected.

Northern Ireland

Between 2016-2021, 280 convictions for animal welfare offences were secured by DAERA, PSNI and local councils in Northern Ireland. Additionally, 1,374 animal welfare seizures took place, with 2,607 animals removed on welfare grounds.

¹ The analysis in this report was carried out before the revision of the Ministry of Justice's Criminal Justice System annual reports in January 2024 and the data relied upon is from the pre-revision datasets. We are aware of significant variations between the pre- and post-revision datasets in connection with the offences we have analysed and are making enquiries with the MOJ's statistics department to understand the reason for such significant differences, although a response has not yet been received as of December 2024.

Farmed animals

Enforcement & oversight in British slaughterhouses

Between 2016 and 2022, there were almost 35,000 reports of critical and serious Non-Compliance Incidents occurring at slaughterhouses in England and Wales, 88% of which were deemed critical (the more serious category). In 2020, there was a notable decrease in the number of incidents affecting poultry, and the total number of all Non-Compliance Incidents continued to decline at an annual rate of -14%, but remains above 2016 levels. Poultry are the species most likely to be involved in a Non-Compliance Incident, the vast majority of which happen on the farm or whilst in transport. Nearly all of the incidents were shared with the competent authority, although it is not possible to establish the outcome of these referrals.

Between 2017 and 2022, there were over 2,100 reports of potential and serious Risk Incidents occurring at slaughterhouses in Scotland, 58% of which were deemed serious (the more serious category). The total number of annual Risk Incidents has declined during the period analysed, which is primarily due to an over 50% decrease in the number of incidents affecting cattle. Cattle remain the species most likely to be involved in a Risk Incident in Scotland, the majority of which happened on the farm or during transport. The majority of Risk Incidents were referred to either the Animal Health Office or Trading Standards. Again, it is not possible to establish the outcome of these referrals.

Enforcement of farmed animal welfare by local councils in Britain

Between 2016 and 2022, there were 667 reported convictions under animal health and welfare legislation across England and Wales as a result of local authority enforcement action. Prosecutions in England and Wales were steadily increasing from 2016. However, a drop occurred in 2020 from which numbers are still recovering, likely due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The majority of convictions in England and Wales related to animal welfare issues (primarily on the farm or during transport), followed by animal by-product issues, and animal traceability issues.

Convictions in Scotland were significantly lower than in England and Wales. However, there was a significant number of other enforcement actions taken by local councils in Scotland. A large number of complaints and service requests were made to local councils, and on average, over 700,000 animals were inspected each year. Nearly 20,000 welfare visits and 14,000 animal health visits were made by Scottish local councils between 2016 and 2022, primarily relating to animal welfare on farms and animal traceability issues. Oral and written advice was the most common action taken.

Enforcement & oversight of farmed animal welfare in Northern Ireland

In relation to Northern Ireland, over 7,300 “production site” (aka farm) inspections were recorded between 2017 and 2022. The compliance rate identified during the inspections has been slowly declining since 2018. On average, breaches were detected in roughly a quarter of cases. However, breaches have increasingly been detected at inspections and, across the period, the number of breaches identified has grown at an annual rate of 6%. However, the actions recorded in response to breaches have been steadily declining.

Welfare in transport in the UK

There is limited available data about welfare in transport inspections since the UK’s departure from the EU. However, between 2016 and 2018, Non-Compliance Incidents relating to welfare in transport in the UK were most likely to occur at the place of departure or slaughterhouse and relate to the fitness of the animal. However, the number of incidents identified at the place of departure or slaughterhouse was proportionately

lower than incidents identified at other locations. This suggests either that non-compliance is more likely to occur at other locations or that non-compliance is not being fully identified at the place of departure / slaughterhouse. This could be explained by comparatively fewer number of animals being checked during each inspection at these locations.

Penalties were imposed in response to almost a quarter of the Incidents that occurred between 2016 and 2018, and were most likely to be imposed if the incident occurred during transport, at a market, staging or transfer point, or after completion of the journey. The likelihood of penalties being imposed varied significantly depending on the species involved.

Oversight of farmed animals by private assurance bodies

Based on limited quarterly data released publicly by the Red Tractor scheme, the number of members suspended from its assurance scheme increased by 47% between Q4 2021 and Q1 2022. Since then, on average there have been 1,125 member suspensions in each quarter. There has not been a corresponding increase to the members withdrawn, which since January 2022 has been 87 members per quarter on average. It is difficult to draw significant conclusions from this data as it relates to all Red Tractor members, including crop producers, and not just those involved in the keeping of farmed animals.

Animals used in research

The overall number of scientific procedures carried out on living animals in the UK has been steadily falling since 2016 (with Great Britain declining at an average rate of -6% between 2016 and 2022). The fall is particularly pronounced for procedures involving genetically altered animals.

However, against this background, the Animals in Science Regulation Unit (ASRU) has recorded a significant increase in the number of non-compliance cases in recent years (almost threefold between 2016 and 2021). The vast majority of non-compliance cases (96% of all cases between 2018 and 2021) were detected through self-reporting by licence holders. The ASRU's recent shift in its operating model has seen an increase in the number of inspectors allocated to undertake a smaller number of (primarily remote) inspections of licence holders.

The number of animals affected by non-compliance more than doubled between 2019 and 2021. The main species affected by non-compliance were mice, fish, birds and rats. The most common enforcement action taken by the ASRU in response to non-compliance was to issue a letter of reprimand/censure and/or to issue inspector advice.

In Northern Ireland, the number of scientific procedures performed on animals has remained more static and, on average, numbers have increased overall during the period by 5.46% annually. The Department of Health does not currently publish non-compliance information on an annual basis.

Wild animals

Wildlife crime in England & Wales

Between 2016 and 2022, there were over 9,600 recorded incidents of crimes relating to wildlife in England and Wales.² The majority of reports related to badgers (46%) and marine mammals (23%), the latter of which has more than doubled across the period.

The proportion of wildlife crimes referred to the Police was not always recorded, but based on the data available, it varied significantly depending on the species. For example, the majority of amphibian and reptile, and bat crimes reported were referred to the Police, whereas only 1% of marine mammal crimes were referred. The proportion of crimes referred tended to remain the same across the period for each species, which suggests that referrals may be linked to the species rather than the severity of the crime.

Data on the number of individuals prosecuted and convicted was not always consistently reported. In general, where data was available, the number of prosecutions was small or, in relation to marine mammals, zero. The exception to this trend was for hunting crimes, which had a conviction rate of 45%.

Wildlife crime in Scotland

There were almost 1,400 reports of wildlife crimes recorded by Police Scotland between 2015 and 2021. Reports have been increasing since 2018/19 and increased significantly in 2020/21, possibly as a result of the increased presence of people in wild areas during the Covid-19 pandemic. Fish poaching, hunting with dogs and crimes involving birds were the most commonly reported wildlife crime types throughout the period.

Around a third of reports to Police Scotland were referred to the COPFS. Crimes most likely to be referred were fish poaching, other wildlife offences and other conservation offences. Just over a third of these referrals resulted in no further action being taken, and a similar number resulted in alternatives to prosecutions (such as warning letters and fines). Around a quarter resulted in prosecutions, which were most commonly secured in relation to fish poaching and hunting with dogs. The majority of the prosecutions resulted in a fine being imposed.

Companion animals

Animal activities licensing in England

Between 2022-2024, on average, 15,435 animal activities licences were in effect across England. Around a third of licences were for home boarding for dogs. Optional data requested for the first time in 2024, shows at least 247 licensed animal activities businesses have a one-star rating, whilst at least 419 have a two-star rating. In addition, seven licences had been suspended, ten revoked, 29 refused and 229 had been varied

² Much of the data relating to wildlife crime is not recorded officially, as many wildlife offences are not notifiable. However, Wildlife & Countryside Link publish an annual wildlife crime report, which is based on crime figures in England & Wales that have been collated by its membership, which is primarily composed of non-governmental organisations. Reference to wildlife crime in relation to the WCL refers to crimes involving badgers, hunting, bats, the illegal wildlife trade, amphibians and reptiles, marine mammals and raptor persecution. The number of hunting crimes was not readily available, and so the number of individuals proceeded against for this crime has been used.

Oversight of the welfare of greyhounds used for racing in Britain

Between 2017 and 2022, 1,125 greyhound fatalities were recorded at GBGB licensed tracks, but this number has decreased during the period at an annual rate of -17%. There were 4,520 injuries recorded in the same period, which were spread across multiple types of injury. In terms of retirement outcomes, 91% of greyhounds were retired or rehomed, with the remainder dying or being put to sleep. The majority of greyhounds who were recorded as being retired or rehomed were given to a Greyhound Trust or another charity.

Enforcement & oversight of companion animal welfare in Northern Ireland

Almost 843,400 dog licences were issued in Northern Ireland between April 2017 and March 2023, with the annual number of licences issued remaining relatively flat across the period. During the same period, over 35,500 complaints were made in relation to stray dogs, resulting in the impounding of 15,407 dogs. Of the dogs impounded, the majority were passed to shelters or other animal organisations, reclaimed by their owner or sold to the public. 3% were recorded as having been humanely destroyed, but this number has been declining at an annual rate of 23%.

Between 2016 and 2022 almost 43,000 complaints were received by local councils in relation to non-farmed animals, the majority of which related to animal welfare. The number of complaints received has been increasing since 2020 at an annual rate of 15%. The complaints resulted in over 58,000 visits from inspectors. Of the actions recorded, the most common were for the animal to be voluntarily signed over to the local council (32%) or for no further action to be required (30%).

Separately, the PSNI recorded almost 38,000 animal-related complaints between 2016 and 2022, the number of which have significantly declined in recent years. Roughly 12% of the complaints related to animal welfare/cruelty. The complaints resulted in 229 seizures and 636 animals being seized by PSNI, with seizures generally growing year-on-year. Less than 2% of calls concerning animal welfare / cruelty resulted in convictions, but the number of prosecutions commenced and convictions secured have generally both increased across the period.

Summary of recommendations

Animal welfare crimes

1. Further research should be carried out to identify the reasons for regional variations in the number of animal welfare convictions in England and Wales, where such variation cannot be explained by higher population figures alone.
2. Sentencing trends in England and Wales should be revisited in the coming years to evaluate the impact of new Sentencing Council guidelines³ for animal welfare offences, which came into effect in 2023 following the introduction of the Animal Welfare (Sentencing) Act 2021.
3. As a matter of significant public interest, and to aid with the identification of key trends, Defra, the Welsh Government and Department of Justice should work together to produce an annual report about animal cruelty and animal welfare offending within England and Wales.
4. The Scottish Government, in conjunction with other organisations as appropriate, should publish annual crime data for animal offences in Scotland.

³ <https://www.sentencingcouncil.org.uk/offences/magistrates-court/item/animal-cruelty/>;
<https://www.sentencingcouncil.org.uk/offences/magistrates-court/item/failure-to-ensure-animal-welfare/>.

Farmed animals

5. Improving poultry and pig welfare in farms, during transport and at slaughterhouses in England and Wales, and identifying problem areas to reduce the number of Non-Compliance Incidents experienced by poultry and pigs, must be a priority for the FSA, Defra, APHA and local authorities.
6. To ensure parity between species, the FSA should encourage a consistent approach to the utilisation of enforcement actions when non-compliance incidents occur in slaughterhouses in England and Wales throughout its operational guidance and training.
7. The FSS, Scottish Government Animal Health and Welfare Division and local councils should make improving cattle welfare in Scottish farms, during transport and at slaughterhouses, and maintaining the reduction of Risk Incidents involving cattle, a priority.
8. The FSA, Defra and FSS should identify problem areas and implement an action plan to address common welfare issues to actively reduce the high proportion of welfare issues occurring on farms and during transport that are identified at British slaughterhouses. Public interest data relating to outcomes of Non-Compliance Incidents shared with the competent authority should be published annually. In light of the high proportion of welfare issues occurring on farm and during transport, the adequacy of the animal welfare inspection and oversight regimes for these locations should be independently reviewed as a matter of urgency.
9. Data relating to farmed animal welfare inspections and oversight at farms, in transport, at markets and places of sale should be reported annually.
10. DAERA should urgently investigate the sharp decline in the non-compliance rate at Northern Irish farms in 2022 and take remedial action to address this.
11. The recent decline in outcomes for farmed animal welfare cases, and corresponding increase in identified breaches, should be urgently investigated by DAERA.
12. Given the lack of recent data about welfare in transport, APHA should resume annual reporting as a matter of urgency to enable the identification of current welfare trends.
13. As farm assurance bodies play a key role in inspecting UK farms and upholding standards, to the extent that regulatory burdens may be reduced through 'earned recognition', there is a significant public interest in such bodies publishing transparency information. Any scheme through which it is possible to earn recognition should be obliged to report welfare compliance information to the statutory regulator and to publish publicly available welfare compliance reports on an annual basis.

Animals in research

14. Additional figures published relating to 2017 suggest the overall number of animals used in science in Britain is significantly higher than currently reported in the ASRU annual statistics. The number of animals used in science overall – including the number of animals bred but not used in scientific procedures - should be reported annually as a matter of significant public interest. We additionally recommend that final outcomes for animals – such as death, killing or rehoming – be reported.
15. The ASRU should urgently investigate reasons for the substantial increase in non-compliance cases since 2019 and take remedial action to reduce such incidences.

16. Steps should be taken to identify reasons for the increase in the number of animals affected by non-compliance incidents and to actively reduce this.
17. Addressing the three most common non-compliance incident types in British laboratories (1. failing to provide adequate food and water, 2. failing to provide adequate care and 3. failing to comply with PPL authorities) through improved training and more robust remedial action should be an urgent priority for the ASRU.
18. The Department of Health should begin reporting on non-compliance incidents in Northern Irish laboratories annually. Achieving a year-on-year decrease in the number of scientific procedures carried out on live animals should be a priority for the Department of Health.

Wild animals

19. To aid with accurate data capture and resource targeting, all serious wildlife crimes should be made notifiable.
20. To improve prosecution and conviction rates in England and Wales, specialist training in wildlife crime investigation techniques and dedicated CPS guidelines for key wildlife crimes should be made available for police and prosecutors, respectively.
21. Public information campaigns to raise awareness about marine mammal crimes and signs to look out for should be carried out.
22. An official annual wildlife crime report for England and Wales should be produced by the UK and Welsh governments, akin to that produced in Scotland by the Scottish Government.
23. Figures should continue to be monitored to establish whether the spike in fish poaching crimes in Scotland becomes an established trend. If it does, public awareness raising of the legal rules around recreational fishing and potential penalties should be carried out.
24. Reasons for the declining number of bird crime cases being reported to COFPS should be identified.
25. Figures relating to wildlife crimes involving hunting with dogs should be reviewed over the coming years to evaluate the impact of the Hunting with Dogs (Scotland) Act 2023.
26. As a high proportion of cases reported to COPFS are categorised as 'other' wildlife crimes, data relating to this crime type should be further broken down in future editions of the Scottish Government's annual wildlife crime reports to enable the identification of notable trends.
27. Future Scottish Government wildlife crime annual reports should include data relating to the number of cruelty to wild animal crimes reported to COPFS.
28. Reasons for the lower conviction rate for wildlife crimes in Scotland compared to other types of crime should be identified.
29. Sentencing trends for wildlife crimes in Scotland should be revisited over the coming years to evaluate the impact of the Animals and Wildlife (Penalties, Protections and Powers) (Scotland) Act 2020 and the Hunting with Dogs (Scotland) Act 2023.

30. Northern Ireland's animal welfare annual report should, where possible, distinguish between PSNI enforcement activity in connection with crimes involving wildlife and crimes involving domestic and kept animals so that key wildlife crime trends in Northern Ireland can be identified.

Companion animals

31. Optional questions about animal activities licensing asked of English local authorities for the first time in 2024 should be made mandatory in future returns to provide a more complete picture of animal activities licensing implementation across England.
32. Defra should work with Local Authorities with one- and two-star rated premises to identify strategies for improving welfare conditions at these businesses.
33. Similar animal activities licensing information should be published by the Scottish and Welsh Governments on an annual basis.
34. We commend DAERA for producing an animal welfare annual report, which provides a top-line overview of animal welfare service delivery by DAERA, local councils and PSNI.⁴ We strongly recommend the governments of Wales, Scotland the UK government produce similar annual reports about animal welfare enforcement, which should also include proposed actions to address problem trends and improve service delivery where necessary.

⁴ DAERA began publishing an animal welfare service delivery statistical bulletin in 2016/17 following a recommendation to do so as part of a post-implementation review of the Welfare of Animals Act (Northern Ireland) 2011.

2. Animal welfare crimes

UK animal welfare enforcement arrangements - who does what?

Welfare (general duty)	England	Animal Welfare Act 2006	Vertebrates other than man that are 'protected animals', e.g. (a) of a kind which is commonly domesticated in the British Islands, (b) under the control of man whether on a permanent or temporary basis, or (c) not living in a wild state.	RSPCA or Local Authority	RSPCA Report Cruelty / Find your local authority (England)
	Wales				RSPCA Report Cruelty / Find your local authority (Wales)
	Scotland	Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006		SSPCA or Local Council	03000 999 999
	Northern Ireland	Welfare of Animals Act (Northern Ireland) 2011		DAERA (farm animals) / Local Authority (domestic pets and horses)	DAERA - responsibilities and contacts / Local councils in Northern Ireland nidirect
Welfare (serious harm, including causing unnecessary suffering, poisoning an	England	Animal Welfare Act 2006	Vertebrates other than man that are 'protected animals', e.g. (a) of a kind which is commonly domesticated in the British Islands, (b) under the control of man	RSPCA or Local Authority	RSPCA Report Cruelty / Find your local authority (England)
	Wales				RSPCA Report Cruelty / Find your local authority (Wales)

animal, mutilating an animal, docking a dog's tail, animal fighting)	Scotland	Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006	whether on a permanent or temporary basis, or (c) not living in a wild state.	SSPCA or Local Council	03000 999 999
	Northern Ireland	Welfare of Animals Act (Northern Ireland) 2011		DAERA (farm animals) / Local Authority (domestic pets and horses) / Police (wildlife crime and crimes involving animals e.g. dog fighting)	DAERA - responsibilities and contacts / Local councils in Northern Ireland nidirect / 999 in emergency / 101 for non-emergency

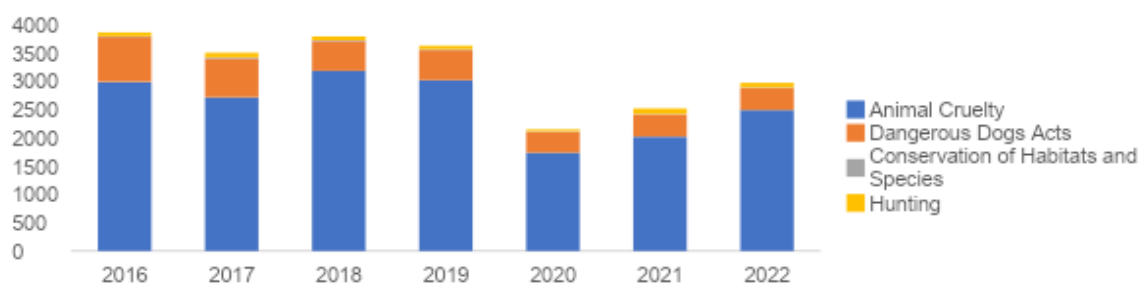
Animal crimes in England & Wales

Data in relation to the Criminal Justice System for England and Wales covers prosecutions, convictions and sentencing decisions across a range of offences, including those involving animals. **Please note:** the following analysis was carried out before the revision of the Ministry of Justice's Criminal Justice System annual reports in January 2024 and the data relied upon is from the pre-revision datasets. We are aware of significant variations between the pre- and post-revision datasets in connection with the offences we have analysed and are making enquiries with the MOJ's statistics department to understand the reason for this.

Prosecutions and convictions⁵

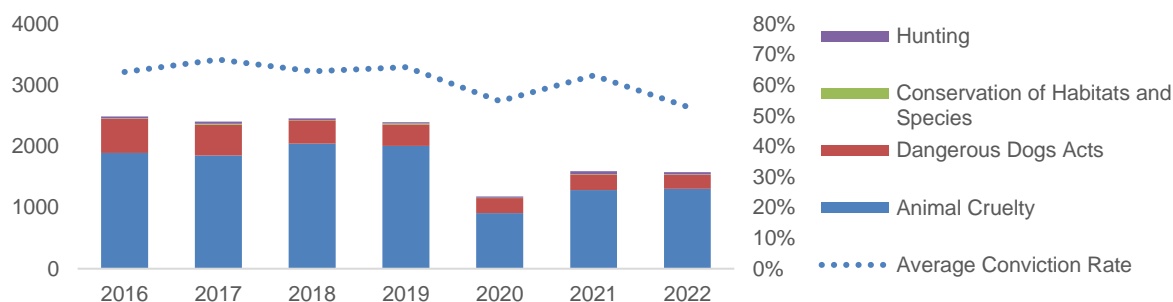
Between 2016 and 2022, there were 22,497 prosecutions in England and Wales related to offences involving animals, an average of 3,214 prosecutions per year.⁶ Prosecutions in relation to animal cruelty offences made up the majority of prosecutions during this period (on average 81%). The number of prosecutions declined sharply in 2020 across all offences, likely as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. Whilst the number of prosecutions has increased in 2021 and 2022, prosecutions remain below pre-pandemic levels.

Chart 1: Prosecutions by offence



In the same period, there were 14,100 convictions, representing an average conviction rate of 63%. The average conviction rate has remained broadly flat over the period with a slightly lower rate in 2020 and 2022. Conviction rates are lower for conservation and hunting offences, but the relatively small number of prosecutions and convictions in these categories means it is difficult to identify any clear trends.

Chart 2: Convictions by offence and average conviction rate



⁵ Source: Criminal Justice System Statistics publication: Proceedings and Outcomes by Home Office Code 2014 to 2022. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/criminal-justice-statistics>.

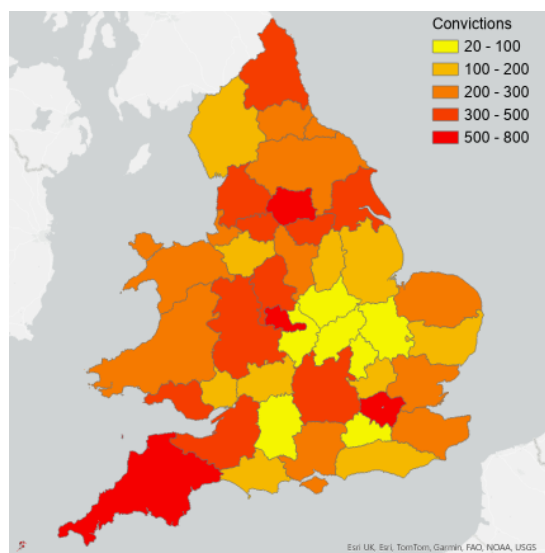
⁶ For the purpose of this report offences involving animals include the following offences as classified by the Ministry of Justice: (i) 108a Animal Cruelty under sections 4-8 under Animal Welfare Act 2006; (ii) 108b Other Cruelty to animal offences; (iii) 97 Animal cruelty; (iv) 111A Offences under Dangerous Dogs Acts – summary; (v) 121A Offences under Hunting Act 2004; and (vi) 197 Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.

There is significant variation in the number of animal cruelty convictions in different areas of the country, as shown in Chart 3.⁷ In part, this reflects areas of high population, e.g. London, having a greater number of convictions.

However, this cannot explain all of the differences. For example, Devon and Cornwall has one of the highest number of convictions by area, whilst the area of Warwickshire had just 20 animal cruelty convictions over the period 2016 to 2022 (less than 3 convictions per year).

Recommendation: Further research should be carried out to identify the reasons for regional variations in the number of animal welfare convictions in England and Wales, where such variation cannot be explained by higher population figures alone.

Chart 3: Animal Cruelty convictions by area (2016-2022)



Sentencing⁸

Most individuals convicted for offences involving animals are sentenced to either a fine, a community sentence (e.g. unpaid work in the local community), a suspended sentence (e.g. a custodial sentence where the offender does not have to go to prison if they commit no further offences and comply with any requirements imposed) or a conditional discharge (e.g. the offender gets a criminal record but no penalty is given on the condition they don't reoffend in a specified time period - if they do re-offend, they could be sentenced for both the new offence and the original offence).⁹

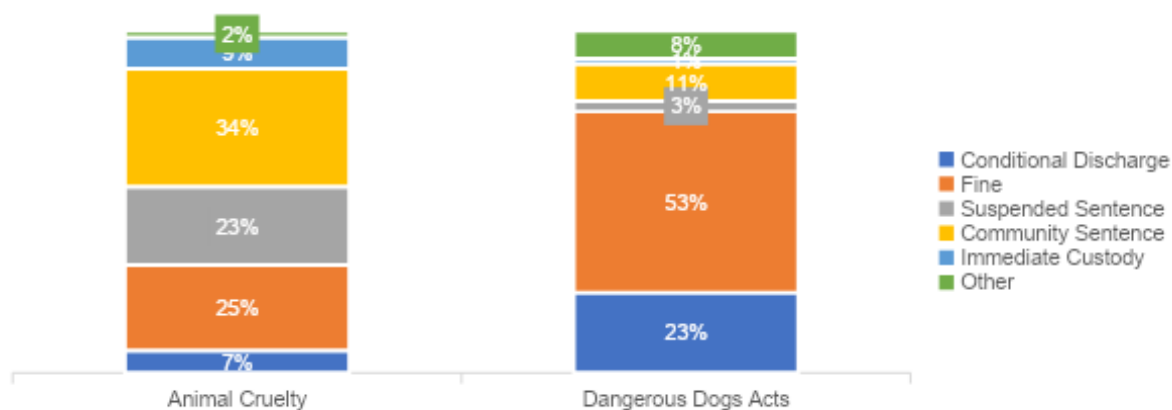
As shown in Chart 4 below, there is a difference in the sentencing approach between animal cruelty offences and offences in relation to dangerous dogs. Individuals convicted of animal cruelty offences were more likely to face a community sentence (34%), fine (25%) or suspended sentence (23%). Whereas individuals convicted in relation to dangerous dogs offences were more likely to be sentenced to a fine (53%) or conditional discharge (23%).

⁷ Areas represent Police Force Areas in England and Wales.

⁸ Source: Criminal Justice System Statistics publication: Outcomes by Offence 2010 to 2022. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/criminal-justice-statistics>.

⁹ Sentencing data is only available for the principal offence. When a defendant has been found guilty of two or more offences the principal offence is the offence for which the heaviest penalty is imposed. Where the same disposal is imposed for two or more offences, the principal offence selected is the offence for which the statutory maximum penalty is the most severe.

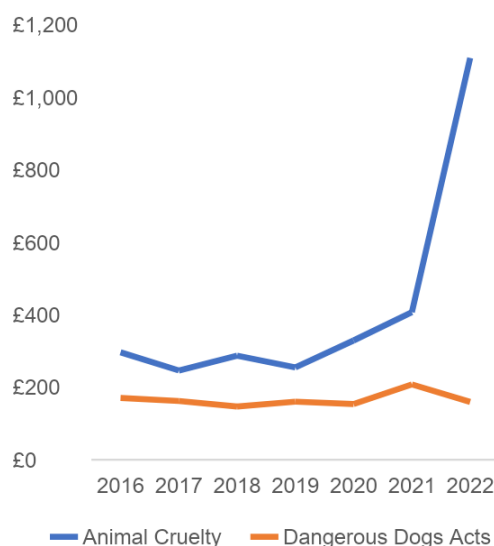
Chart 4: Sentencing outcomes (2016-2022)¹⁰



Of those individuals sentenced to a fine, the average fine across all offences involving animals was £353 for the period 2016 to 2022. The average fine for animal cruelty offences (£391) was higher than offences in relation to dangerous dogs (£165).

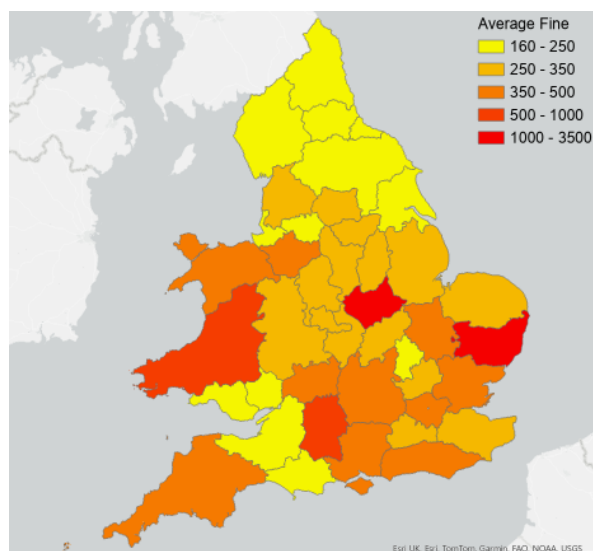
There has been a significant increase in the average fine for animal cruelty offences in recent years, increasing to £1,109 in 2022 (up 335% on 2019). However, despite this increase, the imposition of modest financial penalties for animal cruelty offending is unlikely to reflect societal expectations.

Chart 5: Average fine by offence



¹⁰ The segment 'other' in Chart 4 relates to sentencing involving absolute discharge, compensation or "otherwise dealt with".

Chart 6: Animal Cruelty fines by area (2016-2022)



Average fine rates also mask considerable variation across the country. Chart 6 shows the average fine for animal cruelty offences by police force area. In some areas, including Greater Manchester, Cleveland and Dorset, the average fine was less than £200. Whereas in other areas, including Wiltshire and Suffolk, the average fine is over £500. The area with the highest average fine was Leicestershire (£3,349), although there were only 16 fines in this area across the seven-year period.

Over the period 2016 to 2022, there were 448 immediate custodial sentences in relation to animal cruelty offences. The average custodial sentence length was 3.8 months. This has remained relatively flat over most of the period, although there was an increase to 5.4 months in 2022 (up 48% on 2021).

Recommendation: Sentencing trends in England and Wales should be revisited in the coming years to evaluate the impact of new Sentencing Council guidelines¹¹ for animal welfare offences, which came into effect in 2023 following the introduction of the Animal Welfare (Sentencing) Act 2021.

Enforcement by the RSPCA¹²

The RSPCA has historically acted as a private prosecutor, bringing cases against people suspected of acts of cruelty to wild and domestic animals. Historical RSPCA prosecution reports provide statistics about the activities carried out by the RSPCA Prosecutions Department, such as the number of complaints investigated and the number of convictions achieved, although these have not been published since 2019. In 2021, the RSPCA announced plans to explore transferring its prosecution role to the Crown Prosecution Service.¹³

¹¹ <https://www.sentencingcouncil.org.uk/offences/magistrates-court/item/animal-cruelty/>;
<https://www.sentencingcouncil.org.uk/offences/magistrates-court/item/failure-to-ensure-animal-welfare/>.

¹² Source: RSPCA Prosecutions Annual Report (2016 to 2019). Available at: <https://view.pagetiger.com/besssti/prosecutionreport2019>;
<https://www.rspca.org.uk/documents/1494939/7712578/ProsecutionReport2019.pdf/a2ae6cdc-efe2-f6bf-cac3-0fb53da37bf6?t=1556101041009>; <https://view.pagetiger.com/RSPCA2017PR/RSPCA2017prosecutionreport/PDF.pdf>;
<https://view.pagetiger.com/RSPCAProsecutionsAnnualreport2016>.

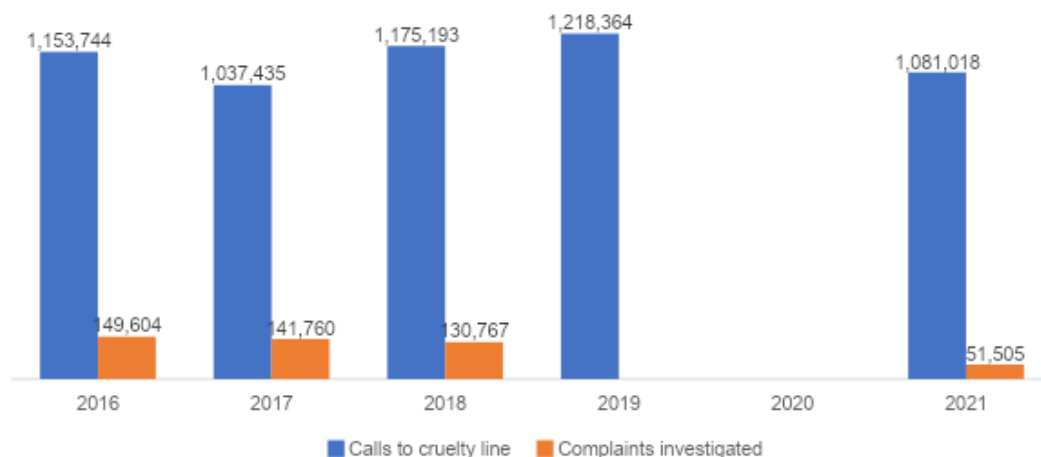
¹³ Source: Rawlinson, K. (2021) 'RSPCA plans to stop taking animal abusers to court privately', The Guardian, 28 January. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/28/rspca-plans-to-stop-taking-animal-abusers-to-court-privately>.

RSPCA operational statistics

Between 2016 and 2021 the RSPCA received over one million calls to its reporting hotline per year. The number of calls remained relatively constant over time, with a slight decline in call volumes (a reduction of circa 140,000 calls) between 2019 and 2021 (no data was available for 2020).

There was a significant decrease, potentially a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, in the number of complaints investigated by the RSPCA between 2018 and 2021, amounting to a 61% decline (no complaints data was available for 2019 or 2020).¹⁴

Chart 7: RSPCA operational statistics



RSPCA convictions by Species¹⁵

Between 2016 and 2019, the RSPCA secured a total of 6,254 convictions under the Animal Welfare Act 2006, resulting in an average of 1,564 convictions under the legislation per year.

In each year, the majority of convictions related to offences against dogs, with cats and equines accounting for either the second or third highest number of convictions, depending on the year. The total number of convictions fell by -19% between 2018 and 2019, from 1,755 to 1,428. This was despite the RSPCA receiving a similar number of calls to its reporting hotline in both years.

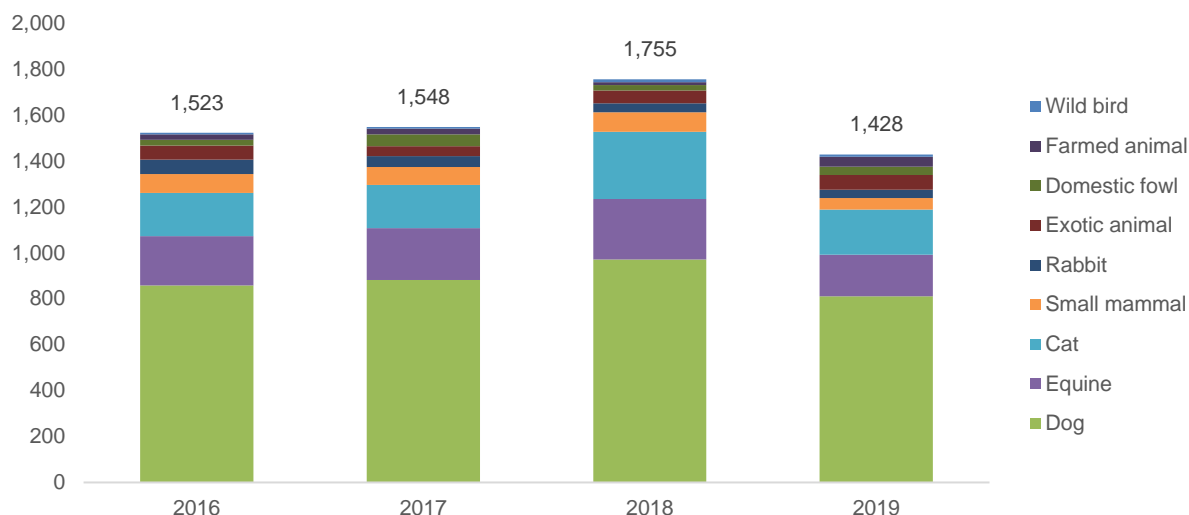
¹⁴ In 2018, the number of complaints was more than 130,767 but accurate figures could not be calculated due to a change in recording systems.

¹⁵ Source: RSPCA Prosecutions Annual Reports 2018 and 2019. Available at:

<https://view.pagetiger.com/bessstj/prosecutionreport2019>;

<https://www.rspca.org.uk/documents/1494939/7712578/ProsecutionReport2019.pdf/a2ae6cdc-efe2-f6bf-cac3-0fb53da37bf6?t=1556101041009>.

Chart 8: Animal Welfare Act 2006 convictions by species, England and Wales¹⁶



RSPCA sentencing outcomes under all Acts¹⁷

Over the period 2016 to 2019, the RSPCA Prosecution Department achieved a total of 2,254 sentences imposed on individuals, the majority of which were community sentences (63%) with the remainder either suspended sentences (28%) or custodial sentences (10%). The total number of sentences achieved in each year remained broadly constant throughout the period.

The RSPCA Prosecution Department also achieved a total of 850 fines over the same period, averaging 213 fines per year.

The most frequent outcome over the period was a disqualification order being imposed on individuals post-conviction pursuant to s34 Animal Welfare Act 2006. A total of 2,419 disqualification orders were imposed over the period, averaging 605 disqualification orders per year.

In each year, there were 39 appeals against conviction made on average. However, there was only one case, in 2018, where an appellant had all convictions quashed after appeal.

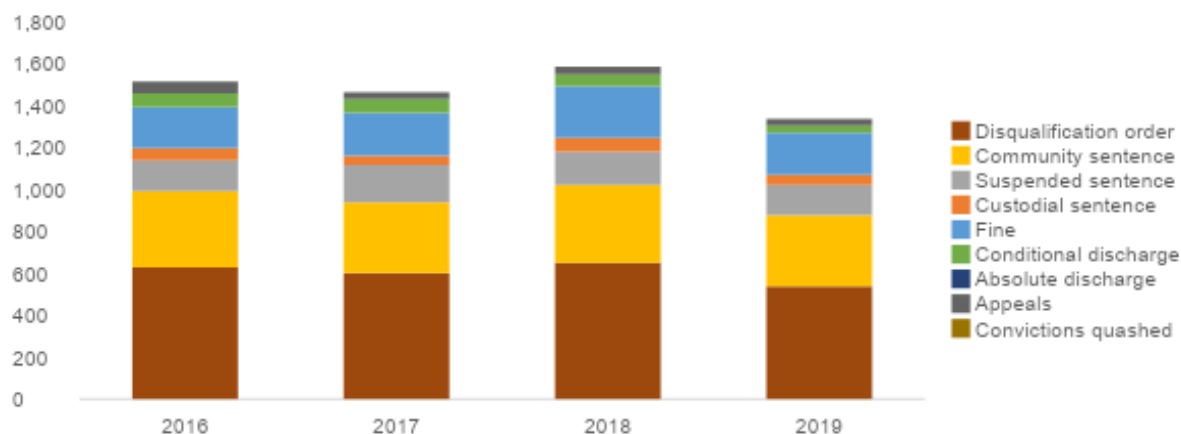
¹⁶ One offence could relate to multiple animals or multiple offences could have been committed in respect of one animal.

¹⁷ Source: RSPCA Prosecutions Annual Reports 2018 and 2019. Available at:

<https://view.pagetiger.com/bessstj/prosecutionreport2019>;

<https://www.rspca.org.uk/documents/1494939/7712578/ProsecutionReport2019.pdf/a2ae6cdc-efe2-f6bf-cac3-0fb53da37bf6?t=1556101041009>.

Chart 9: Sentencing outcomes¹⁸



Recommendation: As a matter of significant public interest, and to aid with the identification of key trends, Defra, the Welsh Government and Department of Justice should work together to produce an annual report about animal cruelty and animal welfare offending within England and Wales.

Animal crimes in Scotland

In Scotland, there are currently no official crime statistics related to animal offences reported annually in the public domain. An analysis of animal welfare prosecutions reported by the Scottish SPCA, published in August 2020, shows between 1 January 2011 – 23 July 2019, 1,543 charges were submitted to the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS) by the charity.¹⁹ These related to 873 cases involving 1,065 persons and were in connection with various legislation, including welfare legislation, wildlife legislation and dangerous dogs legislation.²⁰

The above-mentioned analysis acknowledged that the lack of administrative data about enforcement of animal welfare legislation in Scotland means it is more challenging to evaluate existing legislation and any future amendments. Additionally, the lack of information about offenders of animal crimes in Scotland means it is more difficult to “develop evidence-based and cost-effective methods of intervention and prevention.”²¹

An outcome of the analysis is that recommendations were made to the Scottish SPCA. However, these were not published within the public-facing report.

Recommendation: The Scottish Government, in conjunction with other organisations as appropriate, should publish annual crime data for animal offences in Scotland.

Animal crimes in Northern Ireland

Top-line data about animal crimes in Northern Ireland is reported in annual animal welfare service delivery reports,²² published by DAERA in conjunction with local councils and the Police Service of Northern Ireland

¹⁸ One offender may have more than one sentence imposed. A disqualification order can be imposed as a penalty in its own right or it can be additional to any other penalty imposed.

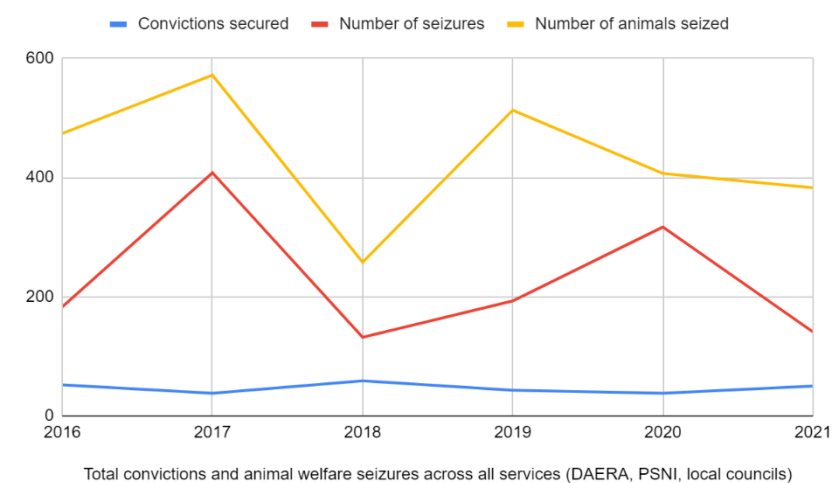
¹⁹ https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Jade-Hooper/publication/344107366_Animal_welfare_prosecutions_reported_by_the_Scottish_SPCA_2011-2019/links/5f52745792851c250b903170/Animal-welfare-prosecutions-reported-by-the-Scottish-SPCA-2011-2019.pdf

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/animal-welfare-statistics>

(PSNI). There is analysis of discrete areas from these annual reports throughout this report. However, as an overview of animal welfare offending in Northern Ireland overall, the reports show between 2016-2021, 280 convictions were secured by DAERA, PSNI and local councils, with 1,374 animal welfare seizures of 2,607 animals taking place.

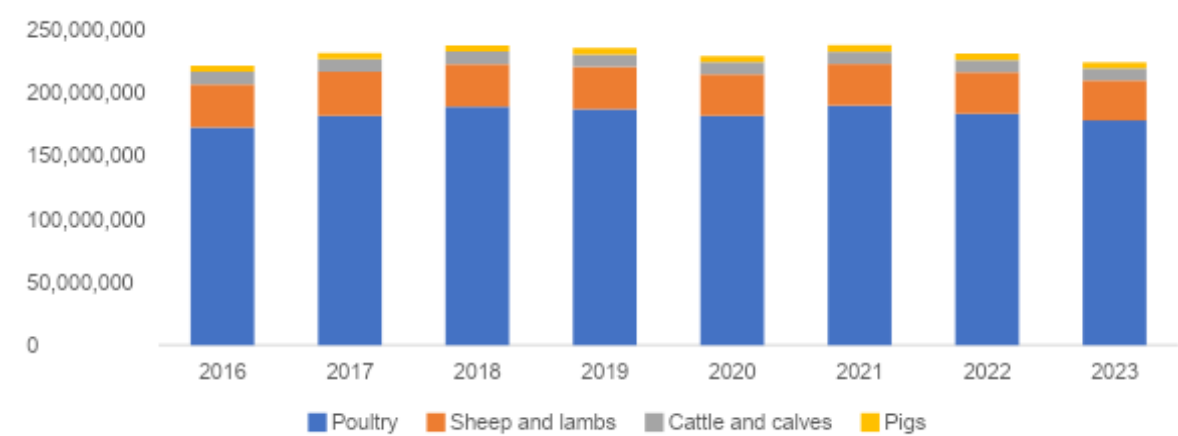


3. Farmed animals

The UK farmed animal population²³

Between 2016 and 2023, on average, the UK terrestrial farmed animal population included 183 million poultry, 33.3 million sheep and lambs, 9.8 million cattle and calves, and 5 million pigs at any given time. The populations have remained relatively flat over the period. Poultry formed the greatest proportion of the farmed animal population, accounting for 83% on average, followed by sheep and lambs (15%), cattle and calves (4%) and pigs (2%).

Chart 10: Farmed animal population in the UK by species



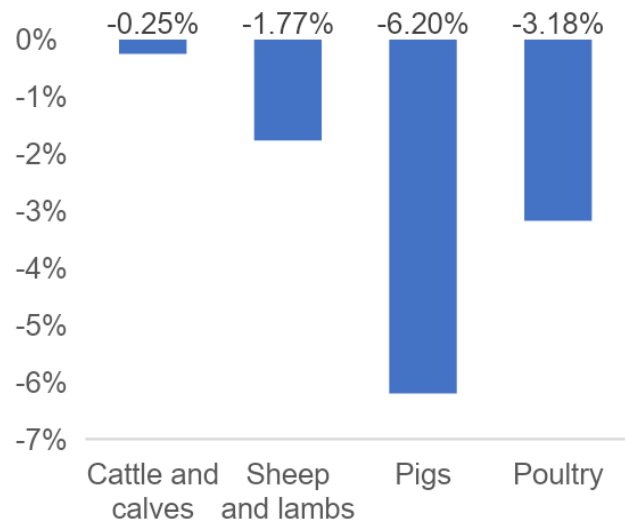
The annual growth for all animal populations, aside from poultry, decreased across the period analysed by small proportions (each was less than -1%). The annual growth rate for the poultry population grew by 0.4%.

²³ Source: DEFRA Livestock Populations in the United Kingdom Data (2016 to 2023). Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/livestock-populations-in-the-united-kingdom>. The data records the population as at 1 June of the relevant year (e.g. the data for 2016 represents 1 June 2015 to 31 May 2016).

As poultry accounts for the greatest proportion of the UK terrestrial farmed animal population, the total population for 2023 remains 3% higher than in 2016, which had the lowest population over the period.

A general increase in the animal population did occur between 2020 and 2021 due to small increases in the populations of pigs, poultry, and sheep and lambs.²⁴ Since then, the annual growth rate of each farmed animal population (including poultry) has declined (see Chart 11). If this rate of decrease continues, the farmed animal population will fall below 2016 levels by 2025.

Chart 11: Annual growth rate of the UK farmed animal population (2021-2023)



²⁴ The pig population increased by 5%, the poultry population by 4% and the sheep and lamb population by 1%.

UK farmed animal enforcement & oversight arrangements - who does what?

Area	Nation	Key law/s	Application	Who enforces?	Contact info
Welfare in transport (including at ports)	England	Welfare of Animals (Transport) (England) Order 2006	Live vertebrates and cold-blooded invertebrates.	Local authority (Unitary / County councils) or APHA	Find your local authority (England) / customeradvice@apha.gov.uk / wit@apha.gov.uk
	Wales	Welfare of Animals (Transport) (Wales) Order 2007		Local authority or APHA	Find your local authority (Wales) / apha.cymruwales@apha.gov.uk
	Scotland	Welfare of Animals (Transport) (Scotland) Regulations 2006	Live vertebrates.	Local council or APHA	Find your local council (Scotland) / APHA.Scotland@apha.gov.uk
	Northern Ireland	Welfare of Animals (Transport) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006	Live vertebrates and cold-blooded invertebrates.	DAERA	DAERA - responsibilities and contacts
Welfare at markets	England	Welfare of Animals at Markets Order 1990/2628 (amended 2003)	Cattle, sheep, goats, other ruminants, swine, rabbits, domestic fowls, turkeys, geese, ducks, guinea-fowls, pigeons, pheasants, partridges and quails.	Local authority (Unitary / County councils) or APHA	Find your local authority (England) / customeradvice@apha.gov.uk / wit@apha.gov.uk
		Welfare of Horses at Markets (and Other Places of Sale) Order 1990	Horses, ponies, asses, hinnies, mules.		
	Wales	Welfare of Animals at Markets Order 1990/2628 (amended 2003)	Cattle, sheep, goats, other ruminants, swine, rabbits, domestic fowls, turkeys, geese, ducks, guinea-fowls, pigeons, pheasants, partridges and quails.	Local authority or APHA	Find your local authority (Wales) / apha.cymruwales@apha.gov.uk

		Welfare of Horses at Markets (and Other Places of Sale) Order 1990	Horses, ponies, asses, hinnies, mules.		
	Scotland	Welfare of Animals at Markets Order 1990/2628 (amended 2003)	Cattle, sheep, goats, other ruminants, swine, rabbits, domestic fowls, turkeys, geese, ducks, guinea-fowls, pigeons, pheasants, partridges and quails.	Local council or APHA	Find your local council (Scotland) / APHA.Scotland@apha.gov.uk
		Welfare of Horses at Markets (and Other Places of Sale) Order 1990	Horses, ponies, asses, hinnies, mules.		
	Northern Ireland	Welfare of Animals and Poultry at Markets Order (Northern Ireland) 1998/203; The Sales, Markets and Lairs Order (Northern Ireland) 1975	Bovines, sheep, goats, other ruminants, horses, ponies, asses, hinnies, mules, pigs, rabbits and poultry.	DAERA	DAERA - responsibilities and contacts
	England	The Welfare of Farmed Animals (England) Regulations 2007	Farm animals (any animal bred or kept for the production of food, wool, skin or for other farming purposes, not including fish, reptiles or amphibians, competition animals, lab animals or animals living in the wild.)	Local authority (Unitary / County Councils) or APHA	Find your local authority (England) / customeradvice@apha.gov.uk
Welfare on farm	Wales	The Welfare of Farmed Animals (Wales) Regulations 2007		Local authority or APHA	Find your local authority (Wales) / apha.cymruwales@apha.gov.uk
	Scotland	The Welfare of Farmed Animals (Scotland) Regulations 2010		Local council or APHA	Find your local council (Scotland) / APHA.Scotland@apha.gov.uk

	Northern Ireland	The Welfare of Farmed Animals Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012	Farm animals (any animal bred or kept for the production of food, wool, skin or for other farming purposes).	DAERA	DAERA - responsibilities and contacts
Welfare at slaughter / killing	England	Council Regulation (EC) No 1099/2009 of 24 September 2009 on the protection of animals at the time of killing; and Welfare of Animals at the Time of Killing (England) Regulations 2015/1782	Vertebrates excluding amphibians and reptiles	Food Standards Agency (FSA) (killing in slaughterhouses) / APHA or local authority (killing outside of slaughterhouses)	Find your local authority (England) / Report a Food Crime (FSA) / customeradvice@apha.gov.uk
	Wales	Council Regulation (EC) No 1099/2009 of 24 September 2009 on the protection of animals at the time of killing; and Welfare of Animals at the Time of Killing (Wales) Regulations 2014/951			Find your local authority (Wales) / Report a Food Crime (FSA) / apha.cymruwales@apha.gov.uk
	Scotland	Council Regulation (EC) No 1099/2009 of 24 September 2009 on the protection of animals at the time of killing; and Welfare of Animals at the Time of Killing (Scotland) Regulations 2012/321		Food Standards Scotland (FSS) (killing in slaughterhouses) / APHA or local authority (killing outside of slaughterhouses)	Report a Food Crime (FSS) / Find your local council (Scotland) / APHA.Scotland@apha.gov.uk
	Northern Ireland	Council Regulation (EC) No 1099/2009 of 24 September 2009 on the protection of animals at the time of killing; and Welfare of Animals at the		FSA and DAERA via Veterinary Service Animal Health Group	Report a Food Crime (FSA) / DEARA Animal Health & Welfare 0300 200 7840 or daera.helpline@daera-ni.gov.uk

		Time of Killing Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014/107			
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Enforcement & oversight of animal welfare in British slaughterhouses

England & Wales

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) is responsible for animal welfare enforcement in approved slaughterhouses in England and Wales and releases quarterly animal welfare non-compliance data.

Critical and Serious Non-Compliance Incidents

Between 2016 and 2022, 34,756 Critical²⁵ and Serious²⁶ Non-Compliance Incidents occurred at slaughterhouses in England and Wales. This amounts to 4,965 Non-Compliance Incidents each year, equivalent to 22 incidents in each slaughterhouse.²⁷ 88% of the Non-Compliance Incidents were classified as Critical, the more serious category.

Chart 12: Number of Non-Compliance Incidents



Between 2016 and 2019, the number of Non-Compliance Incidents occurring at slaughterhouses in England and Wales grew at an annual rate of 18%. There was a significant decrease of 29% in the number of Non-Compliance Incidents occurring between 2019 and 2020, largely due to a reduction in the number of Non-Compliance Incidents experienced by poultry.

The comparatively reduced number of Non-Compliance Incidents has been maintained since 2020, and there have continued to be year-on-year decreases in the total number of incidents at an annual rate of -14%. However, the total number of Non-Compliance Incidents occurring in 2022 is 7% higher than it was in 2016. Moreover, since 2020, the rate of annual decline in Non-Compliance Incidents has been reducing, and Serious incidents increased in 2022 by 13%.

²⁵ Defined by the FSA as incidents where, "welfare practices were observed as failing to comply with legislative requirements, and there was evidence of animals suffering avoidable pain, distress or suffering during their killing and related operations or a contravention poses a serious and imminent risk to animal welfare." Source: FSA Animal Welfare Non-Compliance Data: Explanatory Note, page 3. Available at <https://fsa-catalogue2.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/AW+Non-compliance+Supporting+Final.pdf>.

²⁶ Defined by the FSA as incidents where, "welfare practices were observed as failing to comply with the requirements of legislation and there was no potential risk to animals. There were no animals experiencing any avoidable pain, distress, or suffering." Source: FSA Animal Welfare Non-Compliance Data: Explanatory Note, page 3. Available at: <https://fsa-catalogue2.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/AW+Non-compliance+Supporting+Final.pdf>.

²⁷ The average number of slaughterhouses in England and Wales between 2016 and 2022 has been estimated as 230 based on reports from DEFRA that in 2018 there were a total of 248 slaughterhouses which decreased to 211 in 2022. Source: DEFRA's Results of the 2022 FSA Slaughter Sector Survey in England and Wales (August 2022), page 8. Available at: <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/62f0eec1d3bf7f75b305fbab/Results-of-the-2022-FSA-Slaughter-Sector-Survey-in-England-and-Wales.pdf>.

Chart 13: Annual percentage change in Critical and Serious Non-Compliance Incidents²⁸



Non-Compliance Incidents by species

Between 2016 and 2019, poultry were affected by the majority of Non-Compliance Incidents (56% on average), followed by pigs, cattle and calves, sheep and "other" animals.

Chart 14: Non-Compliance Incidents by species as a percentage of annual Non-Compliance Incidents²⁹

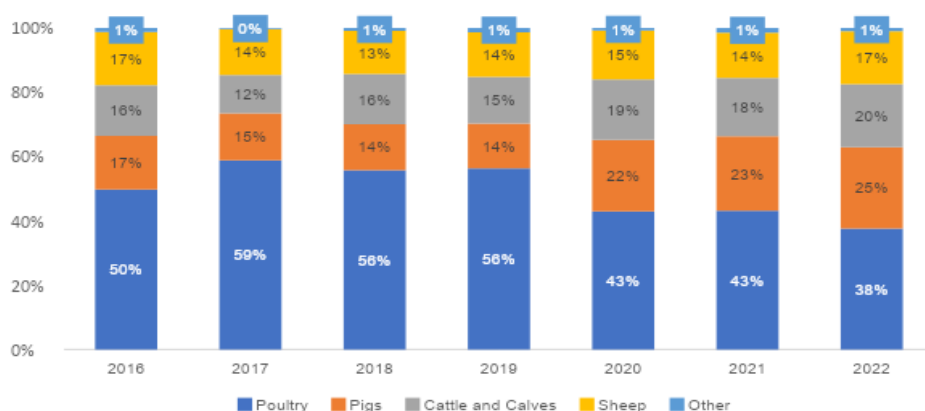
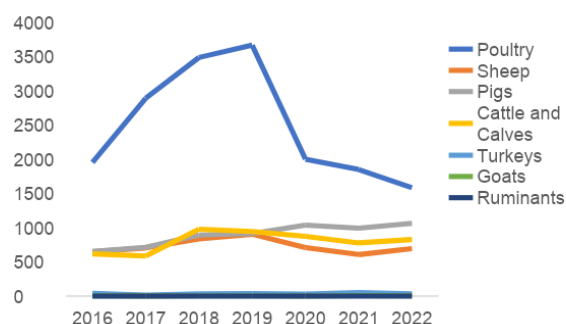


Chart 15: Non-Compliance Incidents by species



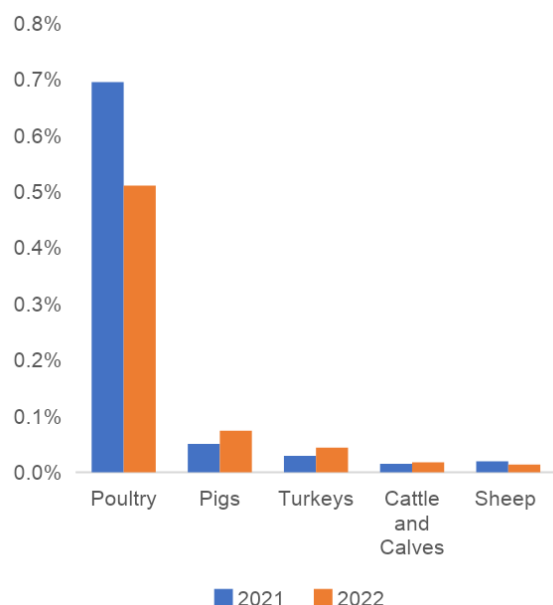
²⁸ The segment 'Other' in Chart 13 relates to goats, turkeys, ruminants and Non-Compliance Incidents where the species was classified as 'N/A'.

²⁹ The segment 'Other' in Chart 14 relates to goats, turkeys, ruminants and Non-Compliance Incidents where the species was classified as 'N/A'.

There was a sharp decline in the number of Non-Compliance Incidents affecting poultry of 45% between 2019 and 2020. Since then, the total number of Non-Compliance Incidents experienced by poultry has continued to decline at an annual rate of -11%.³⁰ However, poultry still experience over a third of the total number of annual Non-Compliance Incidents. During the same period, there have been average year-on-year increases in the number of Non-Compliance Incidents experienced by pigs (1%), and decreases of -3% for cattle and calves, and -1% for sheep.

It should be noted that a report of a single Non-Compliance Incident can relate to multiple animals. Since 2021, the FSA has published data on the number of animals involved in each Non-Compliance Incident.

Chart 16: Percentage of animals affected by Non-Compliance Incidents in comparison to the total animal population³¹



Between 2021 and 2022, over 2.1 million poultry were affected by reported Non-Compliance Incidents. In comparison, the total number of sheep, pigs, cattle and calves, and turkey affected was under 28,000. Poultry therefore accounted for 99% of the animals involved in Non-Compliance Incidents.³²

When the number of animals affected by Non-Compliance Incidents is considered in comparison to the total population of farmed animals, a higher proportion of poultry are affected (0.6% on average) in comparison to pigs, turkey, sheep, and cattle and calves.

Recommendation: Improving poultry and pig welfare in farms, during transport and at slaughterhouses in England and Wales, and identifying problem areas to reduce the number of Non-Compliance Incidents experienced by poultry and pigs, must be a priority for the FSA, Defra, APHA and local authorities.

³⁰ A year-on-year reduction of 8% in 2021 and 14% in 2022.

³¹ The percentage provided for sheep is approximate as the data available for the sheep population also includes lambs, whereas the data available for the number of critical and serious non-compliance incidents is for sheep only. Similarly, the percentage provided for turkeys is approximate as the data available for the turkey population also includes ducks, geese and other poultry, whereas the data available for the number of critical and serious non-compliance incidents is for turkeys only.

³² Between 2021 and 2022, 34 goats were also involved in Non-Compliance Incidents, but comparative data on the total farmed animal population of goats is not readily available for comparative purposes and goats have therefore not been included in Chart 16.

Non-Compliance Incidents by location

Between 2016 and 2022, 93% of Non-Compliance Incidents occurred either on farm or during transport. This is followed by Non-Compliance Incidents at slaughter (3%), in a lairage (2%) and at locations classified as "other" (2%).

Chart 17: Non-Compliance Incidents by location

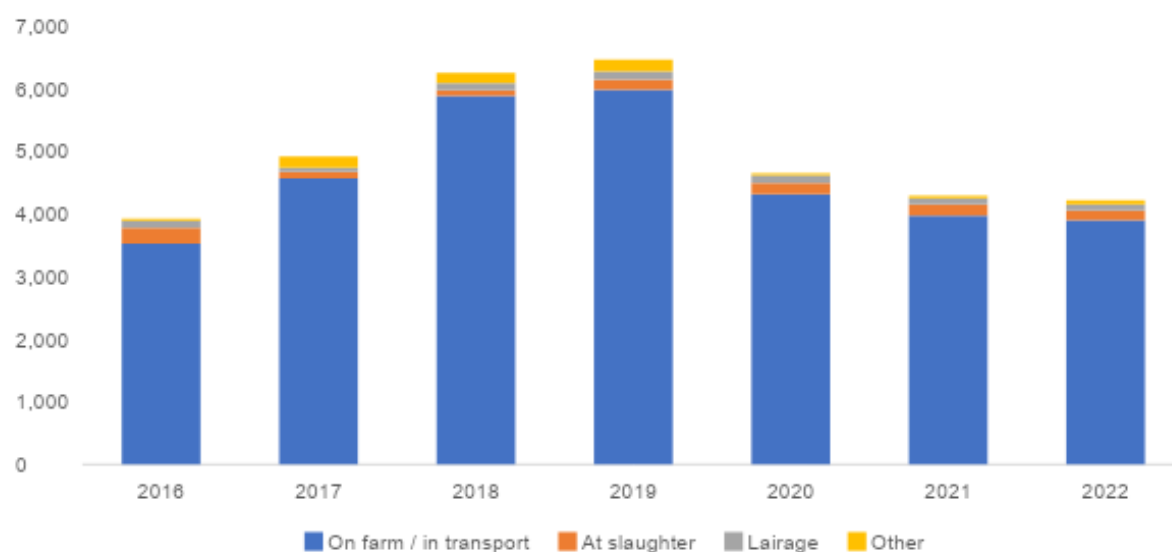
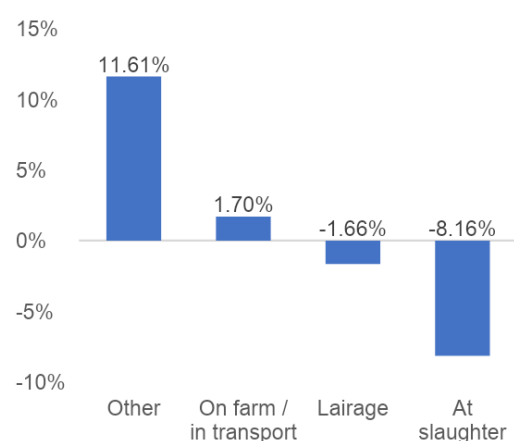


Chart 18 shows the annual rate of growth of Non-Compliance Incidents by location between 2016 and 2022. Between 2016 and 2019, the number of Non-Compliance Incidents occurring at farms / in transport increased at an annual rate of 19%. However, a significant decrease of 28% occurred between 2019 and 2020, and the total number of these Non-Compliance Incidents has continued to fall at an annual rate of 5%.

Chart 18: Annual growth rate of Non-Compliance Incidents by location (2016-2022)

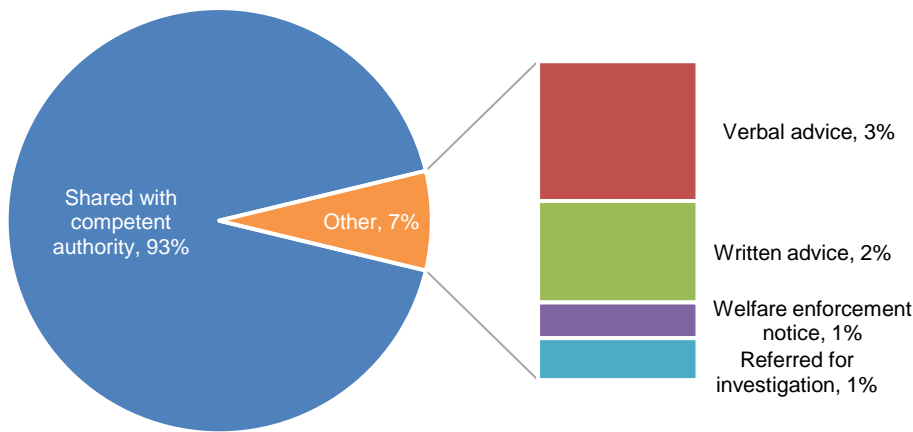


Enforcement actions taken in response to Non-Compliance Incidents

For each Non-Compliance Incident, a corresponding enforcement action was taken. Between 2016 and 2022, an average of 93% of Non-Compliance Incidents were dealt with by being shared with the competent authority responsible for incidents originating on farm or during transport.³³

³³ As a proportion of all actions taken, the number of incidents shared with the competent authority has generally remained flat since 2016.

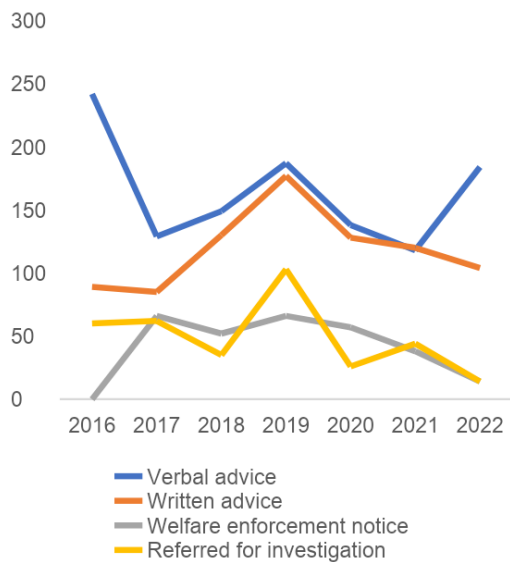
Chart 19: Enforcement actions taken in response to Non-Compliance Incidents (2016-2022)³⁴



Other Enforcement Actions accounted for 7% of total actions over the same period, the majority of which were verbal and written advice.

Hygiene improvement notices and remedial action notices accounted for less than 0.03% of total enforcement actions between 2016 and 2022. These enforcement actions have therefore been excluded from Charts 20, 21 and 22.

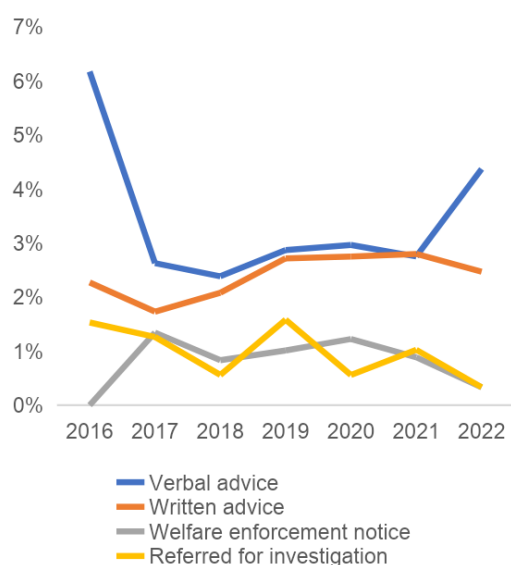
Chart 20: Number of Other Enforcement Actions³⁵



³⁴ Remedial action notices and hygiene improvement notices have not been included in the Chart as the actions have not been used since 2017 and accounted for 0.03% of total actions taken between 2016 and 2022.

³⁵ Remedial action notices and hygiene improvement notices have not been included in the Chart as the actions have not been used since 2017 and accounted for 0.03% of total actions taken between 2016 and 2022.

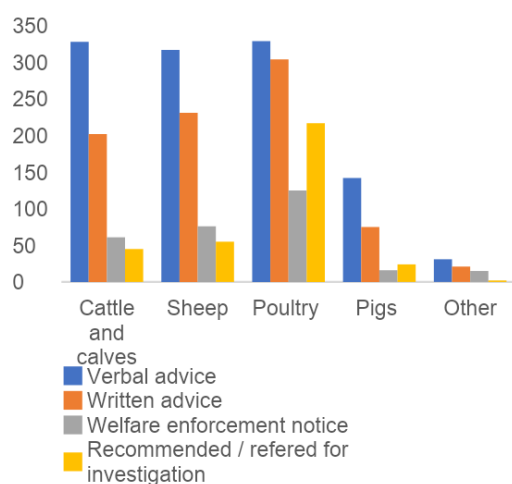
Chart 21: Other Enforcement Actions as a proportion of all enforcement actions³⁶



There was a peak in the number of Other Enforcement Actions in 2019, which reflects the same peak in the total number of Non-Compliance Incidents. Since then, there has generally been decreasing use of Other Enforcement Actions, reflecting the fall in the total number of Non-Compliance Incidents.

The number of Other Enforcement Actions imposed varied depending on the species involved in the Non-Compliance Incident. For example, poultry were affected by over 50% of Non-Compliance Incidents between 2016 and 2022, whereas only 37% of Other Enforcement Actions related to poultry. Sheep accounted for 26%, cattle and calves for 24% and pigs for 10%.

Chart 22: Other Enforcement Actions by species (2016-2022)³⁷



Recommendation: To ensure parity between species, the FSA should encourage a consistent approach to the utilisation of enforcement actions when non-compliance incidents occur in slaughterhouses in England and Wales throughout its operational guidance and training.

³⁶ Remedial action notices and hygiene improvement notices have not been included in the Chart as the actions have not been used since 2017 and accounted for 0.03% of total actions taken between 2016 and 2022.

³⁷ The data for species classified as 'other' in the Chart includes goats, ruminants and 'other' as listed in the source data.

Food Standards Scotland (FSS) is responsible for animal welfare enforcement in approved slaughterhouses in Scotland and publishes monthly animal welfare data.

Total number of incidents in Scotland

Between 2017 and 2022, there were 2,131 reports of Potential Risk Incidents (i.e. category 3) and Serious Risk Incidents (i.e. category 4) occurring at slaughterhouses operating in Scotland.³⁹

During this period there has been a general decline in the total number of Risk Incidents overall, which fell from 460 in 2017 to 320 in 2022. This represents a decline of 30% across the six-year period. Chart 23 breaks down the number of Risk Incidents between Serious Risk Incidents and Potential Risk Incidents.

Chart 23: Total number of Serious Risk Incidents and Potential Risk Incidents



Chart 23 shows that the number of Serious Risk Incidents has fallen much more slowly than Potential Risk Incidents. In the six-year period, Potential Risk Incidents fell by 44%, whereas Serious Risk Incidents declined by only 16%.

Breakdown by species

Cattle accounted for over half (57%) of all Risk Incidents at Scottish slaughterhouses between 2017 and 2022. Pigs (15%), sheep (15%) and poultry (14%) accounted for the vast majority of the remaining Risk Incidents. Goats accounted for two incidents (0.1%), whereas turkeys, ruminants and calves all accounted for zero Risk Incidents.

³⁸ Source: FSS Animal Welfare Data. Available at: <https://www.foodstandards.gov.scot/publications-and-research/open-data-portal/animal-welfare-data>.

³⁹ The FSS defines Potential Risk Incidents as incidents that represent a potential risk to animal welfare with no evidence of pain and suffering and Serious Risk Incidents as incidents that represent an Imminent Risk to animal welfare and evidence of pain and suffering. Source: FSS Animal Welfare Data. Available at: <https://www.foodstandards.gov.scot/publications-and-research/open-data-portal/animal-welfare-data#dataset-downloads-more>.

Chart 24: Total number of Risk Incidents by species (2017-2022)

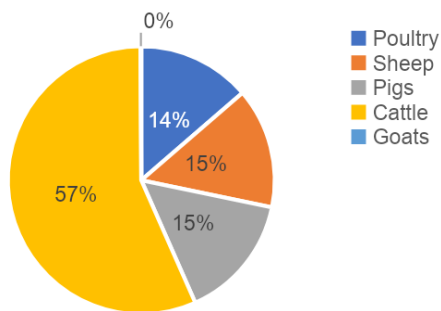
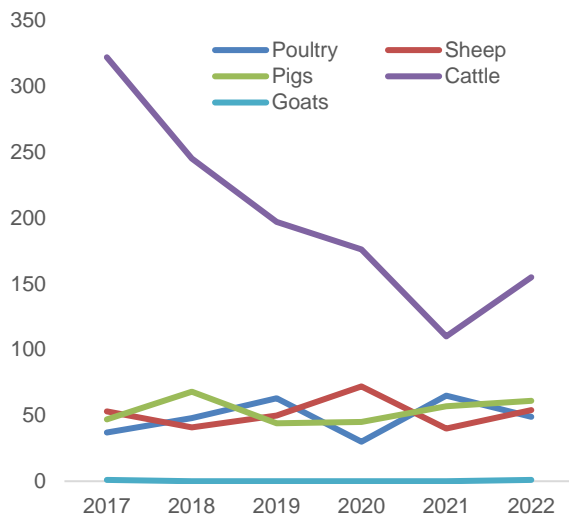


Chart 25: Total number of Risk Incidents by animal over time



Whilst cattle have accounted for the majority of Risk Incidents since 2016, there has been a substantial decrease of more than 50% in the number of Risk Incidents affecting cattle during the period. Risk Incidents involving cattle have decreased from 322 in 2017 to 155 in 2022. This has driven the decline in the total number of Risk Incidents demonstrated in Chart 25.

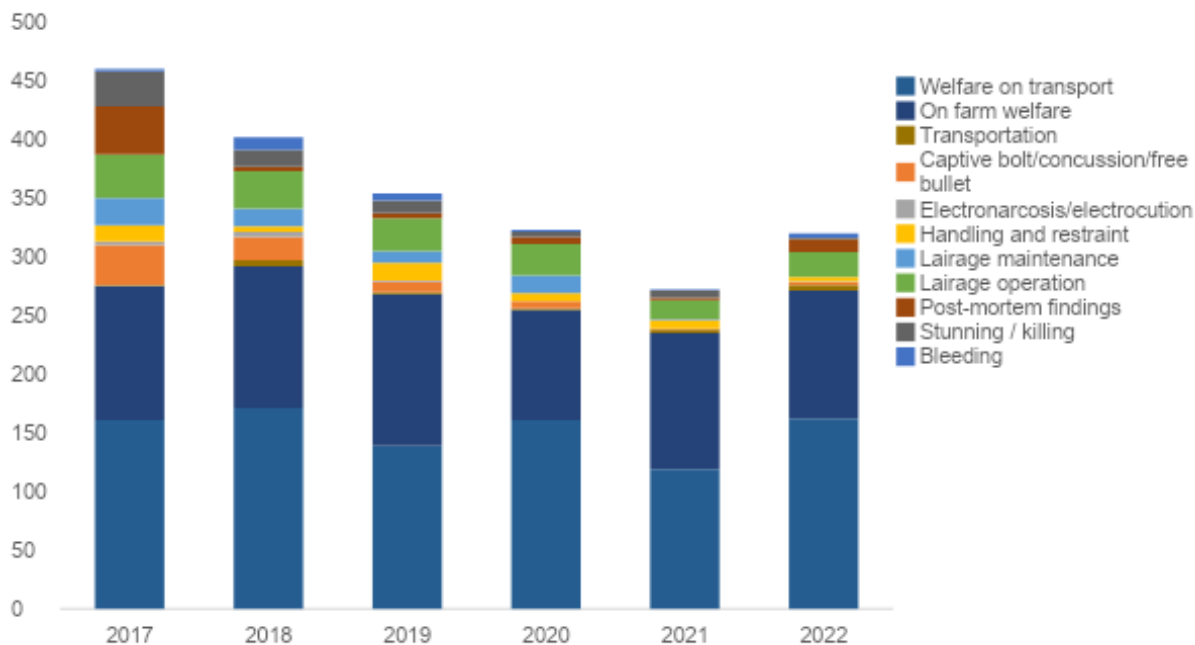
Across the same period, the number of sheep, pigs and poultry involved in Risk Incidents has remained relatively constant (averaging approximately 50 incidents per year).

Recommendation: The FSS, Scottish Government Animal Health and Welfare Division and local councils should make improving cattle welfare in Scottish farms, during transport and at slaughterhouses, and maintaining the reduction of Risk Incidents involving cattle, a priority.

Breakdown by type/location

Like in England and Wales, incidents occurring on the farm (recorded as 'on farm welfare') and during transportation account for a significant majority of total Risk Incidents (increasing from 60% in 2017 to 85% in 2022). The breakdown of incident type/location is shown in Chart 26 below.

Chart 26: Total number of incidents by type/location over time



Action taken

For each Risk Incident identified, a corresponding action was taken. The most common type of action taken was to inform another body, typically the Animal Health Office (40% of incidents) or Trading Standards (39%). The next most common action was to issue advice. 9% of incidents resulted in verbal advice being given, whilst a smaller 6% of incidents resulted in written advice. Welfare enforcement notices are issued in only 2% of incidents. The use of these notices has declined significantly in recent years, with only one issued in 2022.

Recommendation: The FSA, Defra and FSS should identify problem areas and implement an action plan to address common welfare issues to actively reduce the high proportion of welfare issues occurring on farms and during transport that are identified at British slaughterhouses. Public interest data relating to outcomes of Non-Compliance Incidents shared with the competent authority should be published annually. In light of the high proportion of welfare issues occurring on farm and during transport, the adequacy of the animal welfare inspection and oversight regimes for these locations should be independently reviewed as a matter of urgency.

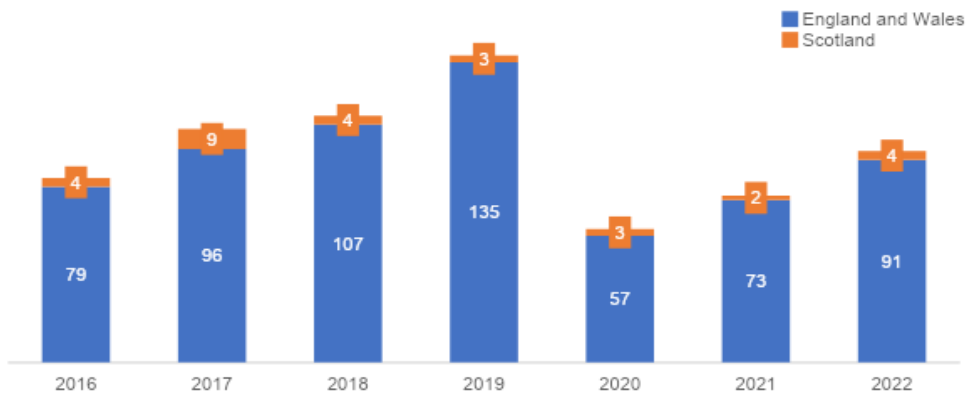
Data relating to farmed animal welfare inspections and oversight at farms, in transport, at markets and places of sale should be reported annually.

Farmed animal welfare enforcement action by local authorities in Britain⁴⁰

Between 2016 and 2022, there were a total of 667 reported convictions secured by local authorities under animal health and welfare legislation across England, Wales and Scotland. Of these, 638 reported convictions were secured by local authorities in England and Wales, while 29 convictions were secured by local councils in Scotland.

⁴⁰ Source: Animal Health Act 1981: expenditure and prosecutions reports. Available at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/?term=Animal%20Health%20Act%201981%3A%20%20Expenditure%20and%20Prosecutions%20&c at=filter&page=1>.

Chart 27: Total animal health and welfare convictions secured by British local authorities



Prosecutions in England and Wales

Prosecutions in England and Wales steadily increased from 2016 to 2019. However, a significant drop occurred in 2020, likely due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Since 2020, prosecutions have been growing by 26% year-on-year.

In England and Wales, the largest categories of convictions across 2016-2022 related to animal welfare issues, followed by animal by-products issues, and animal traceability (ID, movement and records). Other convictions related to issues such as disease control and feed hygiene.

Chart 28: Type of convictions (England and Wales, 2016-2022)

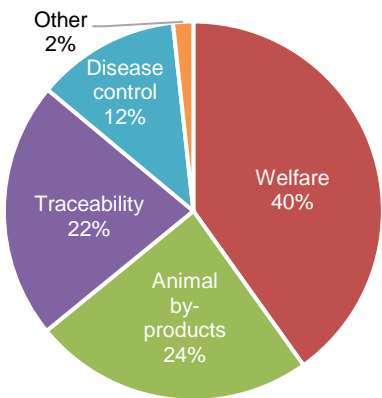
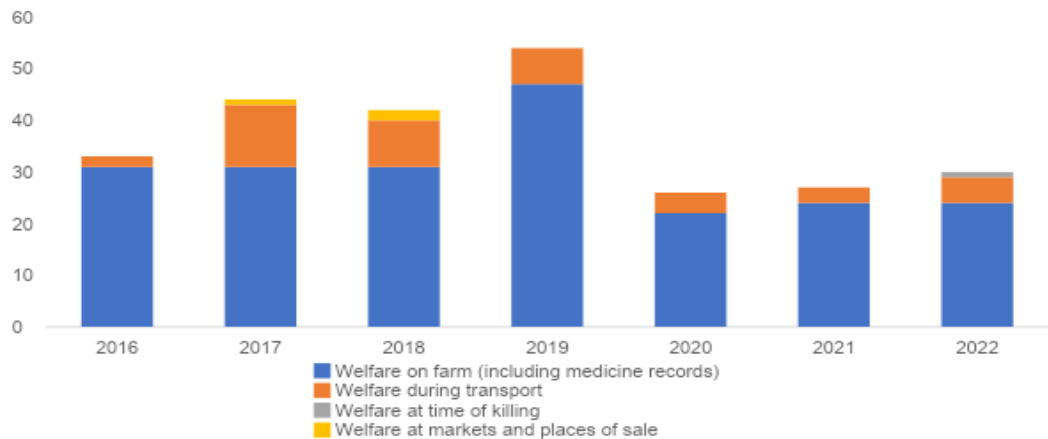


Chart 29: Breakdown of welfare convictions by type (England and Wales)

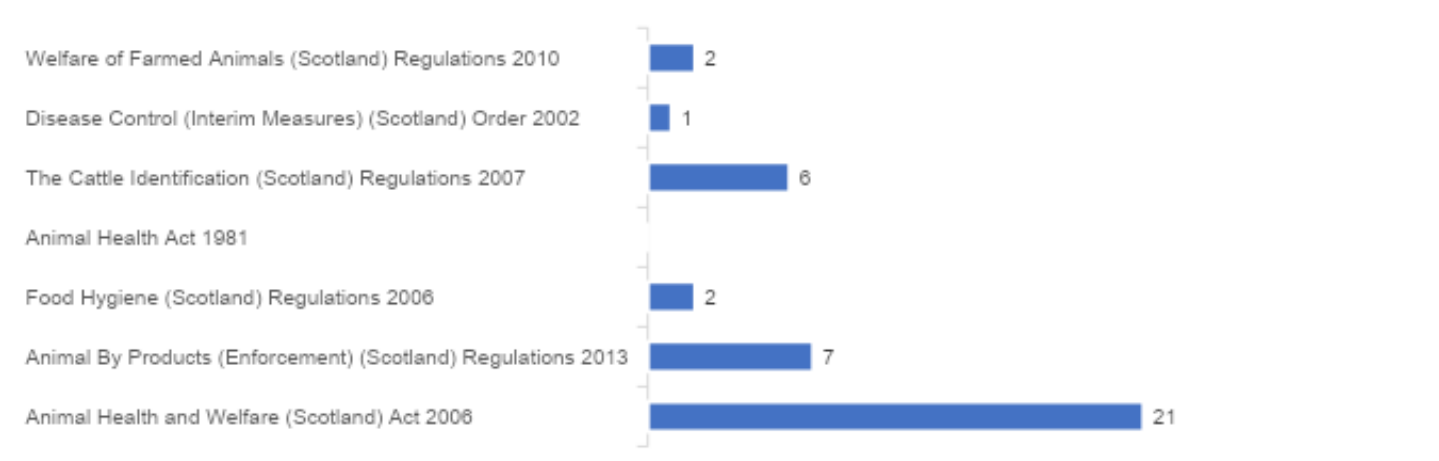


Of the welfare convictions, the majority (82%) related to welfare issues on the farm (including medicine reports), followed by welfare during transport (16%).

Convictions in Scotland

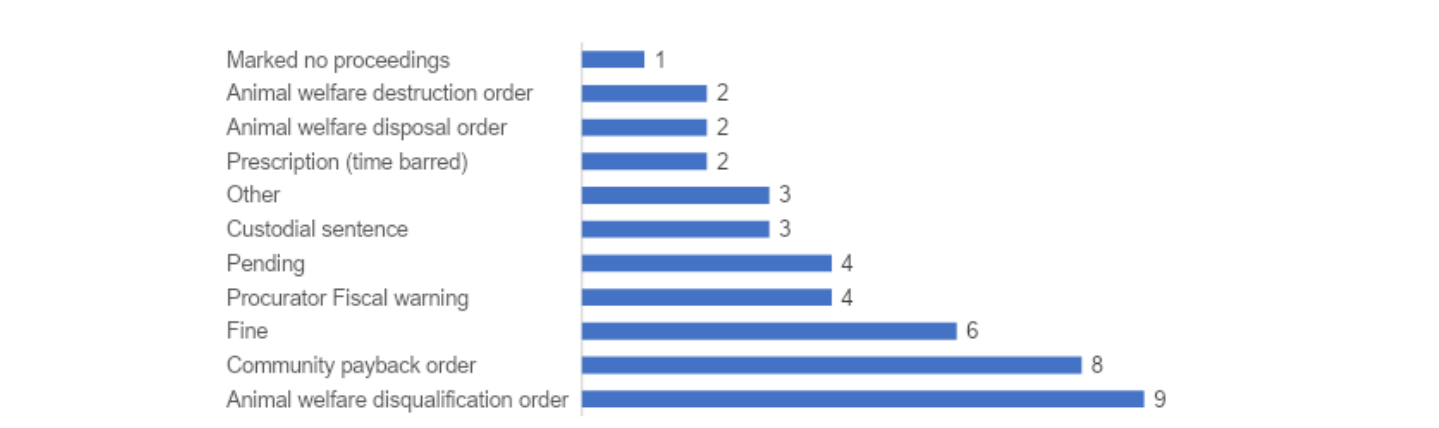
There were 29 reported convictions in Scotland between 2016 and 2022. The majority of convictions were made under the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006, followed by convictions made under regulations relating to animal by-products.

Chart 30: Type of convictions by legislation (Scotland, 2016-2022)



Where a conviction was made, the most common penalties imposed were an animal welfare disqualification order, a community payback order, or a fine.

Chart 31: Penalty / outcome of convictions (Scotland, 2016-2022)

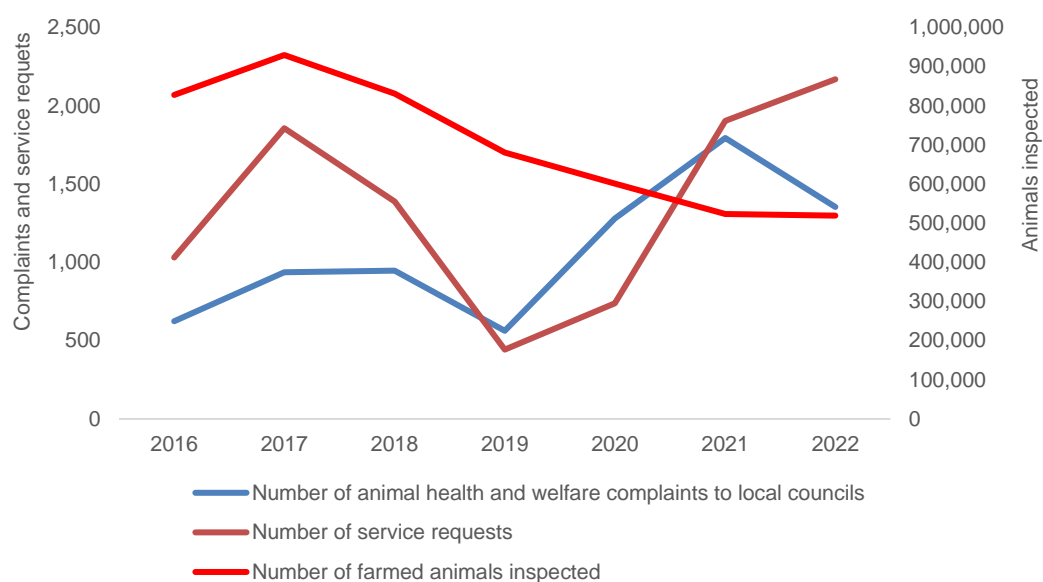


Other enforcement action in Scotland

While reported convictions in Scotland were low, there was a significant amount of other enforcement action taken by local councils in Scotland.

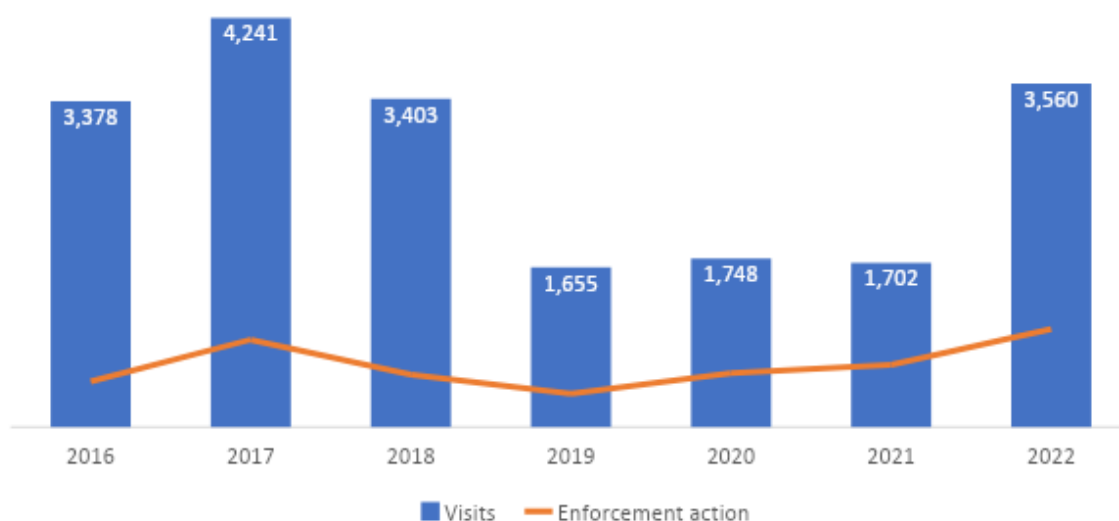
Between 2016 and 2022, there was an average of 1,072 animal health and welfare complaints made to local councils, 1,362 service requests, and 702,000 animals inspected each year. As shown in Chart 32 below, while the number of complaints and service requests made have fluctuated, the number of animals inspected has declined at a rate of -8% year-on-year.

Chart 32: Complaints and service requests vs animals inspected (Scotland)



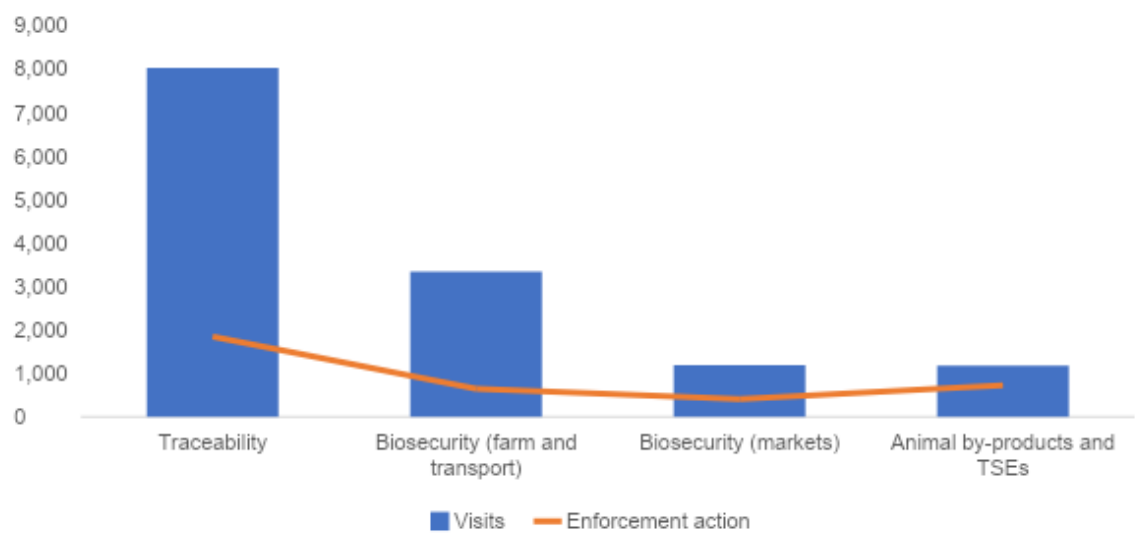
Nearly 20,000 welfare visits were made by local councils across 2016 and 2022. The majority of these related to animal welfare on the farm (50%), followed by in transport (30%) and at markets (20%). An average of 2,800 animal welfare visits were undertaken each year. Across the same period, an average of 781 enforcement actions relating to animal welfare were taken each year. As set out in Chart 33 below, while the number of welfare visits dropped materially in 2019-2021, enforcement action remained more stable. This resulted in the proportion of enforcement action taken compared to visits increasing across these years, at a peak of 46% in 2021.

Chart 33: Welfare visits and enforcement action taken (Scotland)



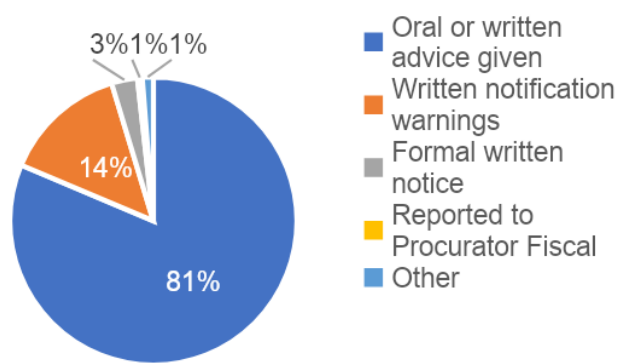
In relation to animal health, nearly 14,000 visits were undertaken between 2016 and 2022, resulting in around 2,500 enforcement actions being taken. The majority of animal health visits and enforcement actions related to traceability issues. Whilst visits related to animal by-products and TSEs (transmissible spongiform encephalopathies) made up the smallest number, they saw the highest proportion of enforcement actions taken (which reflected 37% of visits).

Chart 34: Animal health visits and enforcement action taken (Scotland, 2016-2022)



Across both animal health and welfare, oral or written advice made up the majority of enforcement action taken (81%), followed by written notification warnings (14%). Formal written notices and reports to the Procurator Fiscal made up less than 5% of enforcement action taken.

Chart 35: Type of enforcement action taken (Scotland, 2016-2022)



Enforcement & oversight of farmed animal welfare in Northern Ireland

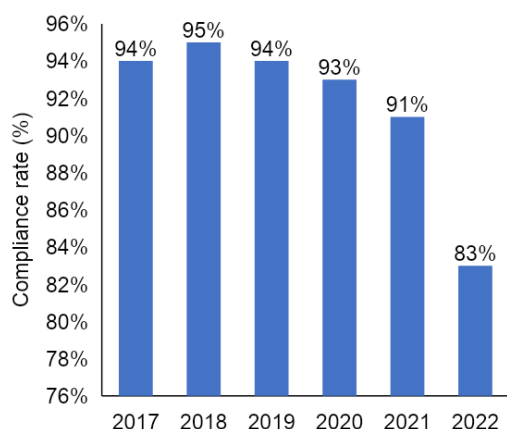
In Northern Ireland, the welfare of animals is protected by the Welfare of Animals Act (Northern Ireland) 2011. Since 2016, DAERA has produced annual reports,⁴¹ which include a summary of welfare compliance statistics for farmed animals. These reports set out the annual number of welfare complaints received about production sites (farms), the number of site inspections undertaken and the outcome of any enforcement action taken.

⁴¹ Source: DAERA Animal Welfare Statistics for years 2016-2022. Available at: <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/animal-welfare-statistics>.

Farmed animals compliance incidents – Northern Ireland

Between 2017 and 2022, there were approximately 7,326 farmed animal production site inspections carried out in Northern Ireland.⁴² Around 700 inspections were carried out following complaints, both anonymous and non-anonymous; inspections were also performed at randomly selected sites. Between 2017 and 2022, 163 breaches were identified. Whilst this is an average of 23 breaches per year, the number has increased year-on-year since 2019 at an annual rate of 6%.

Chart 36: Annual compliance rate across sites



The average compliance rate across the period was 92%, but this has steadily decreased across the period analysed at an annual rate of -3%. In 2022, the compliance rate dropped to 83%, which was a year-on-year decrease of 8 percentage points when compared to 2021.⁴³

Recommendation: DAERA should urgently investigate the sharp decline in the non-compliance rate at Northern Irish farms in 2022 and take remedial action to address this.

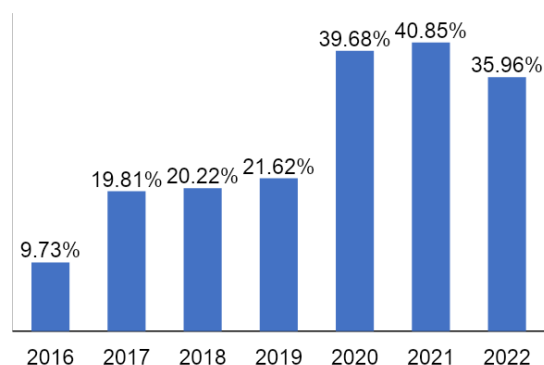
On average, breaches were identified in 25% of inspections following a complaint. The percentage of breaches identified during inspections has increased in recent years and, across the period, had an annual growth rate of 6%. Of the breaches identified between 2016 and 2021, a higher number were detected in inspections following anonymous complaints, than following non-anonymous complaints.⁴⁴ This was roughly proportionate to the number of each type of complaint received.

⁴² Exact figures for 2016 are not available and so have been excluded.

⁴³ Source: DAERA Animal Welfare Report 2022. Available at https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/daera/Animal%20welfare%20service%20delivery%20statistical%20bulletin%202022_0.PDF.

⁴⁴ Source: Data for 2022 does not differentiate between inspections following anonymous complaints and inspections following non-anonymous complaints.

Chart 37: Percentage of inspections (following a complaint) where a welfare breach was detected

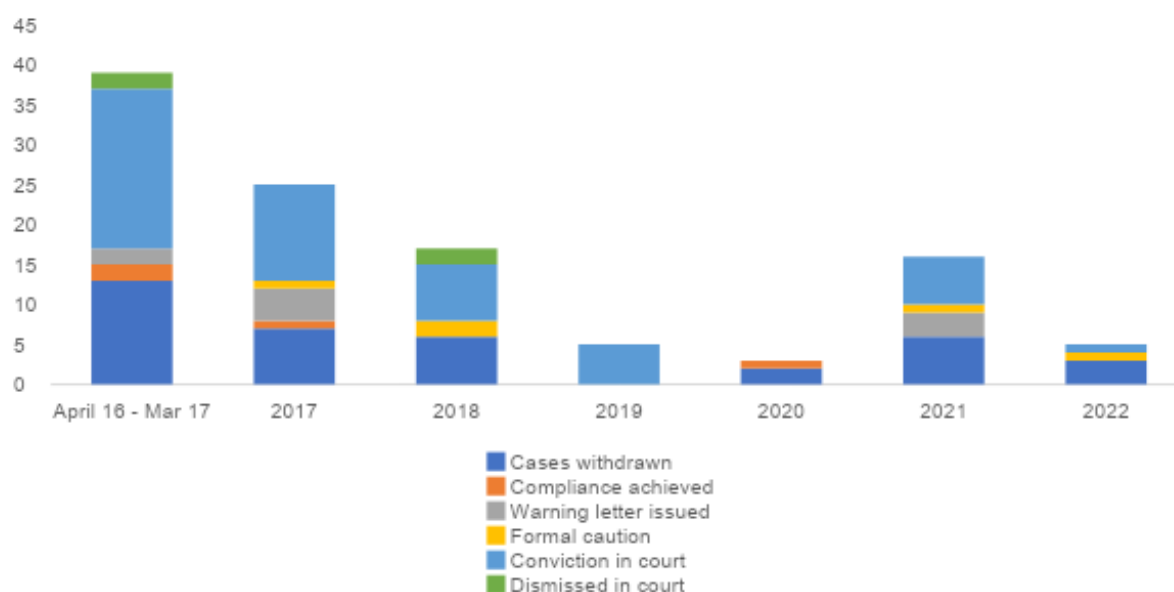


Outcome of investigations – Northern Ireland

Of the investigations closed between 2016 and 2022⁴⁵, a third of cases were withdrawn. Notwithstanding the increase in the number of breaches identified, the number of other actions recorded (i.e. compliance, warning letter, formal caution, conviction or court dismissal) have as a whole declined at an annual rate of -35%.

The most common outcome was a court conviction, largely due to a high number of individuals being convicted between 2016 and 2017. Only one individual was convicted in 2022. Compliance being achieved was recorded in only four cases, and did not occur at all in the last two years of the period.

Chart 38: Farmed animal welfare investigation outcomes



Recommendation: The recent decline in outcomes for farmed animal welfare cases, and corresponding increase in identified breaches, should be urgently investigated by DAERA.

⁴⁵ The data for 2016 commences in April 2016.

Enforcement & oversight of welfare during transport in the UK

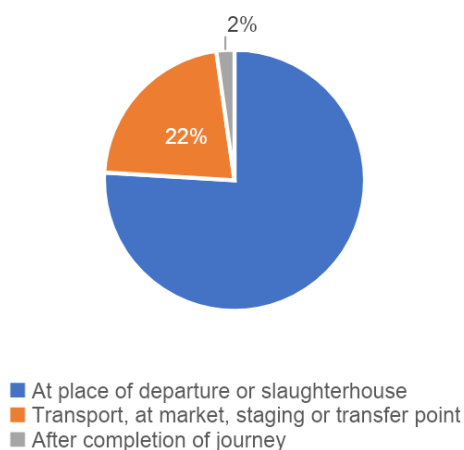
Prior to the UK's exit from the EU, the UK was required to report on the number of inspections of animals in transport under EU legislation.⁴⁶ As these reports were only publicly available up to 2018, the analysis in the following section is based on the relevant data from between 2016 and 2018.⁴⁷

Location of EC Non-Compliance Incidents

The majority of the EC Non-Compliance Incidents during transport between 2016 and 2018 were identified at the place of departure or at slaughterhouses. This reflects the higher number of inspections carried out at departure points and slaughterhouses.

On average between 2016 and 2018, over 1 billion inspections were reportedly carried out at places of departure and at slaughterhouses, in comparison to over 99,000 during transport, at market, staging or at transfer points. Less than 3,000 document checks were completed after the journey.

Chart 39: EC Non-Compliance Incidents by Location (2016-2018)



Although a higher number of incidents would be expected at slaughterhouses due to the higher number of inspections, the number of EC Non-Compliance Incidents is not proportionate to the number of inspections carried out. If it was, EC Non-Compliance Incidents at the place of departure or slaughterhouse would account for 99.9% of all incidents, rather than 76%.⁴⁸

This may suggest that EC Non-Compliance Incidents are more likely to occur during transport, at market, staging or transfer point, or after completion of the journey. Alternatively, the lower proportion of EC Non-Compliance Incidents identified at places of departure and slaughterhouses may be a result of fewer animals being checked – or being recorded as being checked - in each inspection, as set out in Chart 40.

⁴⁶ Article 27 of Council Regulation (EC) No 1/2005 on the protection of animals during transport.

⁴⁷ Source: Inspection reports from EU countries, UK. Available from: https://food.ec.europa.eu/animals/animal-welfare/animal-welfare-practice/animal-welfare-during-transport/inspection-reports-eu-countries_en.

⁴⁸ Non-Compliance Incidents occurring during transport, at market, staging or transfer point would account for 0.01% of EC Non-Compliance Incidents, and after completion of the journey would account for 0.0003% of EC Non-Compliance Incidents.

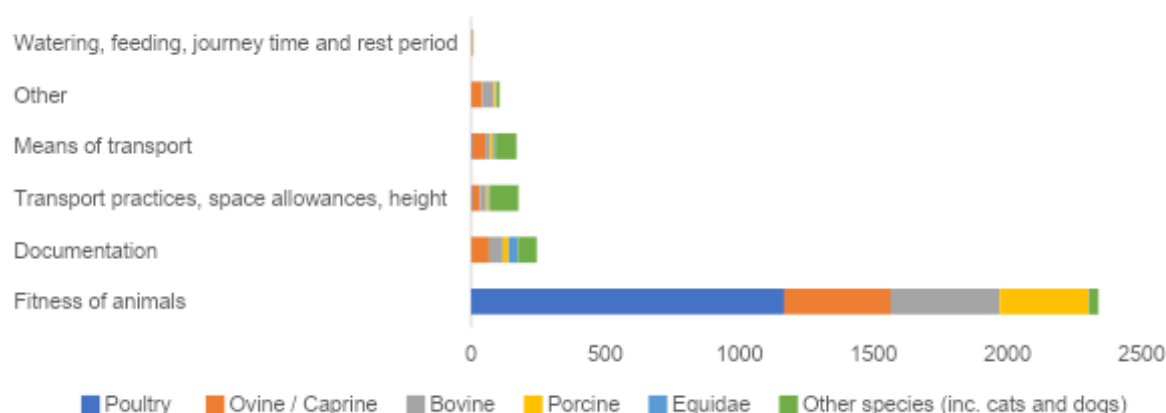
Chart 40: Average number of animals checked per inspection (2016-2018)

Species	At point of departure or slaughterhouse	During transport, at market, staging or transfer point
Poultry	1.1	14,598.8
Other	395.6	1,538.9
Porcine	1.2	65.3
Ovine	1.0	32.6
Bovine	1.2	11.5
Cats and dogs	0	4.8
Equidae	2.4	3.4

In relation to every species for which data was available, a higher number of animals were checked in inspections during transport, at market, staging or transfer point. Excluding poultry, on average, between 2016 and 2018, the number of animals checked during each inspection was over 17 times higher. In relation to poultry, the significant variance in the number of animals inspected between the two locations suggests that the data may be unreliable.

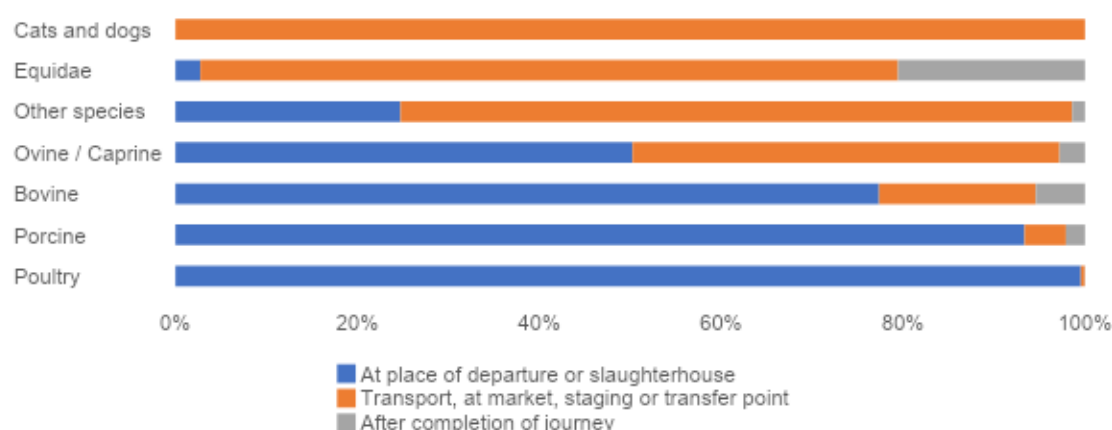
Type of EC Non-Compliance Incident identified

Chart 41: Average number of annual EC Non-Compliance Incidents during transport by incident type (2016-2018)



The majority of EC Non-Compliance Incidents recorded between 2016-2018 related to the fitness of the animal to travel (77%). There were similar levels of EC Non-Compliance Incidents in the majority of the other classifications: documentation (8%), transport practices, space allowances and height (6%), means of transport (6%), and incidents classified as 'other' (4%). In comparison, 0.3% of EC Non-Compliance Incidents related to watering, feeding, journey time and rest periods.

Chart 42: Average proportion of EC Non-Compliance Incidents during transport by location by species (2016-2018)



The location at which EC Non-Compliance Incidents were identified varied significantly depending on the species. EC Non-Compliance Incidents in relation to poultry, porcine and bovine animals in the vast majority of instances were identified at the place of departure or slaughterhouse. Whereas EC Non-Compliance Incidents in respect of cats and dogs, equidae and animals classified as 'other' predominantly occurred during transport, at market, staging or at a transfer point, which is to be expected. In respect of ovine / caprine animals, EC Non-Compliance Incidents were roughly split between place of departure or slaughterhouse and transport, at market, staging or transfer point.

Penalties imposed

On average, penalties were imposed in response to a quarter of the welfare in transport incidents that occurred between 2016 and 2018. This percentage varied considerably depending on the location of the incident.

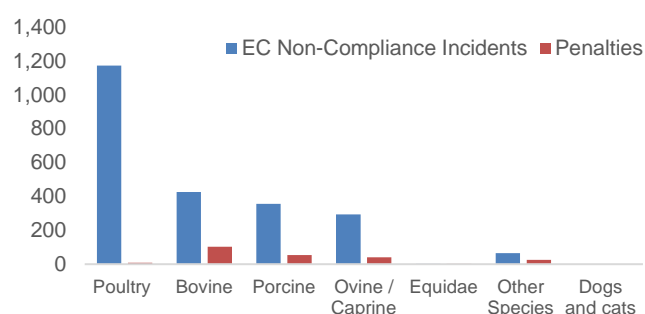
In respect of EC Non-Compliance Incidents occurring at the place of departure or at slaughterhouses, on average, penalties were imposed in 10% of cases. Such penalties accounted for 32% of all penalties imposed, despite incidents at the place of departure or slaughterhouse accounting for 76% of EC Non-Compliance Incidents.

Penalties were much more likely to be imposed in relation to EC Non-Compliance Incidents occurring during transport, at market, staging or at a transfer point. Such penalties accounted for 66% of total penalties imposed between 2016 and 2018 and were imposed in response to 73% of incidents. In relation to incidents recorded after completion of the journey, penalties were imposed in 23% of cases, which is 2% of the total penalties.

Chart 43: Average number of annual Non Compliance Incidents by location and penalties imposed (2016-2018)



Chart 44: Average number of annual EC Non-Compliance Incidents at place of departure or slaughterhouse by species and penalties (2016-2018)



The likelihood of penalties being imposed varied significantly depending on the species involved in the EC Non-Compliance Incident, as set out in Charts 44 to 46. For example, whilst poultry accounted for 39% of animals involved in EC Non-Compliance Incidents, on average only 9 penalties were imposed annually between 2016 and 2018. This is equivalent to 1% of all penalties imposed.

Chart 45: Average number of annual EC Non-Compliance Incidents during transport, at market, staging or transfer point by species and penalties imposed (2016-2018)

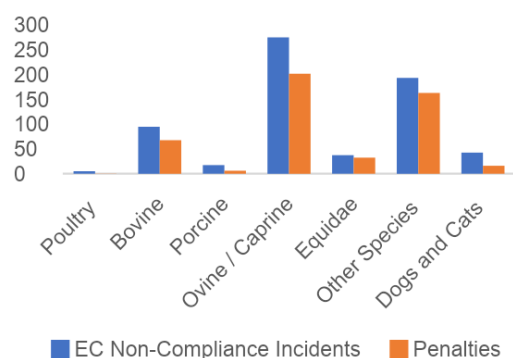
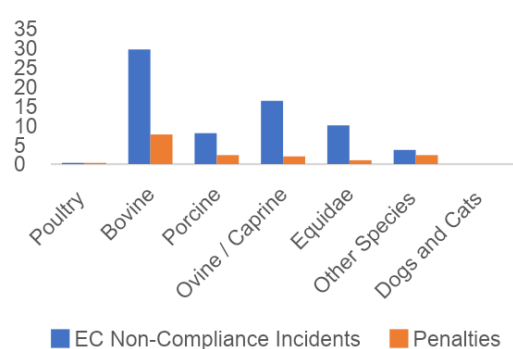


Chart 46: Average number of annual EC Non-Compliance Incidents after completion of journey by species and penalties imposed (2016-2018)



Recommendation: Given the lack of recent data about welfare in transport, APHA should resume annual reporting as a matter of urgency to enable the identification of current welfare trends.

Farmed animal welfare monitoring by private farm assurance schemes

Red Tractor

Some compliance information⁴⁹ is released on a quarterly basis by Assured Farm Standards, which administers the Red Tractor certification scheme. In the event that a member of the Red Tractor assurance scheme commits a "serious non-compliance" or a "minor non-conformance"⁵⁰ with the scheme standards, they will be suspended from the assurance scheme unless they correct it within 28 days. The suspension will last for up to three months, after which time, if the member is unable to show that they are fully compliant with the assurance scheme, their membership will be withdrawn.

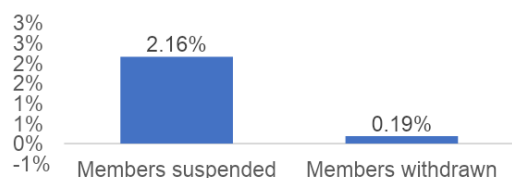
The information that is publicly available is limited, but between January 2021 and March 2023, of Red Tractor's approximate 45,000 assurance scheme members (which includes members that produce crops), on average there were 1,012 (2%) suspended members and 87 (0.2%) members withdrawn each quarter.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Source: Red Tractor, Compliance. Available at: <https://redtractorassurance.org.uk/about-red-tractor/compliance/>.

⁵⁰ More information about what could constitute a non-conformance is available here: <https://redtractorassurance.org.uk/tips-to-avoid-non-conformances/>.

⁵¹ Due to the discrepancy in the date range provided for the April to July 2023 data, this data has been excluded for the purpose of preparing Chart 48.

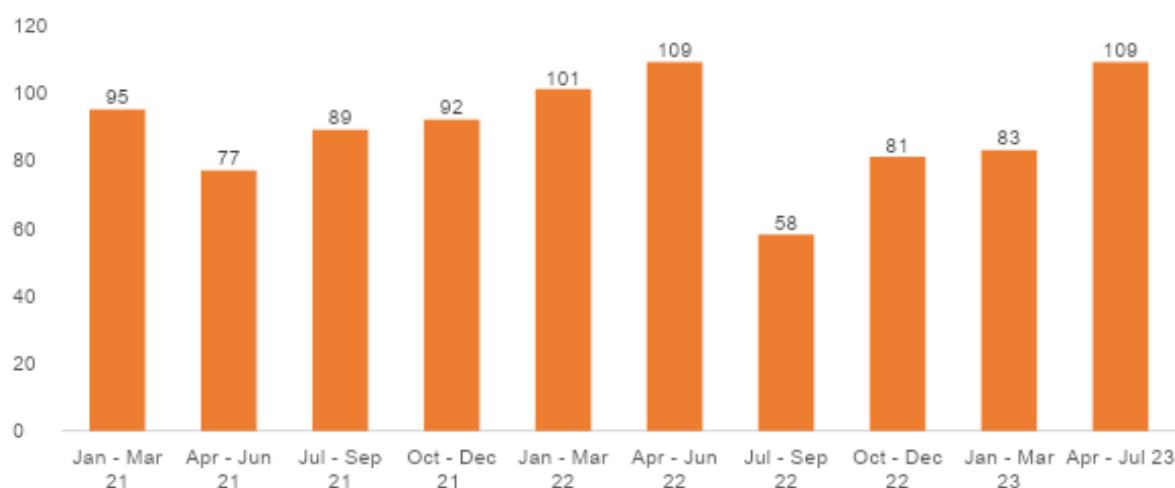
Chart 47: Average Red Tractor member suspensions and withdrawals per quarter (January 2021 – March 2023)⁵²



Between October to December 2021 and January to March 2022, there was a 47% increase in the number of members suspended. Since January 2022, there has been 1,125 member suspensions on average. The reason for this increase cannot be determined with publicly available data.

There has not been any significant corresponding increase to the average number of members withdrawn from the scheme since January 2022 (87 members per quarter).⁵³ In fact, the lowest number of members withdrawn from the assurance scheme in any quarter during the period analysed occurred between July to September 2022 (58 members).

Chart 48: Red Tractor assurance members withdrawn from the scheme per quarter⁵⁴



Whilst this information is limited, it is necessary to include due to the pervasive role of private assurance bodies in inspecting and upholding welfare standards on British farms.⁵⁵

Recommendation: As farm assurance bodies play a key role in inspecting UK farms and upholding standards, to the extent that regulatory burdens may be reduced through 'earned recognition', there is a significant public interest in such bodies publishing transparency information. Any scheme through which it is possible to earn recognition should be obliged to report welfare compliance information to the statutory regulator and to publish publicly available welfare compliance reports on an annual basis.

⁵² Red Tractor approximates that it has 45,000 farmers as members across different sectors, of which around 38,000 involve animal farming. This Chart shows the average number of members suspended and withdrawn each quarter as a percentage of all 45,000 members.

⁵³ This average excludes the data for April to July 2023 given the period was not proportionate to the other quarterly data published by Red Tractor.

⁵⁴ The data provided by Red Tractor for April to July 2023 is provided for four months, rather than quarterly.

⁵⁵ See Annex A for a short introduction to private assurance schemes and animal welfare in the UK.

4. Animals used in research

UK oversight of animals used in research - who does what?

Welfare of animals used in scientific procedures	England	Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986	All living vertebrates, including certain immature forms and any living cephalopod used for experimental or other scientific purposes.	Home Office	ASRUEnforcement@homeoffice.gov.uk
	Wales				
	Scotland			Department of Health NI	028 9052 2214 / health.protection@health-ni.gov.uk
	Northern Ireland				

Great Britain

The Animals in Science Regulation Unit (ASRU) publishes annual statistics outlining the number of scientific procedures carried out on living animals in Great Britain each year. It also publishes annual reports, which outline non-compliance incidents within establishments that are licensed to carry out scientific procedures on animals.

Number of scientific procedures on living animals

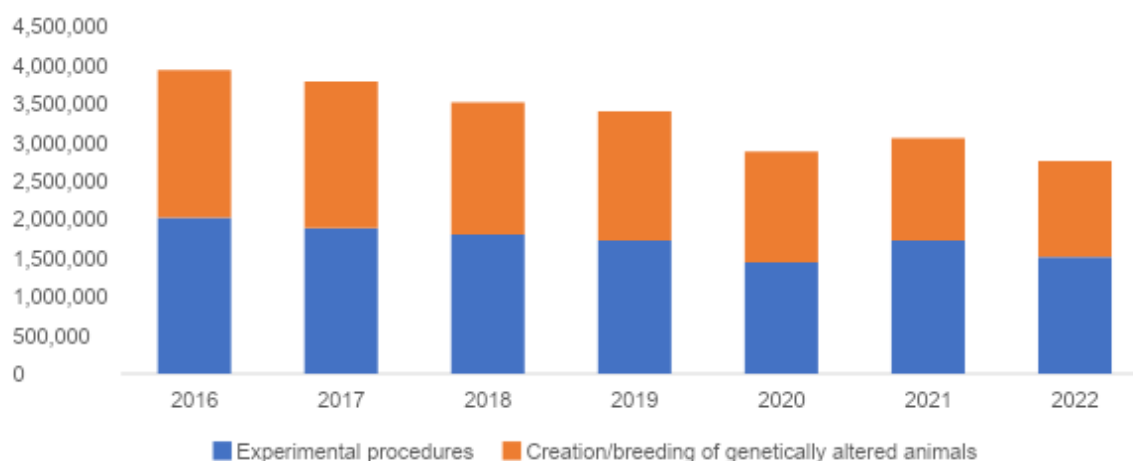
Between 2016 and 2022, more than 23.3 million scientific procedures were carried out on living animals⁵⁶ in Great Britain. The majority of these procedures were carried out on mice, fishes, birds or rats and consisted of:

- experimental procedures (over 12.1 million procedures), which involves the use of animals in scientific studies for purposes such as basic research, the development of medical treatments and procedures, and regulatory and non-regulatory testing of pharmaceutical products, chemical substances, biocides and other kinds of product, including medical devices; and
- the creation and breeding of genetically altered animals (over 11.2 million procedures), which involves the breeding of animals whose genes have been mutated or modified, so that their genetically altered offspring may be used in experimental procedures.

Over this period, there has been an average -6% year-on-year decline in the number of scientific procedures carried out annually in Britain, with the number of procedures carried out for the creation and breeding of genetically altered animals falling at a greater rate (-7%) than the number of experimental procedures (-4%).

⁵⁶ Statistics are recorded and reported on the number of animals used in scientific procedures in accordance with the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986. These are defined as 'protected animals' for the purposes of the act, which is defined as any vertebrate other than man and any cephalopod. Scientific procedures involving invertebrate animals are not reported and recorded.

Chart 49: Scientific procedures in Great Britain⁵⁷



This recent decline follows a period of sustained overall growth in the number of scientific procedures conducted between 2001 and 2016.⁵⁸

In 2018, the Home Office published additional statistics related to 2017, which included the number of non-genetically altered animals bred but who were killed or died without being used in procedures, and the number of animals subject to tissue sampling for the purposes of genotyping.⁵⁹ These figures are not routinely reported. They show that in 2017, 1.81 million non-genetically altered (non-GA) animals were bred for scientific procedures but were killed or died without being used in procedures. From July – December 2017, genotyping was reported in connection with 705,000 animals.

Recommendation: Additional figures published relating to 2017 suggest the overall number of animals used in science in Britain is significantly higher than currently reported in the ASRU annual statistics. The number of animals used in science overall – including the number of animals bred but not used in scientific procedures - should be reported annually as a matter of significant public interest. We additionally recommend that final outcomes for animals (such as death, killing or rehoming) be reported.

Inspections by the ASRU

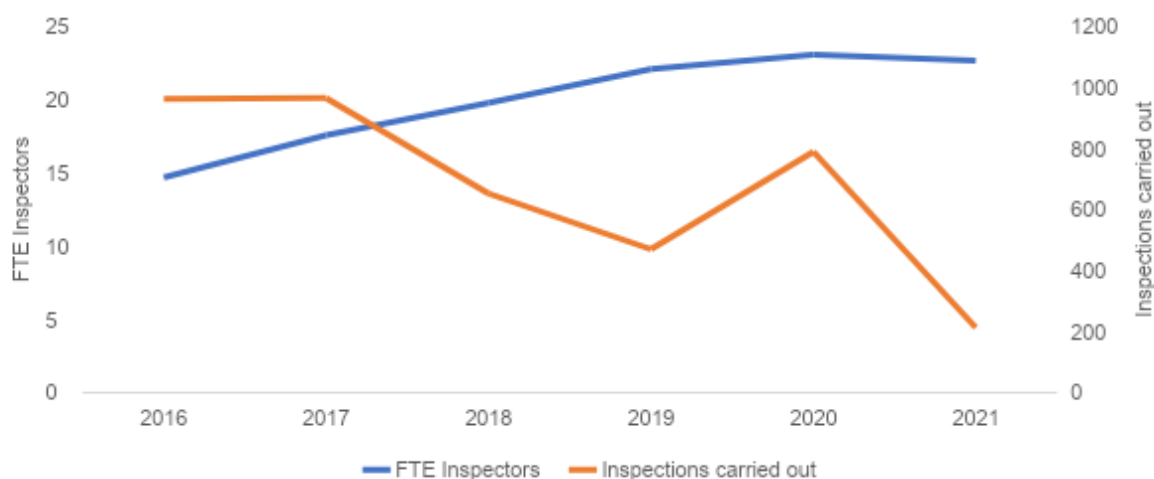
Whilst the number of full-time equivalent (FTE) inspectors in Great Britain (averaged across the relevant year) has risen from 14.7 in 2016 to 22.7 in 2021 (an annual growth rate of 9%), there has been a significant decline in the number of inspections carried out by the Animals in Science Regulation Unit (ASRU) across the same period; the number of inspections have declined at an annual rate of 26% from 963 in 2016 to 214 in 2021. This means that, on average, each FTE inspector is carrying out fewer inspections than in previous years.

⁵⁷ Source: Annual Statistics of Scientific Procedures on Living Animals, Great Britain 2022: Data Tables. Available at: <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/654cb1e2b9068c00130e75f7/annual-statistics-scientific-procedures-living-animals-2022-tables.ods>.

⁵⁸ The recent fall in total scientific procedures in Great Britain appears to coincide with EU Directive 2010/63/EU coming into effect, which changed the way in which scientific procedure data was collected from 2014 onwards. Additionally, between 2016 and 2021, Northern Ireland contrastingly saw a slow overall rise in scientific procedures on living animals. Source: Statistics of scientific procedures on living animals in Northern Ireland. Available at: <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/statistics-scientific-procedures-living-animals-northern-ireland>.

⁵⁹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/additional-statistics-on-breeding-and-genotyping-of-animals-for-scientific-procedures-great-britain-2017>

Chart 50: FTE inspectors vs. inspections conducted⁶⁰



There was an increase in the number of inspections in 2020, which appears linked to the introduction of virtual/remote inspections by the ASRU during the Covid-19 pandemic. However, in 2021, the number of ASRU inspections fell to its lowest level since 2016. In both of these years, most inspections were carried out remotely. The overall decline in the number of inspections appears consistent with the direction the ASRU has taken with its operating model in recent years,⁶¹ with greater resource now reportedly devoted to in-depth, structured evaluations in relation to a smaller number of overall cases.⁶²

Non-compliance cases – general findings

The ASRU has powers to make formal findings that licensed establishments or individual licence holders are not complying with their regulatory obligations and, ultimately, impose sanctions.⁶³ Although the number of non-compliance cases fell from 45 in 2016 to 28 in 2018 (a fall of 38%), they have remained much higher since, with an annual average of 110 non-compliance incidents between 2019 and 2021.

Recommendation: The ASRU should urgently investigate reasons for the substantial increase in non-compliance cases since 2019 and take remedial action to reduce such incidences.

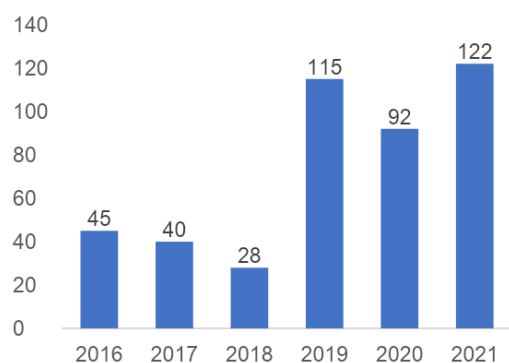
⁶⁰ Source: ASRU Annual Reports. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/animals-in-science-regulation-unit-annual-reports>.

⁶¹ The Bridging Ways of Working model was introduced with the aim of aligning the operating model with leading regulatory practice, separating compliance assurance and licensing functions and ensuring inspectors are no longer assigned to specific establishments. Source: ASRU Annual Reports 2019 to 2021. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/63516fbae90e077686596d9c/14.148_HO_Scientific_Procedures_ARA_web_.pdf.

⁶² In contrast, a total of 28 inspections were undertaken by just one part-time inspector (i.e. 0.5 FTE Inspectors) in Northern Ireland in 2021. Source: Statistics of Scientific Procedures on Living Animals Northern Ireland 2021. Available at: https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/health/aspa-statistics-scientific-procedures-on-living-animals-ni-2021_0.pdf.

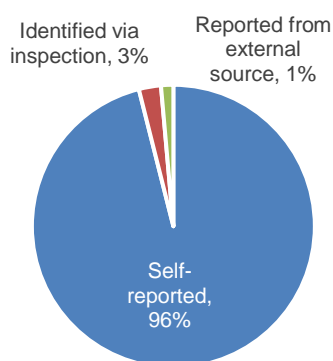
⁶³ These obligations are set out in the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986.

Chart 51: Number of non-compliance cases⁶⁴



The increase in non-compliance cases between 2019 and 2021 is in contrast to the falling number of inspections undertaken by the ASRU.⁶⁵ However, inspections are only one way in which a non-compliance incident may be discovered by the ASRU. Between 2018 and 2021, 3% of non-compliance cases were identified via inspections by the ASRU. The vast majority of non-compliance incidents were self-reported by licence-holders.⁶⁶

Chart 52: Reporting of non-compliance cases (2018-2021)



Non-compliance cases – number of animals affected

The ASRU publishes data on the number of animals affected by non-compliance incidents. However, the data shows that a small number of non-compliance cases (involving large numbers of animals) can have a significant impact on overall trends. An example can be seen from the large increase in animals affected by non-compliance in scientific procedures in 2019, which was largely driven by a small number of cases involving the unauthorised overbreeding of fish and mice.⁶⁷

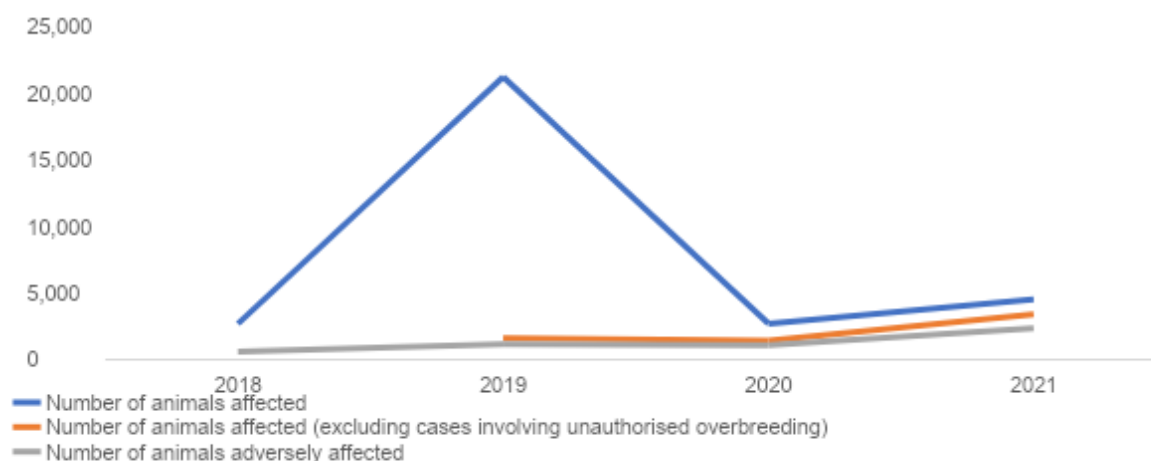
⁶⁴ Source: ASRU Annual Reports. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/animals-in-science-regulation-unit-annual-reports>.

⁶⁵ See Chart 50.

⁶⁶ Self-reporting occurs where a licence holder reports an incident to the ASRU pro-actively. Source: Animals in Science Regulation Unit Annual Reports 2019 to 2021. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/63516fbae90e077686596d9c/14.148_HO_Scientific_Procedures_ARA_web_.pdf.

⁶⁷ Unauthorised overbreeding occurs where animals are overbred in excess of numbers authorised by the relevant licence. In 2019, 19,642 animals were affected across just eight non-compliance cases involving unauthorised overbreeding. In each instance, had requests been made to authorise the additional numbers of animals bred, these authorisations would have been granted.

Chart 53: Animals affected by non-compliance cases⁶⁸



However, even when incidents involving unauthorised overbreeding are excluded from the data, the number of animals affected by non-compliance incidents shows a significant increase in cases from 1,600 in 2019 to 3,400 in 2021 (an increase of 113%). The number of animals who have been adversely affected by non-compliance incidents has also increased.

Recommendation: Steps should be taken to identify reasons for the increase in the number of animals affected by non-compliance incidents and to actively reduce this.

Non-compliance cases – species affected

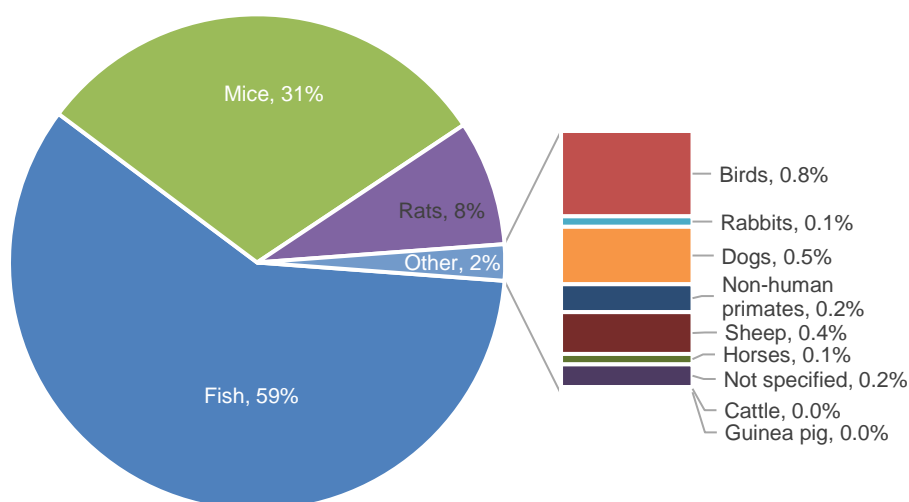
As noted above, the majority of scientific procedures are carried out on mice, fishes, birds or rats,⁶⁹ and the majority of non-compliance cases pursued by the ASRU involve these four types of animals. Additionally, 55 specially protected animals (i.e. dogs, non-human primates and horses) were also found to have been affected by non-compliance incidents between 2019 and 2021.⁷⁰ Of these specially protected animals, the number of non-compliance incidents affecting non-human primates increased from 4 in 2019 to 10 in 2020 (and all 10 animals in 2020 were found to have been adversely affected).

⁶⁸ Total numbers are taken from non-compliance cases for which the numbers of animals involved were reported. No reliable directly comparable information on unauthorised overbreeding non-compliance cases was available for 2018. Source: Animals in Science Regulation Unit Annual Reports. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/animals-in-science-regulation-unit-annual-reports>.

⁶⁹ By way of example, in 2022, 96% of scientific procedures on living animals involved these species, which is consistent with previous years. Source: Annual Statistics of Scientific Procedures on Living Animals Great Britain 2022. Available at: <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/654ca8c6e70413000ffc4a65/annual-statistics-scientific-procedures-living-animals-2022.pdf>.

⁷⁰ These species are specially protected under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986.

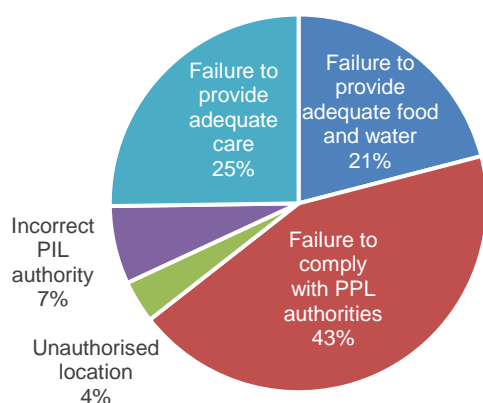
Chart 54: Average proportion of species affected by non-compliance cases (2019-2021)⁷¹



Types of non-compliance identified

The majority of non-compliance cases between 2019 and 2021 involved failing to provide adequate food and water (21% of cases), failing to provide adequate care (25% of cases), or failing to comply with PPL authorities (44%).⁷² By way of example, a breach of a PPL may involve carrying out more procedures than authorised or killing an animal using an unauthorised method.

Chart 55: Average proportion of the types of non-compliance (2019-2021)⁷³



Recommendation: Addressing the three most common incident types (1. failing to provide adequate food and water, 2. failing to provide adequate care and 3. failing to comply with PPL authorities) through improved training and more robust remedial action should be an urgent priority for the ASRU.

⁷¹ Source: Animals in Science Regulation Unit Annual Reports. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/animals-in-science-regulation-unit-annual-reports>.

⁷² The programme of work in which scientific procedures are carried out must be authorised via a project licence (PPL). Separately, the place at which scientific procedures are carried out must hold an establishment licence (PEL) and those carrying out scientific procedures must hold a personal licence (PIL).

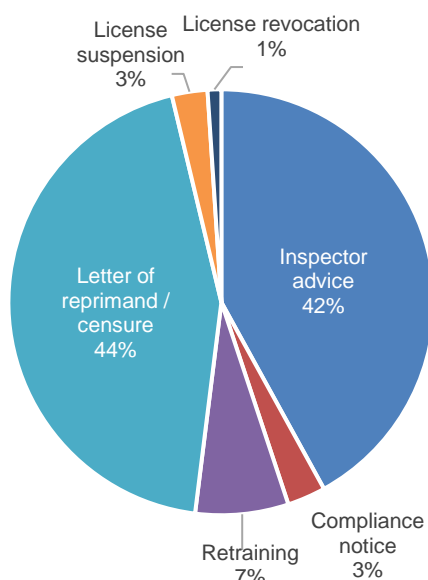
⁷³ It is difficult to reach objective conclusions in relation to data preceding 2019 due to inconsistent data variables. For data on 2019 to 2021, see Animals in Science Regulation Unit Annual Reports 2019 to 2021. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/63516fbae90e077686596d9c/14.148_HO_Scientific_Procedures_ARA_web_.pdf.

Enforcement actions taken in response to non-compliance

The ASRU has powers to impose sanctions for non-compliance, and more than one type of enforcement action can be taken in response to a single instance of non-compliance.

In general, less serious non-compliance cases may result in the ASRU issuing inspector advice⁷⁴ (inspector advice was issued in 42% of non-compliance cases between 2019 and 2021). By way of example, this type of action has typically been taken in cases where mice were not provided with adequate food or water, but steps were taken to address the non-compliance incident at the next scheduled check.

Chart 56: Types of enforcement action taken in response to non-compliance (2019-2021)⁷⁵



In other cases, the ASRU may issue letters of reprimand or censure⁷⁶ (issued in 44% of non-compliance cases between 2019 and 2021). This action has been taken, for instance, in a recent case where mice were left in a dark chamber for longer than authorised under the establishment's project licence.

Very few licences are revoked or suspended as a result of non-compliance (accounting for less than 4% of enforcement action taken by the ASRU). Cases where licences have been revoked or suspended have generally been reserved for the most serious of cases, for example, cases involving multiple licence breaches. No non-compliance cases have been referred for prosecution during the period analysed.⁷⁷

Northern Ireland

In Northern Ireland, the Department of Health is responsible for issuing licenses to conduct scientific procedures on living animals and for collecting and publishing annual statistics. Between 2016-2022, on average, 26,351 procedures have been carried out on living animals in Northern Ireland each year, with 155,859 procedures carried out overall. Although numbers fell slightly in 2022, generally, the number of procedures carried out has increased on average by 5.46% annually.

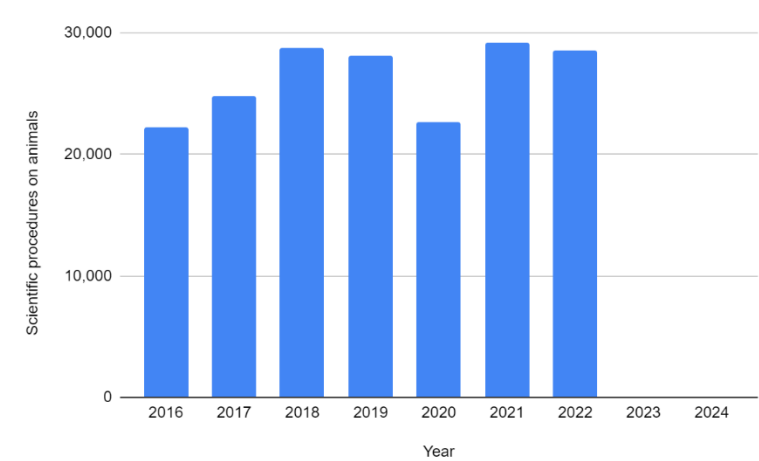
⁷⁴ Inspector advice involves an inspector stating what provision was breached and what is expected in the future to prevent recurrence. This action is taken where there are no/minor avoidable adverse animal welfare consequences, the facts are agreed, there was no intention to subvert statute and the risk of recurrence is deemed low.

⁷⁵ Source: Animals in Science Regulation Unit Annual Reports 2019 to 2021. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/63516fbae90e077686596d9c/14.148_HO_Scientific_Procedures_ARA_web_.pdf.

⁷⁶ Letters of reprimand relate to instances where a licensee has committed a breach. Letters of censure relate to instances where a non-licensee has contributed significantly to the breach.

⁷⁷ No prosecutions resulting from non-compliance cases were found from an analysis of publicly available data and desktop research.

Chart 57: Number of scientific procedures on animals per year (NI)



Like in Britain, the number of inspections carried out fell sharply in 2019 from a peak of 115 in 2018 to 22 in 2019. Remote inspections were also adopted in 2020 and, between 2020-2022, 37 remote inspections were carried out compared to 20 on-site inspections and one off-site inspection.

Unlike the Home Office, the Department of Health does not publish annual reports detailing service delivery by the regulator, including incidents of non-compliance by licence holders. However, a 2021 freedom of information request⁷⁸ shows that between 2017-2021, 13 breaches were recorded.

Recommendation: The Department of Health should begin reporting on non-compliance incidents annually. Achieving a year-on-year decrease in the number of scientific procedures carried out on live animals in Northern Ireland should be a priority for the Department of Health.

⁷⁸ <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/health/doh-foi-0376-2021.pdf>

5. Wild animals

Wildlife crime enforcement arrangements in the UK - who does what?

Hunting wild mammals with dogs	England	Hunting Act 2004	Wild mammals which have been bred or tamed for any purpose, those in captivity/confinement, those which have escaped or been released from captivity, and any mammal living wild that is pursued by one or more dogs (unless the hunting is exempt under sch 1 of the Act).	Police	If crime is in action, call 999. In all other cases, call 101.
	Wales				
	Scotland	Protection of Wild Mammals (Scotland) Act 2002	Hunting (including searching for or coursing) a wild mammal (excluding rodents and rabbits) which has escaped or been released from captivity or any mammal which is living wild (unless the hunting is exempt).	Police	If crime is in action, call 999. In all other cases call 101.
	Northern Ireland	No ban.	N/A	N/A	N/A
Badger crime	England	Protection of Badgers Act 1992 (as amended)	Crimes against badgers, including taking, injuring or killing badgers, cruelty to badgers, sett interference, selling or possessing live badgers, and marking / ringing badgers (unless an exemption authorised by a licence applies).	Police or Natural England (NE for breaches of licences to interfere with badger setts).	If crime is in action, call 999. In all other cases call 101 / wildlife@naturalengland.org.uk
	Wales			Police or Natural Resources Wales (for breaches of a licence to kill or take badger or interfere	If crime is in action, call 999. In all other cases call 101 / Wildlife@gov.wales or 0300 061 5920

				with a badger sett)	
	Scotland			Police or Nature Scot (for breaches of a licence)	If crime is in action, call 999. In all other cases call 101 / licensing@nature.scot or 01463 725 364
	Northern Ireland	The Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 (as amended)	Crimes against badgers, including intentional or reckless killing, injuring, taking or possession of a badger (live or dead), as well as damaging, destroying, obstructing or disturbing a badger sett (unless an exemption authorised by a licence applies).	Police or DAERA NIEA Wildlife Team (regarding licences)	999 in emergency or 101 for non-emergency / 028 9056 9558 or elmswildlife@daera-ni.gov.uk
Other wildlife crime	England	Wild Mammals Protection Act 1996; Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.	1996 Act: Any mammal which is not a "protected animal" under the Animal Welfare Act 2006 (N.B. a protected animal is one which: (a) is of a kind which is commonly domesticated in the British Islands; (b) is under the control of man whether on a permanent or temporary basis; or (c) is not living in a wild state. (s.2 AWA 2006)).	Police	If crime is in action, call 999. In all other cases call 101.
	Wales	Wild Mammals Protection Act 1996; Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.	1996 Act: Cruelty towards any mammal which is not a "protected animal" under the Animal Welfare Act 2006 (N.B. a protected animal is one which: (a) is of a kind which is commonly domesticated in the British Islands; (b) is under the control of man	Police / Natural Resources Wales	If crime is in action, call 999. In all other cases call 101. Non-current incidences of wildlife crime can be reported to Natural Resources Wales.

			whether on a permanent or temporary basis; or (c) is not living in a wild state. (s.2 AWA 2006)).		
	Scotland	Wild Mammals Protection Act 1996; Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.	1996 Act: Any mammal which is not a "protected animal" under the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006 (N.B. a protected animal is one which: (a) is of a kind which is commonly domesticated in the British Islands; (b) is under the control of man whether on a permanent or temporary basis; or (c) is not living in a wild state. (s.17 AHWA 2006)).	Police	If crime is in action, call 999. In all other cases call 101.
	Northern Ireland	The Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985	Deer of any species (and their hybrids), hare, pheasant, partridge, woodcock, snipe, red grouse, domestic fowls, turkeys, geese, ducks, guinea-fowls, pigeons, quails, any animal (other than a bird) which was living wild.	Police	If crime is in action, call 999. In all other cases call 101.
Illegal wildlife trade	England	The Control of Trade in Endangered Species Regulations 2018	Illegal purchasing; offering to purchase; acquiring for commercial purposes; using for commercial gain; displaying to the public for commercial purposes;	Police (National Wildlife Crime Unit) / Border Force National CITES Team / APHA CITES	If crime is in action, call 999. In all other cases, call 101 / ukwildlifecrime@nwcw.police.uk ; aphacomplianceteam@apha.gov.uk ; citesteam@homeoffice.gov.uk
	Wales				
	Scotland				

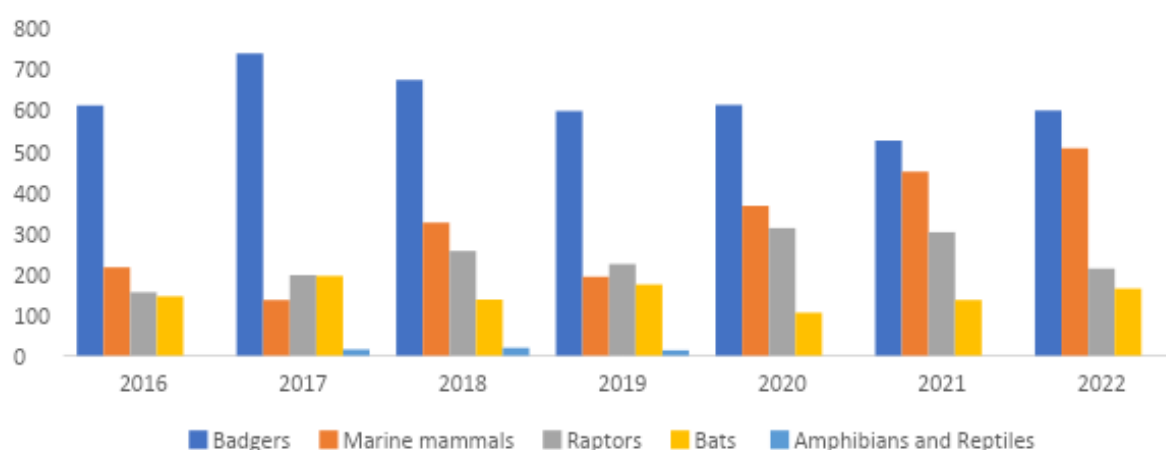
	Northern Ireland	selling; keeping for sale; offering for sale; transporting for sale of a CITES- listed species.	Compliance Team	
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Wildlife crime in England & Wales⁷⁹

Overview of crimes by species

Between 2016 to 2022, there were over 9,600 recorded incidents relating to wildlife in England and Wales.⁸⁰ The incidents involve amphibians and reptiles, badgers, bats, marine mammals, raptors and species subjected to hunting crimes. The actual figure is likely to be significantly higher due to reporting and data challenges.⁸¹ Incidents involving badgers were the most reported with a total of 4,365 incidents, followed by marine mammal crimes (2,195), raptor persecution (1,659), and bat crimes (976). Only 47 incidents were reported for amphibians and reptiles crimes because available data only captures incidents between 2017 to 2019.

Chart 58: Number of reported wildlife incidents by species in England and Wales



Recommendation: To aid with accurate data capture and resource targeting, all serious wildlife crimes should be made notifiable and recordable.

Badger crimes

Between 2016 to 2022, there were 4,365 badger incidents in England and Wales, with the most recent data from 2021 reporting 526 incidents, and 2022 reporting 600 incidents.⁸² Of the reported cases between 2016 to 2020, an average of 29% of incidents were referred to the Police.⁸³ The number of referrals to the police has steadily increased year-on-year, averaging 187 cases annually.

⁷⁹ Source: WCL Wildlife Crime Reports. Available at: <https://www.wcl.org.uk/wildlife-crime.asp>.

⁸⁰ In the absence of official estimates, the WCL's reports have relied on direct reports from members of the public to nature groups and subsequent engagement between nature groups, charities, NGOs, police forces and the Crown Prosecution Service.

⁸¹ Many wildlife crimes are not notifiable, which means they are not separately reported in national crime statistics.

⁸² The Badger Trust, RSCPA and League Against Cruel Sports and the Police reported 654 instances of badger crimes for 2021.

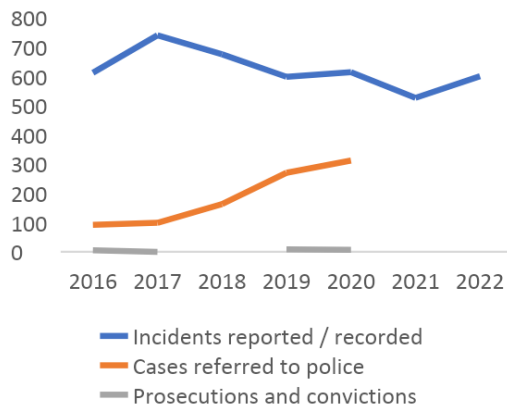
Source: WCL's Wildlife Crime Report (2022), page 4. Available at:

[https://www.wcl.org.uk/docs/Wildlife_Crime_Report_October_2023%20\(1\).pdf](https://www.wcl.org.uk/docs/Wildlife_Crime_Report_October_2023%20(1).pdf). However, this report has sought to rely on information for each year as represented in the corresponding year's Wildlife Crime Report published by WCL. As such, the figures for 2021 reflect the figures presented in the WCL's Wildlife Crime Report (2021), page 7. Available at:

https://www.wcl.org.uk/docs/assets/uploads/WCL_Wildlife_Crime_Report_2021_29.11.22.pdf.

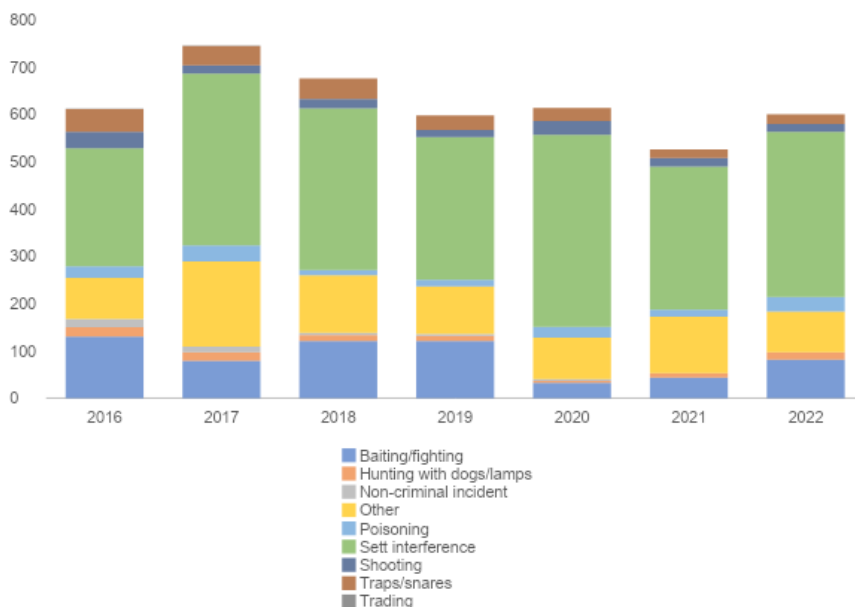
⁸³ Data on the number of cases referred to the Police is not available for 2021 or 2022.

Chart 59: Badger crimes⁸⁴



However, only approximately 2% of cases led to prosecution and conviction. There was a total of 20 convictions from 2016 to 2020.⁸⁵

Chart 60: Reported badger crime in England and Wales by offence type



Of the reported incidents, there are nine main offence types for crimes relating to badgers: sett interference, baiting/fighting, hunting with dogs/lamps, non-criminal incidents, poisoning, shooting, trading, traps/snares and 'other' as shown in Chart 60. The most common offence types between 2016 and 2022 were sett interference (2,314 cases representing 53% of all reports), 'other' (782 cases) and baiting/fighting (607 cases).

Sett interference includes fox hunting, blocking, agricultural interference and development interference. For example, the Badger Trust reports that 25% of sett interference offences from 2021 relate to illegal fox hunting. Similarly, in 2022, sett interference offences related to hunting with dogs (15%), blocking (15%) and development (10%). Land development projects may have increased interactions between badgers and people, increasing habitat disturbance and sett damage or destruction.

The 'other' category includes reference to dead badgers found on roads with injuries not typical of a traffic accident, suggesting badgers were killed by other means and left at the side of the road to appear as if the animal was killed in a collision.

⁸⁴ The number of cases referred to the Police, and prosecution and conviction data was not available for the years 2021 and 2022.

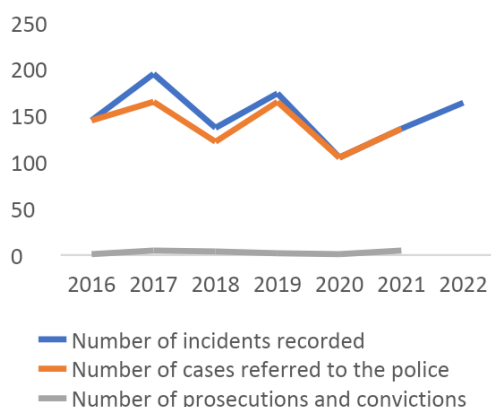
⁸⁵ Comparative data for 2021 and 2022 was not available.

Bat crimes

Between 2016 to 2022, there were a total of 1,056 recorded incidents of bat crimes occurring in England and Wales, with the most recent data in 2022 reporting 164 cases.⁸⁶ Since 2020, reports of incidents have grown at an annual rate of 25%.

The majority of cases were referred to the Police between 2016 and 2021⁸⁷ with a total of 838 cases referred, which represents approximately 94% of recorded incidents.

Chart 61: Bat crimes in England and Wales

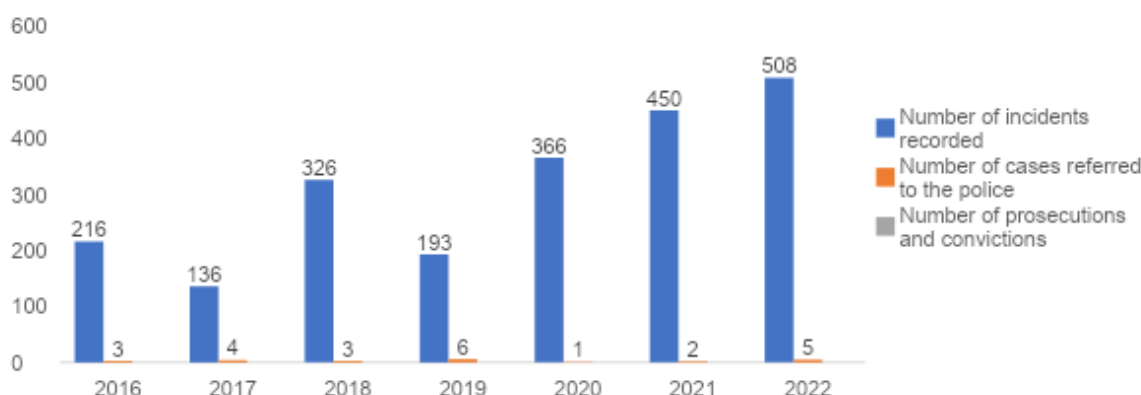


However, only approximately 2% of cases led to prosecution and conviction. There was a total of 21 convictions from 2016 to 2022, with an average of three prosecutions and convictions per year.

Marine mammal crimes

Between 2016 to 2022, there were 2,195 marine mammal recorded incidents occurring in England and Wales. This represents an average of 314 incidents recorded each year. The real number is likely to be higher due to limited public awareness of actions that could constitute a crime and/or reluctance to contact the police.

Chart 62: Reported incidents of marine mammal crimes in England and Wales, referrals to the Police and prosecutions/convictions



All reliably sourced data on marine mammal crimes are reported from Cornwall, where incidents have been on the rise, according to the Cornwall Marine and Coastal Code Group. This is reflected in the data published by the WCL, which shows marine mammal crimes have grown at an annual rate of 15% since 2016.

⁸⁶ This is the number of incidents reported by the Bat Conservation Trust and identified by data requests submitted to Police forces in England and Wales.

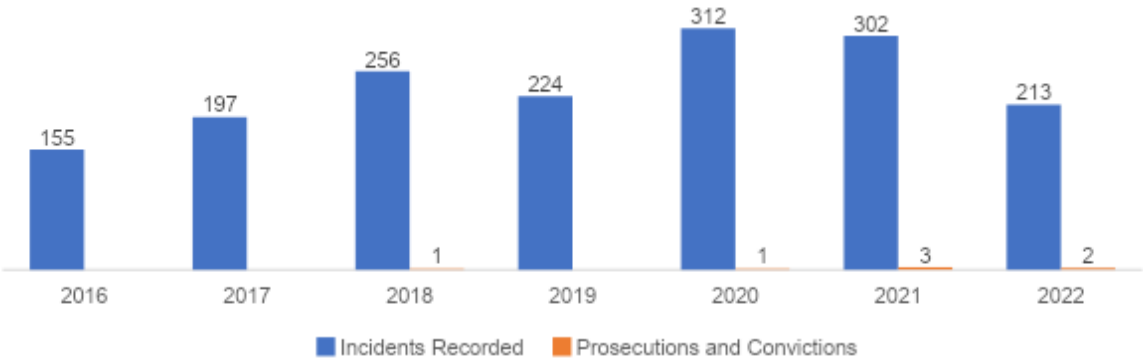
⁸⁷ Comparative data for 2022 was not available.

Only 24 cases (1% of all incidents) were referred to the Police, and no cases resulted in prosecution or conviction between 2016 and 2022.⁸⁸ WCL has considered that the low levels of prosecution may deter the public from reporting repeat incidents.

The Whale and Dolphin Conservation notes that the sharp rise in marine mammal incidents in recent years may be attributed to growing numbers of people participating in outdoor activities near or on the coast, which can lead to an increase in disturbance and harm to marine mammals.

Raptor persecution

Chart 63: Reported incidents and prosecutions of raptor crimes in England and Wales⁸⁹



Between 2016 to 2022, there were 1,659 raptor recorded incidents occurring in England and Wales, which represents an average of 237 cases annually. The number of cases peaked in 2020 (312 cases) and has since been declining at an annual rate of -17%.

There are six offence types related to raptor crimes: nest destruction, illegal pole/spring trapping, poisoning, shooting, persecution (other) and illegal trapping (other) as shown in Chart 64 below.⁹⁰ The most common was shooting, representing 50% of the incidents for which the type of incident was recorded. The number of shooting incidents has remained relatively constant across the period.

The number of incidents recorded likely represents only a fraction of crimes committed, in particular in relation to shooting, including gamebird shooting, which continues to be the most commonly detected type of raptor persecution, according to the RSPB.⁹¹

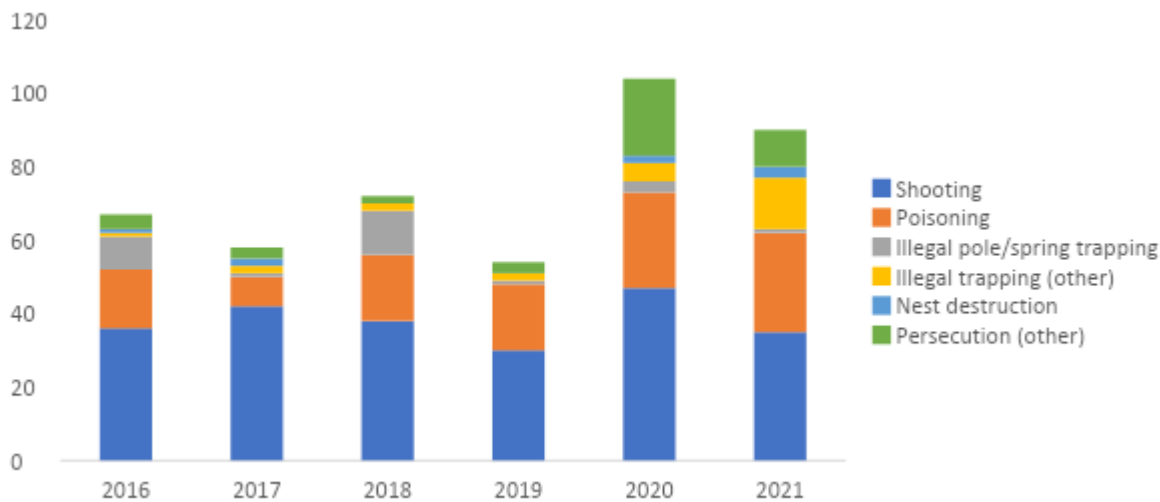
⁸⁸ Source for 2018 – 2022 data: Egret, E. (2023) 'The criminal justice system is failing wildlife' Protect the Wild, 9 December 2023. Available at: <https://protectthewild.org.uk/news/the-criminal-justice-system-is-failing-wildlife/>

⁸⁹ No data was available in the WCL Wildlife Crime Reports on the number of cases referred to the Police.

⁹⁰ An offence type was not recorded for each incident, which is the reason that Chart 64 shows a smaller number of incidents each year when compared with Chart 63.

⁹¹ For further details, see the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds' Raptor Persecution Map Hub. Available at: <https://www.arcgis.com/apps/dashboards/0f04dd3b78e544d9a6175b7435ba0f8c>.

Chart 64: Reported raptor crimes in England and Wales by offence type⁹²

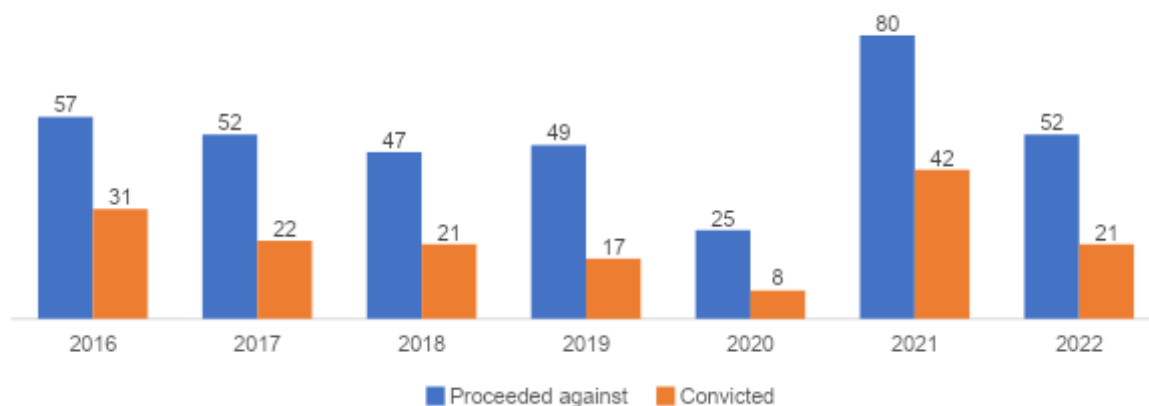


While the WCL has reported that most incidents are referred to the Police,⁹³ only 7 cases led to prosecution and conviction between 2016 to 2021. This represents less than 0.4% of all reported incidents. Moreover, as of 2021 there had been no custodial sentences imposed in England and Wales for raptor related crimes.

Hunting

No data was available on the number of incidents of hunting reported during the period. However, between 2016 and 2022, 362 cases were proceeded against in relation to hunting wild animals with dogs. This number has remained relatively constant across the period. At least a third of prosecutions in 2022 were linked to registered fox, deer and hare hunts. Additionally, illegal fox hunting continues to account for a number of crimes reported by eyewitnesses.

Chart 65: Hunting crimes proceeded against and convictions in England & Wales⁹⁴



In total, 45% of individuals proceeded against were convicted. There was a recent drop in the conviction rate from 53% in 2021 to 40% in 2022, but the spike in cases and convictions is attributed to cases linked to Operation Galileo and other Police activities designed to reduce the impact of hare coursing.⁹⁵

⁹² Comparable data for only certain types of crimes was available for 2022, and so has been excluded from Chart 64.

⁹³ Data from the WCL Crime Reports does not provide an official estimate of cases referred to the Police. Instead, the reports note that "most" incidents are referred to the Police for the years 2016 to 2020. No information has been provided for 2021 or 2022.

⁹⁴ No data relating to "cases referred to the Police" was presented by the League Against Cruel Sports. As such, this metric has not been included in the Chart.

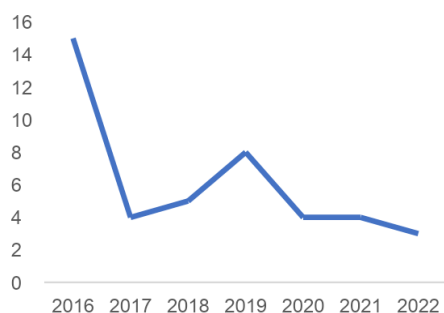
⁹⁵ For further information on Operation Galileo, please see: <https://www.dorset.police.uk/police-forces/dorset-police/areas/campaigns/campaigns/operation-galileo/>.

Illegal wildlife trade crimes

WWF UK and Traffic were unable to report on the number of incidents recorded and the number of cases referred to the Police in relation to illegal wildlife trade crimes, as these numbers are unknown.

The WCL reported low numbers of convictions for illegal wildlife trade crimes, with a total of 43 convictions between 2016 and 2022, which amounts to an average of 7 convictions each year. The spike in convictions in 2016 appears to be an outlier, as the numbers of convictions have otherwise been relatively constant across the period. While there was a decrease in prosecutions and convictions in 2020 and 2021, this is likely linked to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Chart 66: Prosecutions and convictions of illegal wildlife trade in England and Wales



The restrictions on travel may have impacted the number of seizures of illegal imports into the UK and subsequent prosecutions.

Recommendation: To improve prosecution and conviction rates, specialist training in wildlife crime investigation techniques and dedicated CPS guidelines for key wildlife crimes should be made available to police and prosecutors, respectively.

Public information campaigns to raise awareness about marine mammal crimes and signs to look out for should be carried out.

An official annual wildlife crime report for England and Wales should be produced by the UK and Welsh governments, akin to that produced in Scotland by the Scottish Government.

Wildlife Crime in Scotland⁹⁶

Critical and serious non-compliance incidents

Between 2015 and 2021, there were 1,398 wildlife crimes recorded by Police Scotland. "Wildlife Crime" is defined in Scottish reports as "any unlawful act or omission, which affects any wild creature, plant or habitat, in Scotland."⁹⁷ The Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS) contains the Wildlife and Environmental Crime Unit (WECU), which manages the prosecutions for Scotland relating to Wildlife Crime and publishes public figures pertaining to the outcome of cases referred to WECU.

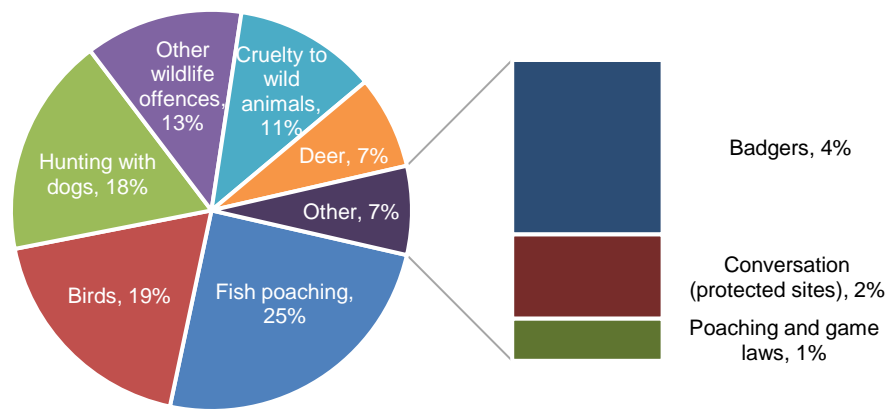
Police Scotland separates Wildlife Crimes into several distinct categories, namely: badgers, birds, conservation (protected sites), cruelty to wild animals, deer, fish poaching, hunting with dogs, poaching and

⁹⁶ Source: Wildlife Crime in Scotland Annual Reports (2016 to 2021). Available at: <https://www.gov.scot/policies/wildlife-management/wildlife-crime/>.

⁹⁷ Source: Wildlife Crime in Scotland Annual Report 2021, Chapter 1, page 5. Available at: <https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/corporate-report/2023/04/wildlife-crime-scotland-annual-report-2021/documents/wildlife-crime-scotland-annual-report-2021/wildlife-crime-scotland-annual-report-2021/govscot%3Adocument/wildlife-crime-scotland-annual-report-2021.pdf>.

game laws, and other wildlife offences. Incidents involving fish poaching were the most common type of Wildlife Crime in Scotland between the 2015-16 to 2020-21 reporting periods, with 346 recorded incidents. This was followed by birds (260 incidents) and hunting with dogs (248 incidents). The analysis in the following section focuses on the top five most commonly reported Wildlife Crimes.

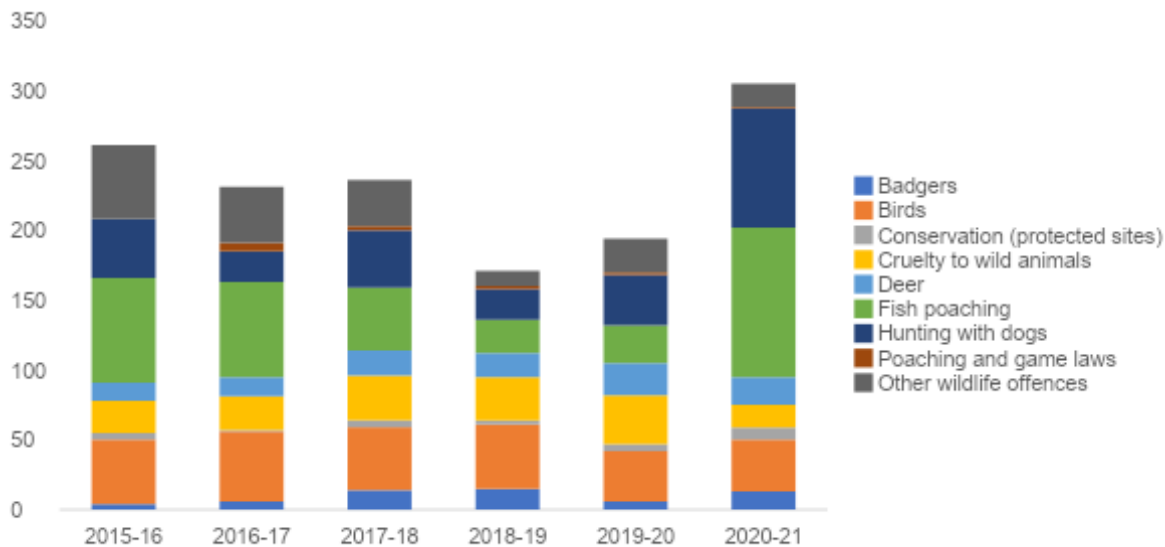
Chart 67: Wildlife Crimes recorded by the Scottish Police (2015/16-2020/21)



The total number of Wildlife Crimes decreased during the initial part of the period analysed. The decline stopped during the 2018/19 reporting period and reports of Wildlife Crimes have since been increasing at an annual rate of 34%. This is largely due to increases in the number of reports of fish poaching and hunting with dogs.

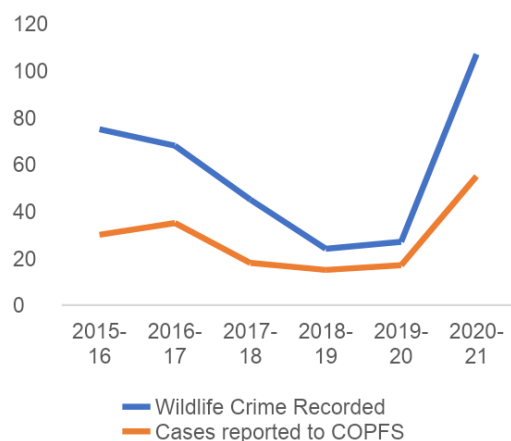
The increase in Wildlife Crimes, particularly during the 2020/21 reporting period, could be a result of the increased presence of individuals in natural areas during the Covid-19 pandemic. The fact that certain crimes, such as fish poaching and hunting with dogs, saw a more significant increase could be a result of increased participation in leisure activities.

Chart 68: Number of incidents by type of wildlife crime recorded by the Scottish Police



Fish poaching

Chart 69: Fish poaching Wildlife Crimes and reports to COPFS



Between 2015/16 and 2019/20, there was a general decline in the number of fish poaching reports. However, between 2019/20 and 2020/21, there was a 296% increase in the number of crimes recorded. There was also a corresponding increase of 224% in the number of cases reported to COPFS.

As noted above, the sudden increase in fish poaching crimes may have been a result of increased levels of fishing during the Covid-19 pandemic.

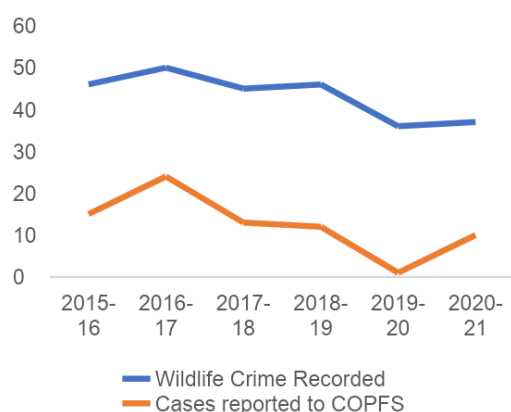
Fish poaching Wildlife Crimes had the highest average proportion of reports referred to COPFS at 51%. This proportion has remained relatively constant across the period analysed.

Recommendation: Figures should continue to be monitored to establish whether the spike in fish poaching crimes in Scotland becomes an established trend. If it does, public awareness raising of the legal rules around recreational fishing and potential penalties should be carried out.

Birds

Between the 2015/16 and 2020/21 reporting periods, there were a total of 260 bird related Wildlife Crimes recorded by Police Scotland, with the most recent data from 2020/21 confirming 37 incidents were recorded. Reports of wildlife crimes relating to birds have steadily decreased at an annual rate of -4% across the period analysed. There has been a similar decline in the number of cases reported to COPFS.

Chart 70: Bird Wildlife Crimes and reports to COPFS



In comparison to other Wildlife Crimes, and particularly those which form a high proportion of total Wildlife Crimes, a lower level of crimes relating to birds were reported to COPFS. On average, 28% of recorded cases

were reported to COPFS. The number of cases reported to COPFS has been declining at an annual rate of -8% across the period.

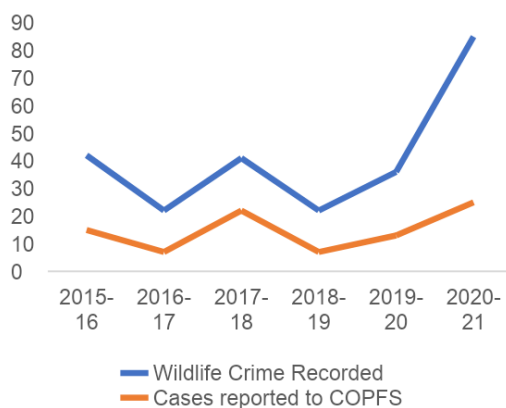
Recommendation: Reasons for the declining number of bird crime cases being reported to COPFS should be identified.

Hunting with dogs

Between the 2015/16 and 2020/21 reporting periods, there were a total of 248 incidents of Wildlife Crime related to hunting with dogs recorded by Police Scotland. On average, 41 such Wildlife Crimes were recorded in each period. The number of recorded cases more than doubled in 2020/21 to 85 cases, representing the highest number of crimes recorded in the period analysed.

On average, 14.8 cases relating to hunting with dogs were reported to COPFS during each reporting period, representing 36% of the crimes recorded. The sharp increase in the number of incidents recorded during 2020/21 does not correlate to the increase in the number of crimes reported to COPFS (25 or 24%). However, this was the highest number of cases referred to COPFS in the period analysed.

Chart 71: Hunting with dogs Wildlife Crimes and reports to COPFS



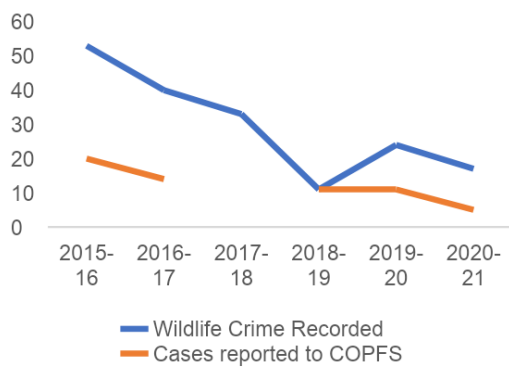
Recommendation: Figures relating to wildlife crimes involving hunting with dogs should be reviewed over the coming years to evaluate the impact of the Hunting with Dogs (Scotland) Act 2023.

Other wildlife offences

Wildlife Crimes listed as 'other' wildlife offences include damaging or destroying the breeding site or resting place of a European protected species and attempts to commit offences.

Between the 2015/16 and 2020/21 reporting periods, there were 178 incidents recorded as 'other wildlife offences' by Police Scotland. Reports of these types of Wildlife Crimes have been steadily declining across the period analysed at an annual rate of -20%. A similar decline has been seen in the number of crimes reported to COPFS, which has declined at an annual rate of -24%.

Chart 72: Other wildlife offence Wildlife Crimes and reports to COPFS



However, 'other' wildlife crimes had one of the highest overall proportions of reports to COPFS at 41% on average. This includes the 2018/19 reporting period, where no cases were referred.

Recommendation: As a high proportion of cases reported to COPFS are categorised as 'other' wildlife crimes, data relating to this crime type should be further broken down in future editions of the Scottish Government's annual wildlife crime reports to enable the identification of notable trends.

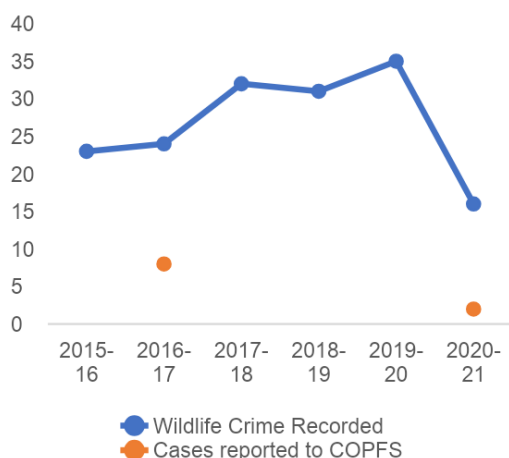
Cruelty to wild animals

Between the 2015/16 and 2020/21 reporting periods, there were a total of 161 incidents of wildlife crime related to cruelty to wild animals recorded by Police Scotland.

In contrast to the general decline seen in wildlife crimes, recorded incidents of cruelty to wild animals rose steadily between 2015/16 and 2019/20 at an annual rate of 11%. There was a sharp decrease in the number of incidents of -54% in 2020/21.

It has not been possible to determine any trends in relation to the number of cases reported to COPFS as no data was available between 2016/17 and 2019/20.

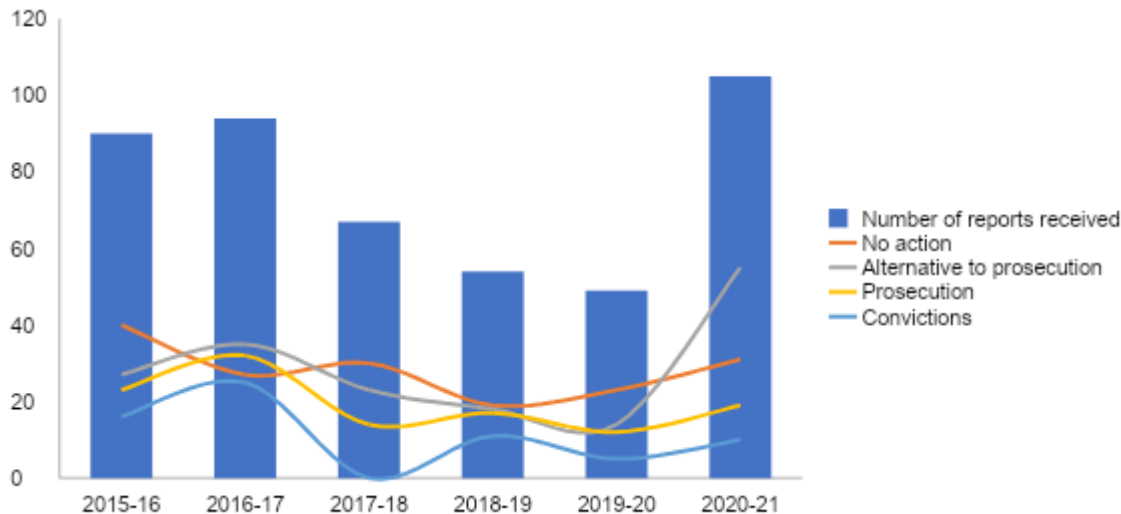
Chart 73: Cruelty to wild animals Wildlife Crimes and reports to COPFS



Recommendation: Future Scottish Government wildlife crime annual reports should include data relating to the number of cruelty to wild animal crimes reported to COPFS.

Outcomes of Wildlife Crimes reported to COPFS (Scotland)

Chart 74: Sentencing outcomes of wildlife cases reported to COPFS



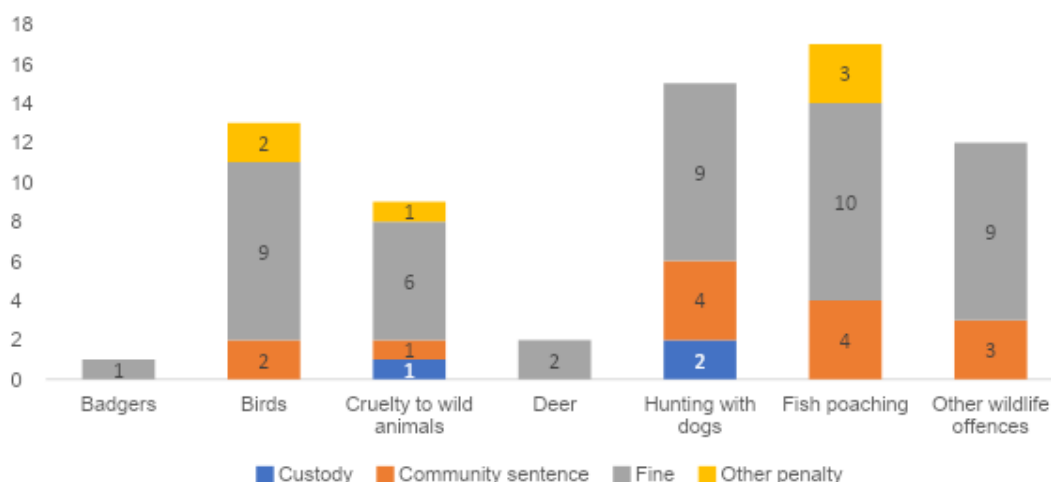
A sentencing outcome was recorded for the majority of the Wildlife Crimes reported to COPFS. Across the period analysed, 38% of reports to COPFS recorded an outcome of alternative to prosecution. This consists largely of warning letters and fiscal fines. Fiscal fines are a type of fine offered as a means of avoiding prosecution for a crime that would otherwise proceed to the lowest level of the Scottish criminal court.

37% of reports to COPFS recorded an outcome of no action. At the beginning of the period, the number of reports recorded as no action was declining, but since 2018/19 it has been rising at an annual rate of 28%. Between 2015/26 and 2020/21, 26% of reports to COPFS recorded an outcome of prosecution. Of the cases prosecuted, 57% resulted in convictions. There are still 13 incidents across 2019/20 (6) and 2020/21 (7) with trials that were recorded as pending. However, the number of individuals prosecuted has declined across the period at an annual rate of -17%.

The conviction rate for Wildlife Crimes is below the wider conviction rate in Scotland, where over the ten years to 2020/21, the conviction rate for all crimes and offences has fluctuated between 86% and 91%.⁹⁸

Recommendation: Reasons for the lower conviction rate for wildlife crimes in Scotland compared to other types of crime should be identified.

Chart 75: Wildlife Crimes – Sentencing Outcomes by type (2016/17 to 2020/21)



⁹⁸ Source: Criminal Proceedings in Scotland (2020 to 2021). Available at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/criminal-proceedings-scotland-2020-21/pages/6/>.

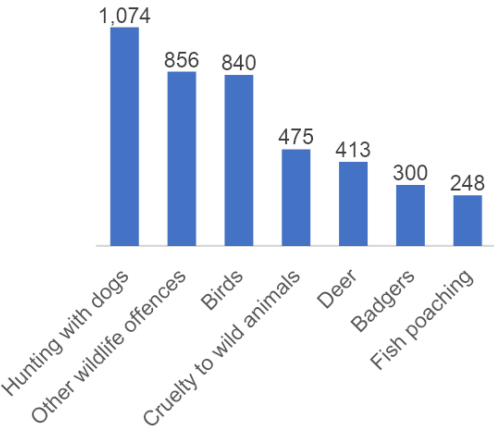
Between 2016/17 and 2020/21, fish poaching, hunting with dogs and birds had the greatest number of convictions; 17, 15 and 13 respectively. This is not surprising given these are the three most commonly reported wildlife crimes in Scotland. Combined, they account for 65% of the total number of convictions secured for wildlife crimes, which is only slightly higher than the proportion of initial reports received by Police Scotland in relation to those crimes (61%). Across the period there were no successful convictions for poaching and game laws, which reflects the low reports of this crime.

Only three custodial sentences were recorded, two of which related to hunting with dogs and one to cruelty to wild animals. The length of the custodial sentence was recorded as 126 days for the single outcome under cruelty to wild animals, and 142 days as an average between the two outcomes recorded for hunting with dogs.

Fines were by far the largest outcome (accounting for 67% of all sentencing outcomes). Between 2016/17 and 2020/21, the average fine imposed at sentencing was £601, but this varied significantly depending on the offence type.

The highest average fines were imposed for crimes relating to hunting with dogs, birds and other wildlife offences, whereas significantly lower average fines were imposed for crimes involving badgers and fish poaching.

Chart 76: Average fine imposed by offence type (2016/17-2020/21)



Recommendation: Sentencing trends should be revisited over the coming years to evaluate the impact of the Animals and Wildlife (Penalties, Protections and Powers) (Scotland) Act 2020 and the Hunting with Dogs (Scotland) Act 2023.

Wildlife crime in Northern Ireland

The government of Northern Ireland produces an annual report about animal welfare service delivery, which includes information relating to enforcement by the PSNI, which is the body responsible for enforcing wildlife crimes. However, the available data does not distinguish between wildlife crime and other animal crimes.

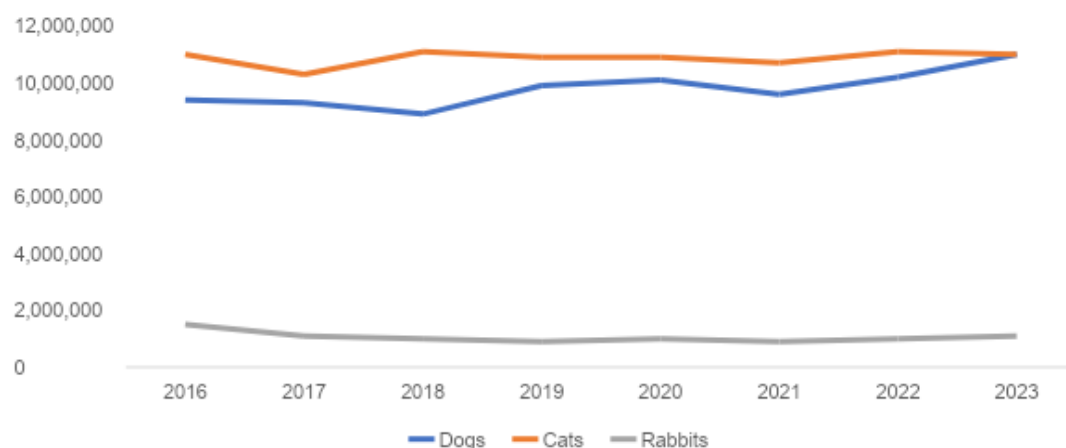
Recommendation: Northern Ireland’s animal welfare annual report should, where possible, distinguish between PSNI enforcement activity in connection with crimes involving wildlife and crimes involving domestic and kept animals so that key wildlife crime trends in Northern Ireland can be identified.

6. Companion & kept animals

The UK companion animal population (dogs, cats & rabbits)⁹⁹

Since 2016, there has been limited variance to the estimated UK companion animal population representing dogs, cats and rabbits. Between 2016 and 2023, there have on average been 21.7 million of these companion animals in the UK each year, of which approximately 50% are cats (around 10.8 million), 45% are dogs (around 9.8 million) and 5% are rabbits (around 1.1 million).

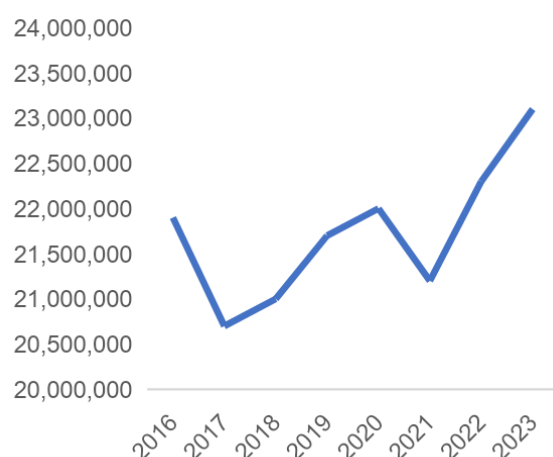
Chart 77: UK companion animal population (dogs, cats and rabbits)



With the exception of 2021,¹⁰⁰ there have been year-on-year increases in the companion animal population in the UK since 2021. This resulted in 2023 having the highest companion animal population estimated at 23.1 million animals.

The trend since 2021 suggests that the companion animal population will continue to increase, as the population has grown at an annual rate of 4%. This increase in the population since 2021 is predominantly a result of an increase in the number of companion animal dogs; which grew at an annual rate of 7%. The population of rabbits grew at an annual rate of 11% and the cat population by 1%.

Chart 78: Number of UK companion animal population (dogs, cats and rabbits)



⁹⁹ Source: PDSA Annual Reports (2016 to 2023). Available at: <https://www.pdsa.org.uk/what-we-do/pdsa-animal-wellbeing-report/past-reports>.

¹⁰⁰ The decrease in the animal companion population that occurred in 2021 could be a result of lower levels of demand for companion following the Covid-19 pandemic.

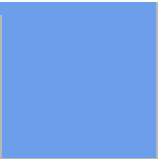
UK companion & kept animal enforcement & oversight arrangements - who does what?

Animal activities	England	The Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (England) Regulations 2018	Selling animals as pets, providing or arranging for the provision of boarding for cats or dogs, hiring out horses, breeding dogs and keeping or training animals for exhibition.	Local authority (unitary & district)	Find your local authority (England)
	Wales	The Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (Wales) Regulations 2021	Selling animals as pets.	Local authority	Find your local authority (Wales)
		Animal Welfare (Breeding of Dogs) (Wales) Regulations 2014	Dog breeding (premises keeping 3 or more breeding female dogs and breeding, supplying, advertising 3 or more litters in a twelve month period)		
		Animal Boarding Establishments Act 1963	Dog and/or cat boarding establishments		
		Riding Establishments Act 1964 (as amended)	Operating a horse riding establishment		
		Performing Animals (Regulation) Act 1925	Exhibiting or training performing animals (excludes invertebrates)		
	Scotland	The Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (Scotland) Regulations 2021	Selling animals as pets, rehoming animals as pets, operating animal welfare establishments (including sanctuaries and rehoming centres), breeding dogs, breeding cats and breeding rabbits.	Local council	Find your local council (Scotland)
		Performing Animals (Regulation) Act 1925	Exhibiting or training performing animals (excludes invertebrates)		

		Animal Boarding Establishments Act 1963	Dog and/or cat boarding		
		Riding Establishments Act 1964 (as amended)	Operating a horse riding establishment		
	Northern Ireland	The Welfare of Animals (Dog Breeding Establishments and Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2013	Licensing of dog breeding establishments	Councils	Local Councils in Northern Ireland
		Petshops Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2000	Operating a pet shop	DAERA (regional offices)	DAERA regional offices
		Riding Establishment Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1980	Operating a horse riding establishment	DAERA (regional offices)	DAERA regional offices
		Animal Boarding Establishments Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1974	Dog and/or cat boarding	DAERA (regional offices)	DAERA regional offices
Zoos	England	Zoo Licensing Act 1981; Zoo Licensing Act 1981 Amendment (England and Wales) Regulations 2002	Mammalia, Aves, Reptilia, Amphibia, Pisces and Insecta and any other multi cellular organism that is not a plant or a fungus and “wild animals” means animals not normally domesticated in Great Britain kept in an establishment for exhibition to the public (excluding circuses and pet shops).	Local authority (district, unitary, metropolitan, London Borough and City of London) accompanied by DEFRA-appointed Zoo Inspector	Find your local authority (England) / customeradvice@apha.gov.uk

Dangerous wild animals	Wales	Zoo Licensing Act 1981; Zoo Licensing Act 1981 Amendment (England and Wales) Regulations 2002	Mammalia, Aves, Reptilia, Amphibia, Pisces and Insecta and any other multi cellular organism that is not a plant or a fungus and “wild animals” means animals not normally domesticated in Great Britain kept in an establishment for exhibition to the public (excluding circuses and pet shops).	Local authority accompanied by Welsh Government- appointed Zoo Inspector	Find your local authority (Wales) / apha.cymruwales@apha.gov.uk
	Scotland	Zoo Licensing Act 1981; Zoo Licensing Act 1981 Amendment (Scotland) Regulations 2003	Mammalia, Aves, Reptilia, Amphibia, Pisces and Insecta and any other multi cellular organism that is not a plant or a fungus and “wild animals” means animals not normally domesticated in Great Britain kept in an establishment for exhibition to the public (excluding circuses and pet shops).	Local council accompanied by Scottish Government- appointed Zoo Inspector	Find your local council (Scotland) / APHA.Scotland@apha.gov.uk
	Northern Ireland	Zoo Licensing Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2003/115	Mammalia, Aves, Reptilia, Amphibia, Pisces, and Insecta and any other multi cellular organism that is not a plant or a fungus and “animals of wild species” means animals not normally domesticated in the United Kingdom kept in a permanent establishment where animals of wild species are kept for exhibition to the public.	DAERA (regional offices)	DAERA regional offices
	England	Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976	Kinds of animals named in sch 1 of the Act, including kinds of marsupials, primates, edentates, carnivores, pinnipedes, elephants, aardvark, odd- toed ungulates, even-toed ungulates, hybrids, cassowaries, ostrich,	Local authority (district, unitary, metropolitan, London Borough and City of London)	Find your local authority (England)

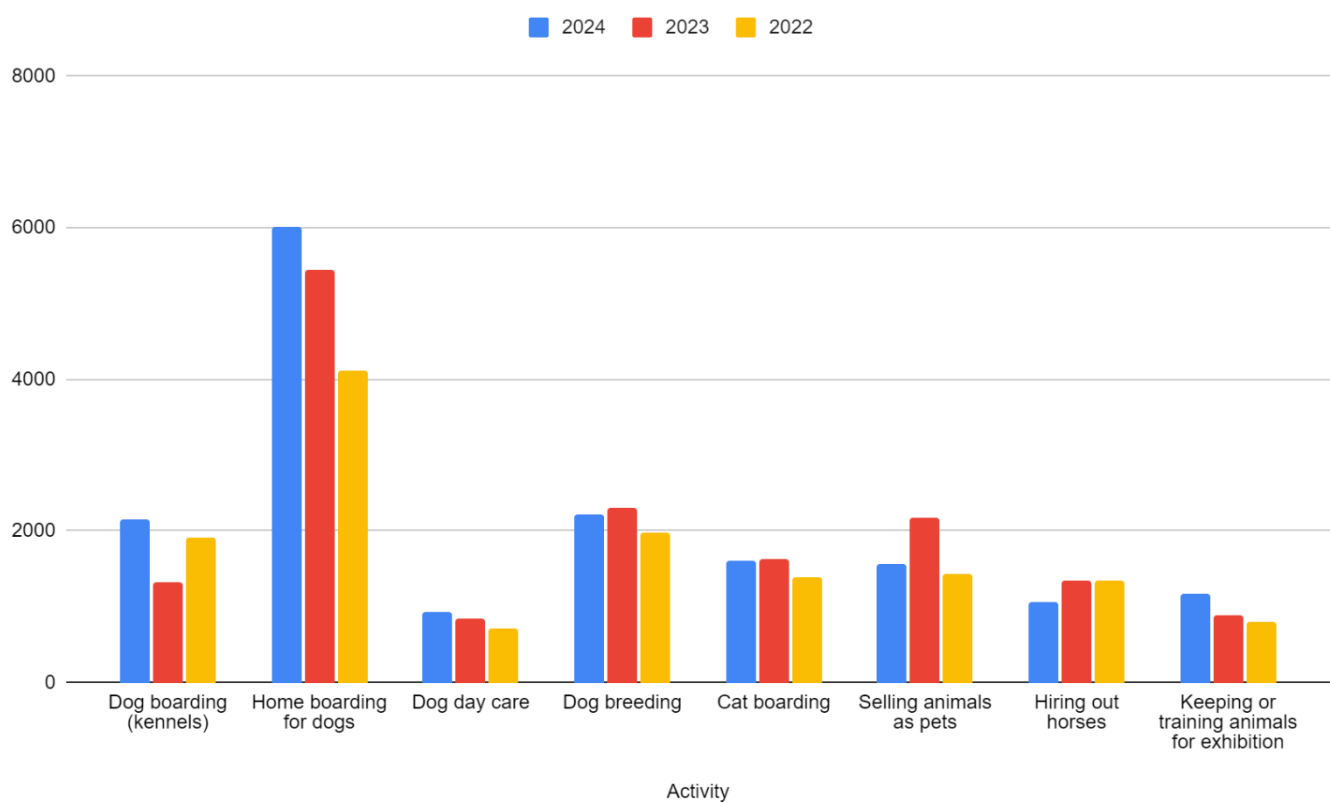
Wild animals used in circuses	Wales		crocodilians, lizards and snakes, spiders and scorpions	Local authority	Find your local authority (Wales)
	Scotland	Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976 (as amended)	Kinds of animals named in sch 1 of the Act, including kinds of marsupials, primates, edentates, carnivores, pinnipedes, elephants, aardvark, odd-toed ungulates, even-toed ungulates, hybrids, cassowaries, ostrich, crocodilians, lizards and snakes, spiders and scorpions	Local council	Find your local council (Scotland)
	Northern Ireland	The Dangerous Wild Animals (Northern Ireland) Order 2004	Kinds of animals named in sch 1 of the Order, including kinds of marsupials, primates, edentates, rodents, carnivores, pinnipedes, elephants, hyraxes, aardvark, odd-toed ungulates, even-toed ungulates, hybrids, cassowaries and emu, ostrich, crocodilians, lizards and snakes, spiders and scorpions	DAERA (NIEA Wildlife Team)	028 9056 9558 / elmswildlife@daera-ni.gov.uk
	England	Wild Animals in Circuses Act 2019	An animal of a kind not commonly domesticated in Britain which is used in a performance or exhibit as part of a travelling circus.	DEFRA-appointed inspectors	circuswildanimal@defra.gov.uk
	Wales	Wild Animals and Circuses (Wales) Act 2020	An animal of a kind not commonly domesticated in Britain which is used in a performance or exhibit as part of a travelling circus.	Local authority	Find your local authority (Wales)
	Scotland	Wild Animals in Travelling Circuses (Scotland) Act 2018	An animal of a kind not commonly domesticated in Britain which is used in a performance, display or exhibition	Local councils and police	Find your local council (Scotland) / call 999 if an offence is in progress, otherwise 101

			in a travelling circus.		
	 Northern Ireland	No ban.	N/A	N/A	N/A

Animal activities licensing

Local authorities in England that issue animal activities licences have a statutory duty to submit licensing returns¹⁰¹ to the Defra Secretary of State on an annual basis, pursuant to Reg 29 Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (England) Regulations 2018. According to data made available for 2022 - 2024, an average of 15,435 animal activities licenses are in force across England for activities ranging from dog boarding, dog day care, dog breeding, cat boarding, selling animals as pets, hiring out horses and keeping or training animals for exhibition. The most commonly licensed activity is home boarding for dogs, with an average of 5,187 licenses issued each year.

Table 79: Animal activities licences issued by local authorities in England (2022-2024)



In 2024, local authorities were asked a range of optional questions for the first time, including questions about the number of licenses with particular star-ratings and the number of licenses suspended, refused, revoked or varied in the 12 months to April 2024. Not all local authorities responded to these questions. However, those that did show there are 247 one-star rated licences in effect in England (the lowest star-rating) and 419 with a two-star rating. The majority of licences have a five-star rating (1,828). Seven animal activities licences were suspended, ten were revoked, 29 were refused and 225 were varied.

Similar data does not appear to be available for Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales, although it should be noted that each Welsh local authority has a statutory duty to provide information to Welsh Ministers annually about the number of licenses it has issued pursuant to Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (Wales) Regulations 2021, which currently covers pet selling.

¹⁰¹ <https://www.data.gov.uk/dataset/525058ee-73c6-4cf9-8641-291999ace395/local-authority-licensing-of-activities-involving-animals-returns>

Recommendation: Optional questions about animal activities licensing asked of English local authorities for the first time in 2024 should be made mandatory in future returns to provide a more complete picture of animal activities licensing implementation across England.

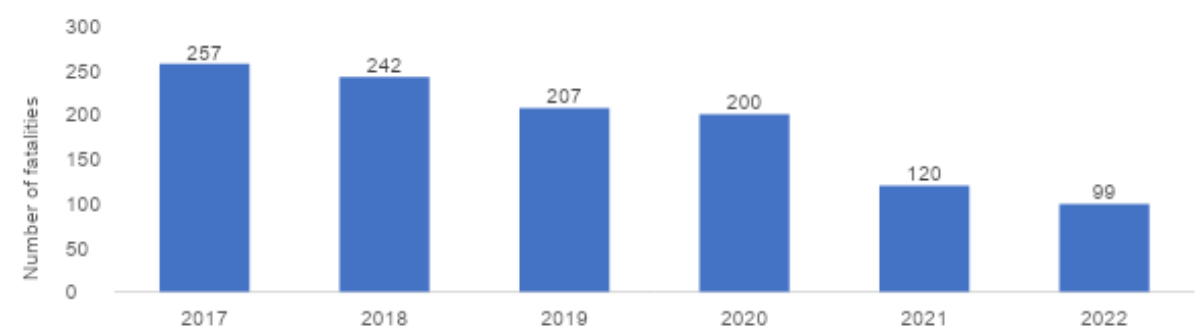
Defra should work with Local Authorities with one- and two-star rated premises to identify strategies for improving welfare conditions at these businesses.

Similar animal activities licensing information should be published by the Scottish and Welsh Governments on an annual basis.

Oversight of greyhounds used for racing in Britain

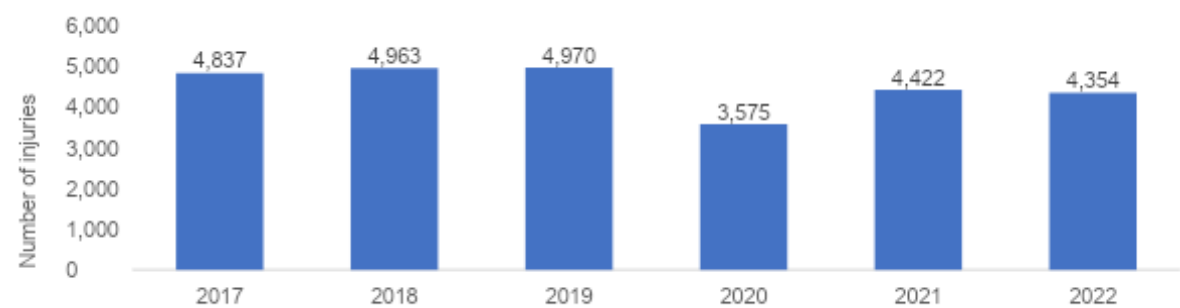
The Greyhound Board of Great Britain (GBGB) is a private non-statutory body that regulates greyhound racing tracks in Great Britain. It voluntarily publishes some welfare data annually.¹⁰² According to such data, between 2017 and 2022, there were 1,125 reported greyhound fatalities that occurred at licensed tracks. GBGB data shows that the recorded number of fatalities has declined at an annual rate of -17% during the same period. Nevertheless, there were 99 recorded fatalities in 2022.

Chart 80: Reported number of greyhound track fatalities



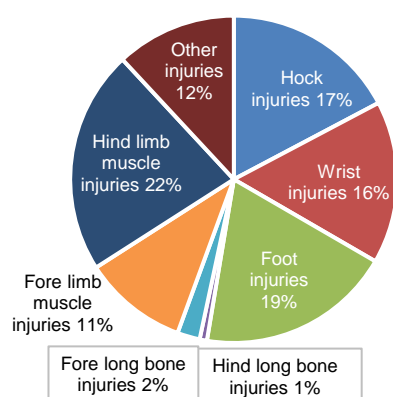
During the same period, the reported number of greyhound injuries has remained relatively constant; on average, 4,520 injuries were reported annually in the period between 2017 and 2022. There has been a decline in more recent years; across the period the annual rate of decline was 2%.

Chart 81: Reported number of greyhound injuries



¹⁰² Source: GBGB Injury and Retirement data. Available at: <https://www.gbgb.org.uk/welfare-care/injury-and-retirement-data/>.

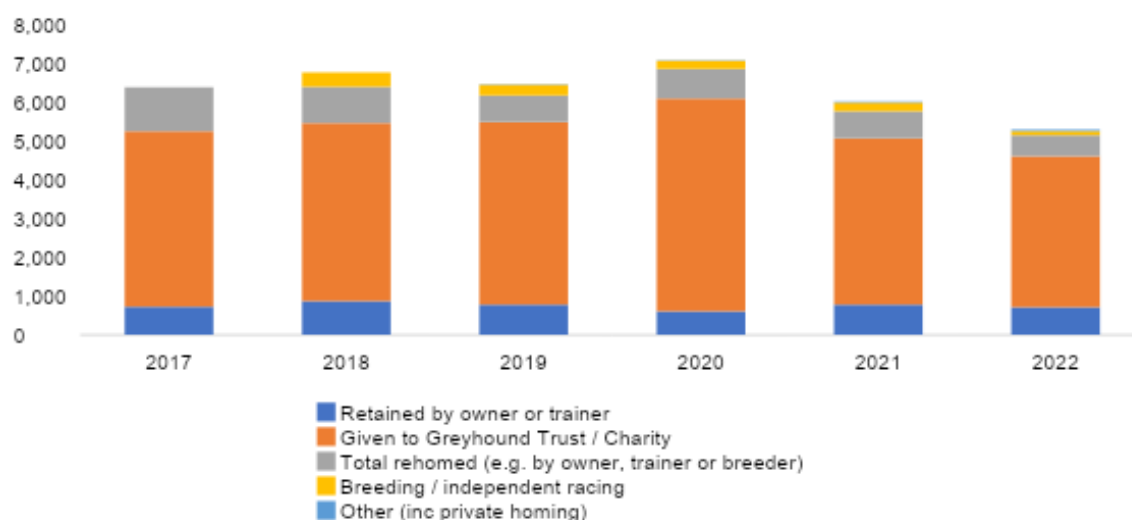
Chart 82: Proportion of greyhound injury types (2017-2022)



The types of injuries experienced by greyhounds have generally been constant across the period. Whilst hind limb muscle injuries were the most common injury type, most injuries had similar levels of occurrence. In contrast, hind long bone and fore long bone injuries were the least common type of injury, occurring in 3% of cases.

The retirement data published by GBGB records whether a greyhound was retained, rehomed or given to a charity (which occurred in 91% of instances), or died or were put to sleep (which occurred in the remaining 9% of instances).

Chart 83: Greyhound retirement outcomes



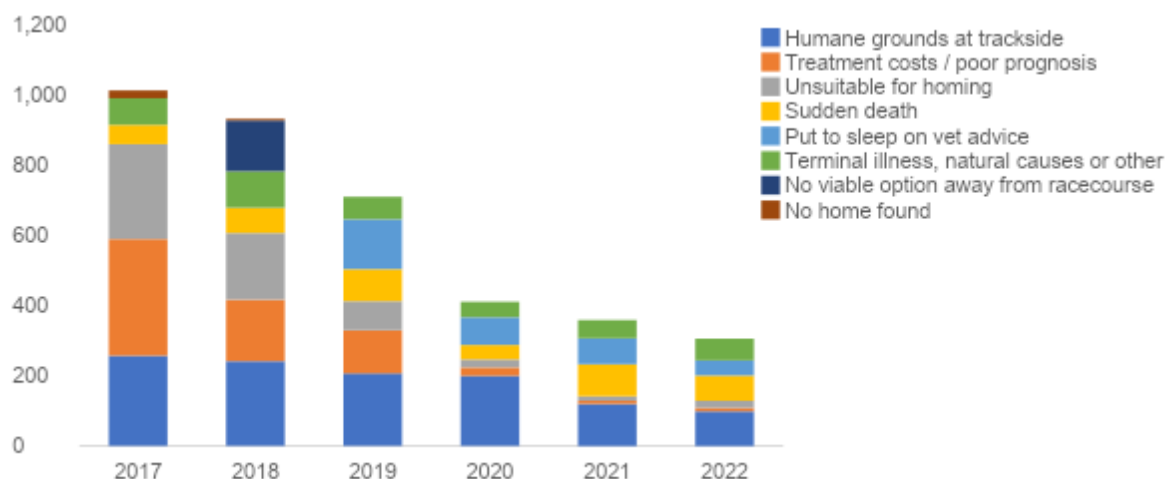
Multiple retirement outcomes exist, but between 2017 and 2022, 66% of all greyhounds were given to a Greyhound Trust or other charity.¹⁰³ The next most common retirement outcomes were rehoming (11%) or the greyhound being retained by their owner / trainer (11%).

There was an annual decline in the number of greyhounds bred or kept for independent racing of -27% between 2018 and 2022. There has also been an annual decline of -14% in the number of greyhounds rehomed (such as by their owner, trainer or breeder) since 2017, and smaller declines in the number of greyhounds given to a greyhound trust/charity (-3%) or retained by owner (-0.3%).

The retirement outcome for 3,807 greyhounds was recorded as death in the six year period, the reasons for which are outlined in Chart 84 below. The most common reason was for humane grounds at the trackside (30%), followed by treatment costs / poor prognosis (18%) and the greyhound being unsuitable for rehoming (16%). There have been declines across almost all categories since 2017. The only exception is to sudden deaths, which increased at an annual rate of 6%.

¹⁰³ There was no data available for 2017 of the number of greyhounds that were retired for breeding / independent racing or 'other' reasons.

Chart 84: Greyhound deaths by reason¹⁰⁴



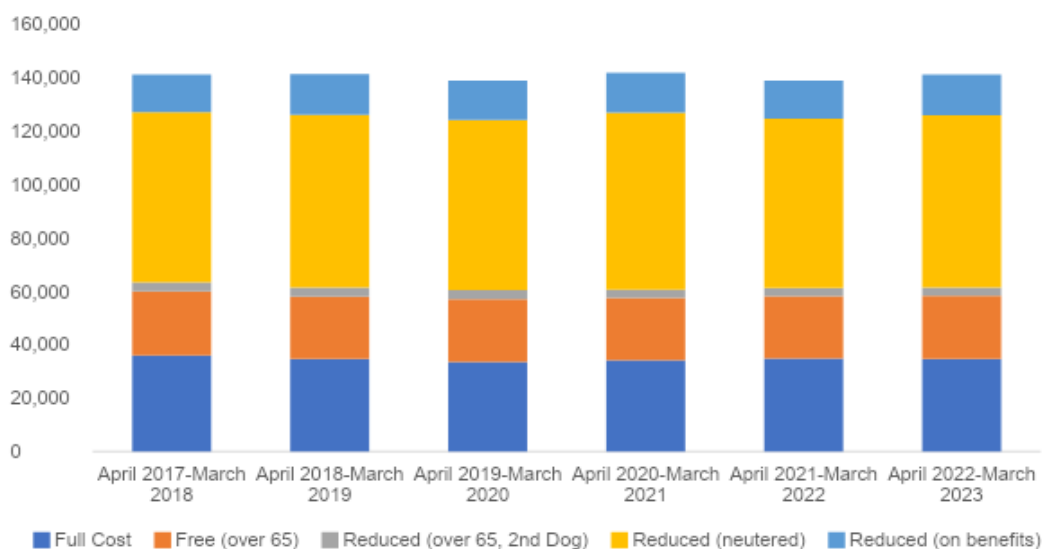
Companion animal welfare enforcement & oversight in Northern Ireland

Dogs

DAERA publishes annual statistics¹⁰⁵ on dogs in Northern Ireland, including the number of dog licences issued, complaints made regarding stray dogs, dog attacks and dog warden enforcement actions.

In Northern Ireland, an individual is generally required to purchase an annual licence for any dog(s) that they own.¹⁰⁶ Between April 2017 and March 2023, a total of 843,399 licences were issued. Of these, 25% of the licences were charged at the full price, the majority (59%) were reduced and 17% were free. The number of dog licences issued has averaged approximately 140,500 licenses a year and this number has remained constant across the period.

Chart 85: Total number of dog licenses issued under Northern Ireland Dogs (Northern Ireland) Order 1983



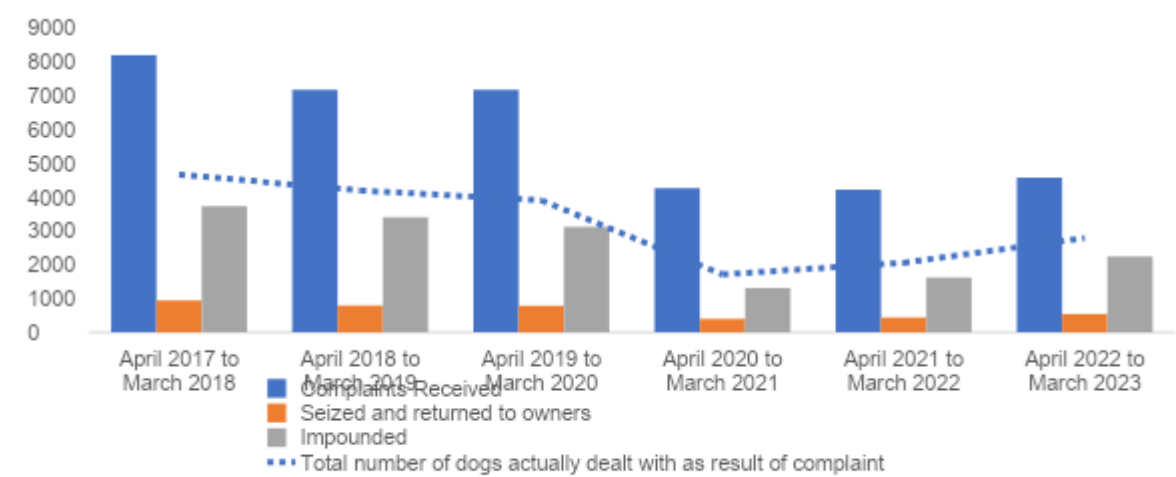
¹⁰⁴ For comparative purposes, the categories 'medical / other', 'terminal illness' and 'natural causes' (for which only 2017 data is available) have been combined for the 2017 period and compared against data that was available from 2018 onwards for 'terminal illness, natural causes or other'.

¹⁰⁵ Source: DAERA Council Dog Summary Statistics for years 2017 to 2023. Available at: <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/council-dog-summary-statistics>.

¹⁰⁶ Source: NI Direct Government Services, Dog licensing and microchipping. Available at: <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/dog-licensing-and-microchipping>.

There were 5,013 block licences¹⁰⁷ issued over the period, with each licence on average relating to 8 dogs. Separately, across the period only 254 dogs were recorded as being exempt from microchipping.

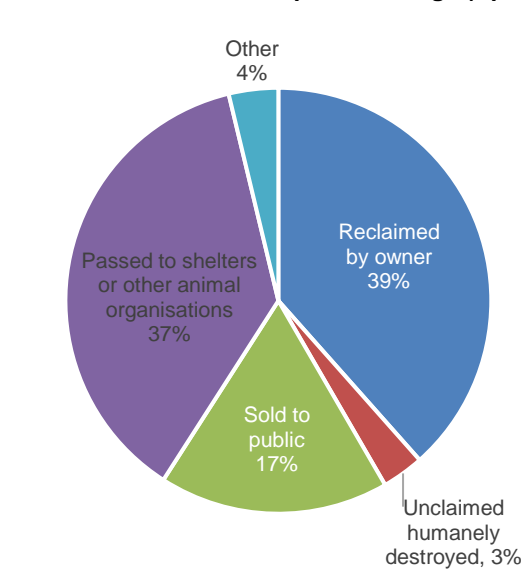
Chart 86: Total complaints received in relation to stray dogs and follow-up action



Between April 2017 and March 2023, 35,578 complaints were received in relation to stray dogs. As a result of these complaints, local authorities dealt with 19,308 stray dogs (54%). Of all the stray dogs dealt with, the majority were impounded in the first instance and the remainder were seized and returned to their owners. In total, this resulted in 15,407 dogs being impounded during the period (representing approximately 2% of the total number of dog licences issued during the same period).

Of the dogs impounded, the majority were either reclaimed by their owner, passed to other animal shelters or organisations, or sold to the public. A small percentage, representing 491 dogs, were humanely destroyed. This number has generally fallen across the period, as has its proportion relative to the number of stray dogs impounded (6% in 2017/2018 compared to 3% in 2022/2023). Whereas the proportion of impounded dogs passed to shelters or other animal organisations has increased from 34% to 45% during the same periods.

Chart 87: Outcomes of impounded dogs (April 2017 to March 2023)



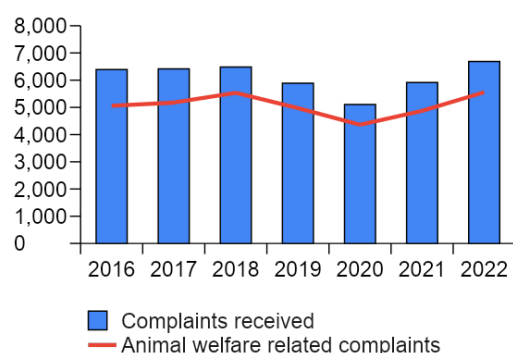
¹⁰⁷ 'Block licences' can be issued to owners of three or more dogs.

Enforcement by local councils¹⁰⁸

In Northern Ireland, local councils enforce the animal welfare requirements of the Welfare of Animals Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 in respect of non-farmed animals.¹⁰⁹

Between 2016 to 2022, a total of 42,881 complaints were received by local councils in respect of non-farmed animals. Of these, 83% (35,530) were found to be animal welfare-related complaints. Although the number of all complaints received started to decrease from 2018, this trend stopped in 2020 and since then total complaints have grown at an annual rate of 15%.¹¹⁰

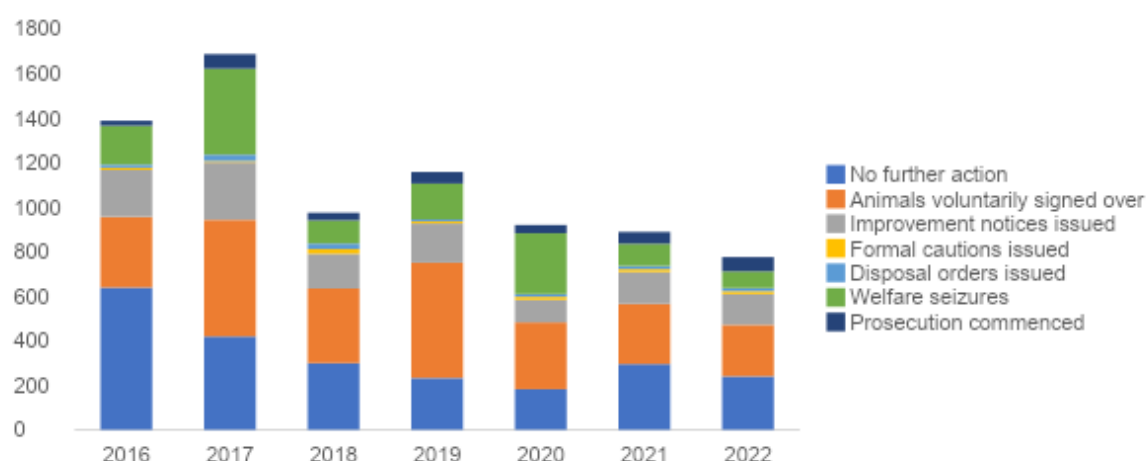
Chart 88: Number of non-farmed animal welfare complaints received each year



The complaints resulted in 58,252 visits, which is an average of 1.4 visits per complaint (due to certain complaints requiring more than one visit). Chart 89 sets out the actions taken between 2016 and 2022; data is only available in respect of 18% of all complaints received.

In 30% of cases, it was decided that no further action was required. The most common other actions taken were for animals to be voluntarily signed over to local councils (32%), a welfare seizure (16%) or an improvement notice (15%). In respect of the prosecutions, between 2016 and 2022, 327 prosecutions were commenced. Of the 199 prosecutions that concluded, a conviction was secured in 98% of cases.

Chart 89: Actions taken by local councils in response to complaints received¹¹¹



¹⁰⁸ Source: DAERA Animal Welfare Statistics (2016 to 2022). Available at: <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/animal-welfare-statistics>.

¹⁰⁹ Source: DAERA Animal Welfare Report 2022, page 6. Available at: https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/daera/Animal%20welfare%20service%20delivery%20statistical%20bulletin%202022_0.PDF.

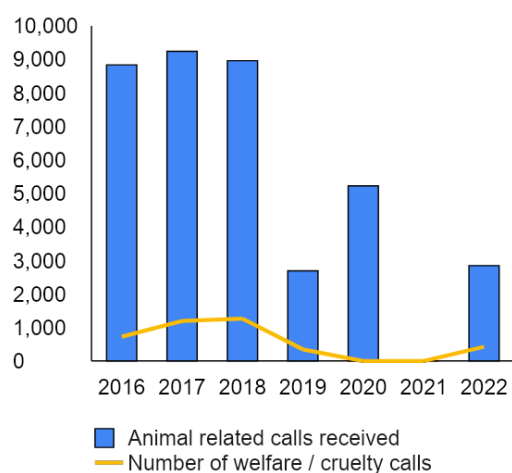
¹¹⁰ Source: DAERA Welfare Report 2022. Available at https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/daera/Animal%20welfare%20service%20delivery%20statistical%20bulletin%202022_0.PDF.

¹¹¹ Prosecutions completed may refer to prosecutions commenced in a previous year.

Enforcement by the PSNI

The Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) also has powers to deal with animal-related incidents, principally animal fighting, wildlife crime and wildlife on roads. Between 2016 to 2022, a total of 37,785 complaints were received by the PSNI, of which 12% related to animal welfare / cruelty.¹¹² Note that some data, including the number of complaints received, is not available for 2021. The total number of complaints has significantly declined since 2019, and in 2022 only 2,844 complaints were received. The number of seizures has been steadily increasing at an annual rate of 45%.

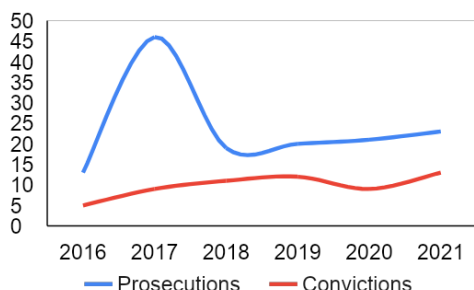
Chart 90: Number of animal-related calls received by PSNI



This has resulted in an increase in the number of animals seized, with the highest annual number seized in 2022 (152 animals). 6% of welfare / cruelty related calls resulted in seizures, with 229 seizures taking place and 636 animals being seized across the period.

The number of prosecutions commenced grew at an annual rate of 19% across the period. The number of prosecutions that resulted in a conviction also increased across the period and, between 2018 and 2022, was an average of 50%. Penalties that have been imposed include prison sentences, monetary penalties and prohibitions from keeping animals.

Chart 91: Number of animal-related offences prosecuted, and convictions secured by the PSNI



Recommendation: We commend DAERA for producing an animal welfare annual report, which provides a top-line overview of animal welfare service delivery by DAERA, local councils and PSNI.¹¹³ We strongly recommend the governments of Wales, Scotland and the UK government produce similar

¹¹² The PSNI statistics are not a recordable offence and are instead held locally. There was a change to the computer systems for statistics which has resulted in the unavailability of certain data for 2020 and 2021. These years have therefore been excluded from the statistic.

¹¹³ DAERA began publishing an animal welfare service delivery statistical bulletin in 2016/17 following a recommendation to do so as part of a post-implementation review of the Welfare of Animals Act (Northern Ireland) 2011.

annual reports about animal welfare enforcement in British nations, which should also include proposed actions to address problem trends and improve service delivery where necessary

Annexes

Annex A: The role of private bodies in animal welfare oversight

Introduction

British animal welfare controls are not just undertaken by statutory bodies. Some animal use industries are wholly or partly overseen by private regulators that set standards, and some of those regulators play a part in the delivery of animal welfare controls. For example, a number of animal welfare regulatory regimes in Britain establish a formal role for accredited bodies and allow members of private certification or inspection schemes to 'earn recognition'. In practice, this means that animal use businesses that can provide evidence of a history of compliance with accredited private standards equal to or above minimum legal requirements are afforded reduced regulatory oversight by statutory bodies.

This type of regulatory model is typically framed as beneficial for compliant businesses and statutory bodies because it means control and oversight mechanisms, such as inspections, can be carried out by professional auditors, whilst statutory bodies can focus their limited resources on non-compliant businesses that pose higher risk.¹¹⁴ However, animal welfare groups are often concerned that private regulators are not sufficiently independent of the communities they regulate, which could lead to conflicts of interest or regulatory capture. Private bodies are also not held to the same transparency standards as statutory bodies, unless it can be argued they are performing a public function.

Which private regulatory bodies are involved in animal welfare standard setting and oversight in Great Britain?

Body	What/who do they set standards for?	Do they inspect/assess members (either themselves or via a certification body)?	Are they or their certification body UKAS accredited?
Assured Food Standards (aka Red Tractor)	Farms, markets, collection centres, poultry catching, transport, slaughterhouses	Y - via various certification bodies (SAI Global, NSF, QWFC, IRQA)	Y - certification bodies
Quality Meat Scotland (QMS)	Farms (cows, sheep, pigs), markets, collection centres, transport, slaughterhouses	Y - via Food Integrity Assurance	N - accreditation in progress
RSPCA Assured	Farms, transporters, slaughterhouses	Y - via Supply Chain In-Sites	Y - certification body
Soil Association	Farms, slaughterhouses	Y	Y
LEAF Marque Standard	Farms	Y - via various certification bodies	
British & Irish Association of Zoos & Aquariums (BIAZA)	Zoos and aquariums	Y	

¹¹⁴ Scott Steedman et al, 'Standards-based Regulation, the Role of Standards and Accreditation in Regulatory Delivery' in Graham Russell and Christopher Hodges (eds), *Regulatory Delivery* (Civil Justice Systems, Hart Publishing 2019) 386.

Kennel Club Assured Breeders Scheme	Dog breeders	Y	N – UKAS accreditation expired in May 2024
Greyhound Board of Great Britain (GBGB)	Greyhound racing, including tracks, trainers and kennels	Y - via NSF International	Y
British Horseracing Authority (BHA)	Horse racing, including racecourses, jockeys and trainers	Y	
National Equine Welfare Council (NEWC)	Equine welfare organisations (e.g. sanctuaries, rehab & rehoming centres)	Y	
British Horse Society	Equine related businesses, including training, riding, trekking, livery, competition and sporting centres. Also has a B&B approval service for accommodation that welcomes horses.	Y	N - accreditation is part of the organisation's current strategic plan
Association of British Riding Schools, Livery Yards and Equestrian Centres (ABRS+)	Riding establishments, livery yards, equestrian centres	Y - Approved members only (Certified members self-certify)	
Governing Council of the Cat Fancy (GCCF) Breeder Scheme	Cat breeders	Y	
Ornamental Aquatic Trade Association (OATA)	Ornamental aquatic species importers, distributors and retailers		
Animal Behaviour & Training Council (ABTC)	Animal trainers and behaviourists	Y - via Practitioner Organisations recognised by the ABTC	N - ABTC have registered their interest in becoming UKAS accredited

In what ways can membership of a private regulatory body impact or reduce oversight by statutory bodies?

Some risk-based regulations allow members of UKAS-accredited private regulatory schemes to 'earn recognition'. For instance, under the Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (England) Regulations 2018 ("LAIR") licensed businesses that are 1. registered with a UKAS-accredited body and 2. have at least one year of compliance history with that body may automatically be considered 'low risk' as part of the local authority inspection process.¹¹⁵ This reduces eligible businesses' regulatory burden as it means they benefit from a longer licence period and fewer inspections. This 'earned recognition' approach to regulation is favoured

¹¹⁵ Defra, 'Statutory guidance: Animal activity licensing process: statutory guidance for local authorities' (17 January 2023) <<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/animal-activities-licensing-guidance-for-local-authorities/animal-activity-licensing-process-statutory-guidance-for-local-authorities>> accessed 24 February 2023.

by the UK Government¹¹⁶ and is well-established in the farming sector (the principle gained traction following the recommendations of a Defra task force designed to reduce the frequency of farm inspections¹¹⁷).

UKAS is the United Kingdom Accreditation Service. It is recognised¹¹⁸ by the UK Government to accredit organisations that provide certification and inspection services, amongst others, against nationally and internationally agreed standards. Its role as the UK's National Accreditation Body is established by the Accreditation Regulations 2009. Some private regulators are UKAS-accredited themselves, whereas others utilise UKAS-accredited external auditing companies to undertake their certification and inspection processes. Formal accreditation is relied upon to enhance the credibility of schemes that assess conformity with standards.

Some sectors are entirely self-regulating, such as horseracing, which is regulated by the British Horseracing Authority, and greyhound racing, which is regulated by the Greyhound Board of Great Britain.

How do private regulatory bodies deal with breaches of their standards?

Not all private regulators publish information about their disciplinary procedures, but of those that do, a range of penalties are used to address breaches of standards. These range from measures designed to bring members into compliance, such as informal advice¹¹⁹ and warnings.¹²⁰ Some schemes place members into special measures¹²¹ or under mentorship¹²² to support them back into compliance. Some schemes also utilise inspections¹²³ or spot-checks,¹²⁴ which may be unannounced.¹²⁵ Most schemes utilise suspension¹²⁶ or termination¹²⁷ of membership for serious breaches. In addition, some regulators, such as the British Horseracing

¹¹⁶ Cabinet Office, 'Regulatory Futures Review' (January 2017) <<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/regulatory-futures-review>> accessed 22 March 2023.

¹¹⁷ Farming Regulation Task Force, 'Striking a balance: reducing burdens; increasing responsibility; earning recognition - A report on better regulation in farming and food businesses' (May 2011) <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/69201/pb13527-farm-reg-task-report.pdf> accessed 22 March 2023.

¹¹⁸ BEIS and UKAS, 'Memorandum of Understanding between Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy and United Kingdom Accreditation Service' (1 January 2021) <<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/memorandum-of-understanding-between-department-for-business-innovation-and-skills-and-united-kingdom-accreditation-service--4>> accessed 24 February 2023.

¹¹⁹ RSPCA Assured, 'Sanctions Guidelines' <<https://www.rspcaassured.org.uk/about-us/sanctions-guidelines/>> accessed 16 March 2023.

¹²⁰ RSPCA Assured, 'Sanctions Guidelines' <<https://www.rspcaassured.org.uk/about-us/sanctions-guidelines/>> accessed 16 March 2023; BIAZA, 'BIAZA Sanctions Policy' (March 2018) <<https://biaza.org.uk/downloader/48>> accessed 16 March 2023.

¹²¹ RSPCA Assured, 'Sanctions Guidelines' <<https://www.rspcaassured.org.uk/about-us/sanctions-guidelines/>> accessed 16 March 2023.

¹²² BIAZA, 'BIAZA Sanctions Policy' (March 2018) <<https://biaza.org.uk/downloader/48>> accessed 16 March 2023.

¹²³ BIAZA, 'BIAZA Complaints and Whistleblowing Policy' (October 2021) <<https://biaza.org.uk/downloader/2230>> accessed 16 March 2023.

¹²⁴ Red Tractor Assurance, 'Membership Rules' <<https://redtractorassurance.org.uk/member-rules/>> accessed 16 March 2023.

¹²⁵ RSPCA Assured, 'Sanctions Guidelines' <<https://www.rspcaassured.org.uk/about-us/sanctions-guidelines/>> accessed 16 March 2023.

¹²⁶ RSPCA Assured, 'Sanctions Guidelines' <<https://www.rspcaassured.org.uk/about-us/sanctions-guidelines/>> accessed 16 March 2023; Red Tractor Assurance, 'Membership Rules' <<https://redtractorassurance.org.uk/member-rules/>> accessed 16 March 2023; BIAZA, 'BIAZA Sanctions Policy' (March 2018) <<https://biaza.org.uk/downloader/48>> accessed 16 March 2023.

¹²⁷ RSPCA Assured, 'Sanctions Guidelines' <<https://www.rspcaassured.org.uk/about-us/sanctions-guidelines/>> accessed 16 March 2023; Red Tractor Assurance, 'Membership Rules' <<https://redtractorassurance.org.uk/member-rules/>> accessed 16 March 2023; BIAZA, 'BIAZA Sanctions Policy' (March 2018) <<https://biaza.org.uk/downloader/48>> accessed 16 March 2023.

Authority¹²⁸ and the Greyhound Board of Great Britain,¹²⁹ may impose fines or disqualify members from engaging in certain activities, such as being on a registered premises.

Some private regulators state that they will report evidence of illegality to the appropriate authorities.¹³⁰

Do private regulatory bodies publish transparency data about their scheme?

Some private bodies publish some data on a periodic basis, including:

- Red Tractor - this scheme publishes quarterly suspension and withdrawal figures, but these are only available for the most recent twelve-month period. According to these figures, over 1,000 members are suspended each quarter, and on average 90 members have their membership withdrawn per quarter.¹³¹ There does not appear to be any recent data about how many inspections it undertakes, but it has around 38,000 members that are involved in animal farming.¹³²
- RSPCA Assured - this scheme publishes top-line data in its annual reviews. According to its 2021 review, it has 4,020 members and the scheme covers 25,157,031 animals.¹³³ The most recent annual review did not include data about the number of assessments it carries out or non-compliances detected, but this data has been published in the past. For instance, the 2020 annual review states that 3,521 assessments were carried out that year, non-compliance was raised on 1,755 visits, and 4,040 non-compliances were detected overall.¹³⁴
- BIAZA - this scheme publishes its number of members in its annual review. It has 117 full members (zoos open to the public and that hold a zoo licence), 6 provisional members (zoos being mentored to full member status), 10 accredited associates (private zoos that don't hold a zoo licence), and 3 educational associates with animals according to its most recent annual review.¹³⁵
- Greyhound Board of Great Britain - this scheme publishes annual injury and retirement data about greyhounds used for racing.¹³⁶ It licences 20 racing tracks,¹³⁷ around 900 trainers¹³⁸ and publishes some regulatory data in its annual review. According to the most recent annual review, it received 31 complaints in 2021, two of which related to welfare.¹³⁹ 7,182 samples were taken from greyhounds in 2021, 11 of which were positive for doping substances.¹⁴⁰

¹²⁸ British Horseracing Authority, 'BHA - Rules of Racing: L BHA Investigations and Disciplinary Action - Disciplinary Powers' <<https://rules.britishhorseracing.com/#!/book/34/chapter/s3489-bha-investigations-and-disciplinary-action/content?section=s3493-disciplinary-powers>> accessed 16 March 2023.

¹²⁹ Greyhound Board of Great Britain, 'Section 8 - Inquiries, Tests & Samples, Disciplinary Powers and Consequences' <<https://rules.gbgb.org.uk/>> accessed 16 March 2023.

¹³⁰ RSPCA Assured, 'Sanctions Guidelines' <<https://www.rspcaassured.org.uk/about-us/sanctions-guidelines/>> accessed 16 March 2023; BIAZA, 'BIAZA Complaints and Whistleblowing Policy' (October 2021) <<https://biaza.org.uk/downloader/2230>> accessed 16 March 2023.

¹³¹ Red Tractor Assurance, 'Compliance Reports' <<https://redtractorassurance.org.uk/about-red-tractor/compliance/quarterly-reports/>> accessed 18 March 2023.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ RSPCA Assured, 'Annual Review 2021' <https://business.rspcaassured.org.uk/media/dvwbu4ir/rspcaass_annualreview2021_a5-portrait_v8_spreads.pdf> accessed 18 March 2023.

¹³⁴ RSPCA Assured, 'Annual Review 2020' <https://business.rspcaassured.org.uk/media/qI0jxvg0/final_annualreview2020.pdf> accessed 18 March 2023.

¹³⁵ BIAZA, '2020 Annual Report' <<https://biaza.org.uk/downloader/1931>> accessed 22 March 2023.

¹³⁶ Greyhound Board of Great Britain, 'Injury and retirement' <<https://www.gbgb.org.uk/welfare-care/injury-and-retirement-data/>> accessed 22 March 2023.

¹³⁷ Greyhound Board of Great Britain, 'Our racecourses' <<https://www.gbgb.org.uk/racing/race-courses/>> accessed 22 March 2023.

¹³⁸ Greyhound Board of Great Britain, 'Trainers and Kennel Staff' <<https://www.gbgb.org.uk/rules-regulation/licensing/trainers-and-kennel-staff/>> accessed 22 March 2023.

¹³⁹ Greyhound Board of Great Britain, '2021 Annual Report and Accounts' <https://gbgb-prod-assets.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/20123715/22224_GBGB-2021-Report-web-update.pdf> accessed 22 March 2023.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

- British Horseracing Authority - this scheme publishes lists of persons who are disqualified or excluded from being licensed, although reasons are not provided in most listings.¹⁴¹ It also makes available disciplinary hearing results.¹⁴² It licences 59 racecourses,¹⁴³ approximately 440 jockeys,¹⁴⁴ and around 600 trainers.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴¹ British Horseracing Authority, 'Disqualified and excluded persons' <<https://www.britishhorseracing.com/disqualified-excluded-persons/>> accessed 22 March 2023.

¹⁴² British Horseracing Authority Judicial Panel, 'Disciplinary / Appeal Hearings' <<https://judicialpanel.britishhorseracing.com/results/>> accessed 22 March 2023.

¹⁴³ British Horseracing Authority, 'Racecourses' <<https://www.britishhorseracing.com/racing/racecourses/>> accessed 22 March 2023.

¹⁴⁴ British Horseracing Authority, 'Jockeys' <<https://www.britishhorseracing.com/racing/participants/jockeys/>> accessed 22 March 2023.

¹⁴⁵ British Horseracing Authority, 'Trainers' <<https://www.britishhorseracing.com/racing/participants/trainers/>> accessed 22 March 2023.

Annex B: Glossary

Term / Acronym	Definition
APHA	Animal and Plant Health Agency.
ASRU	Animals in Science Regulation Unit.
COPFS	Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service.
DAERA	Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs.
EC Non-Compliance Incidents	An incident in which Article 27 of Council Regulation (EC) No 1/2005 on the protection of animals during transport is not complied with.
FTE	Full time equivalent.
FSA	Food Standards Agency.
FSS	Food Standards Scotland.
GBGB	Greyhound Board of Great Britain.
Non-Compliance Incidents	Incidents classified by the FSA as critical or serious.
Other Enforcement Actions	Enforcement actions imposed by the FSA, excluding Non-Compliance Incidents that were shared with the competent authority.
Potential Risk Incidents	Incidents classified by the FSS as category 3, representing a potential risk to animal welfare with no evidence of pain and suffering.
PDSA	People's Dispensary for Sick Animals.
PEL	An establishment licence that must be held by any establishment carrying out regulated animal research procedures.
PIL	A personal licence that must be held by individuals that conduct regulated animal research procedures.
PPL	A project licence that is required in order to conduct research involving regulated animal procedures.
PSNI	The Police Service of Northern Ireland.
Risk Incidents	Potential Risk Incidents and Serious Risk Incidents.
RSPB	The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds.
Serious Risk Incidents	Incidents classified by the FSS as category 4, representing an imminent risk to animal welfare and evidence of pain and suffering.
TB	Tuberculosis.
WCL	Wildlife and Countryside Link.
WECU	Wildlife and Environmental Crime Unity.
Wildlife Crime	Any unlawful act or omission, which affects any wild creature, plant or habitat in Scotland.

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