

**Online sales:
Welsh pets deserve better**



Welsh pets deserve better

In 2017, **488,978** adverts were placed for dogs, cats and rabbits on the three leading classified websites in the UK. In Wales the total number of adverts was **37,179**. We know that tens of thousands of exotic animals as well as thousands of horses were also sold online last year. With the internet now being the go-to place to source a pet we wanted to try and ascertain not only the amount of animals being sold, but also the types of sale that were happening and the key issues that were occurring in adverts.

Blue Cross is a member of the Pet Advertising Advisory Group which has a set of minimum standards that leading sites in the UK are signed up to. This group has been extremely successful at ensuring sites do all they can to keep illegal and unethical adverts off the websites. There is only so much we can expect commercial websites to do in terms of dealing with the issues around the mass selling of animals online; we can and must do more to tackle the irresponsible behaviour of both buyers and sellers.

Rather than focussing on the websites this report is looking at seller and buyer behaviour and aims to offer workable solutions to ensure that animals are bred, sold and rehomed responsibly.

What we did

Blue Cross analysed a sample of just over 2,000 Welsh adverts posted on three of the main classified websites¹ to try and establish trends around how pets are bought and sold online.

As well as analysing adverts we also commissioned a public poll² which looked at issues around pre- purchase knowledge and pet purchasing habits.

TERMINOLOGY

Breeder/seller: An individual selling puppies from a litter that they have either bred themselves or have acquired from another source to sell. It is often very difficult to distinguish between the two on online classified ads.

Rehoming: An individual who has purchased an animal but is no longer able to keep it and is advertising the pet

Rescue: An individual or group who takes unwanted, abandoned, abused, or stray pets and attempts to find suitable homes for them

¹ Gumtree, Pets4Homes and Preloved

² Censuswide survey of 2011 respondents between 24.01.18 - 26.01.18



Recommendations

Registration and licensing of online pet sellers

Blue Cross would like to see a system of registration and licensing for all those who breed and sell pet animals. This would include those sellers who place advertisements on the internet, whether that is on classified websites or social media. A system of registration and licensing would bring much needed visibility and traceability to the trade, increasing consumer protection and better protecting the welfare of the animals being bred and sold across Wales.

Regulation of animal sanctuaries and rescue centres

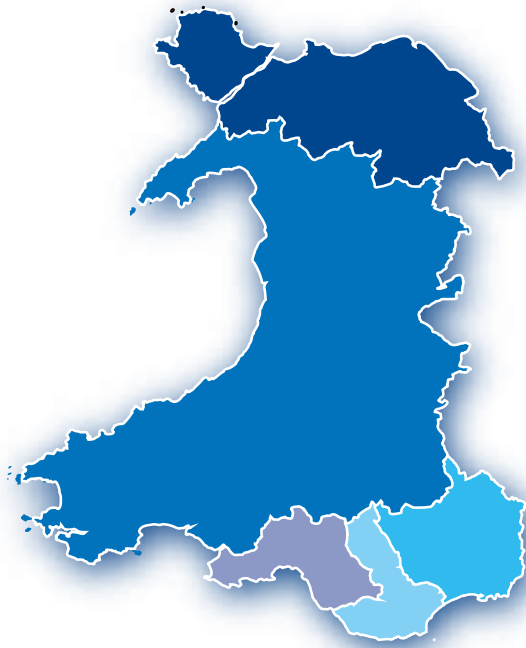
Organisations both large and small rehome and rehabilitate thousands of pets on a daily basis up and down the country. Blue Cross alone rehomed over 8,000 pets in England and Wales in 2017. However, with no regulation of such activities there are occasions where well-meaning individuals become overwhelmed and struggle to provide for the welfare needs of the animals in their care. Blue Cross would like to see statutory regulation to ensure all organisations provide the best possible care for pets and prevent further suffering when a facility is struggling to cope.

No pet sold without correct care advice

Far too many new pet owners start out with very little or incorrect information on how to provide for the welfare needs of their new animals. According to our survey, one in five pet owners didn't receive any information about their pet at the point of sale. We would like to see advice at the point of sale, whether that is in a physical pet shop or online, be made a statutory requirement. This would help to ensure that pet owners are more aware of the welfare requirements of their animals.



Findings

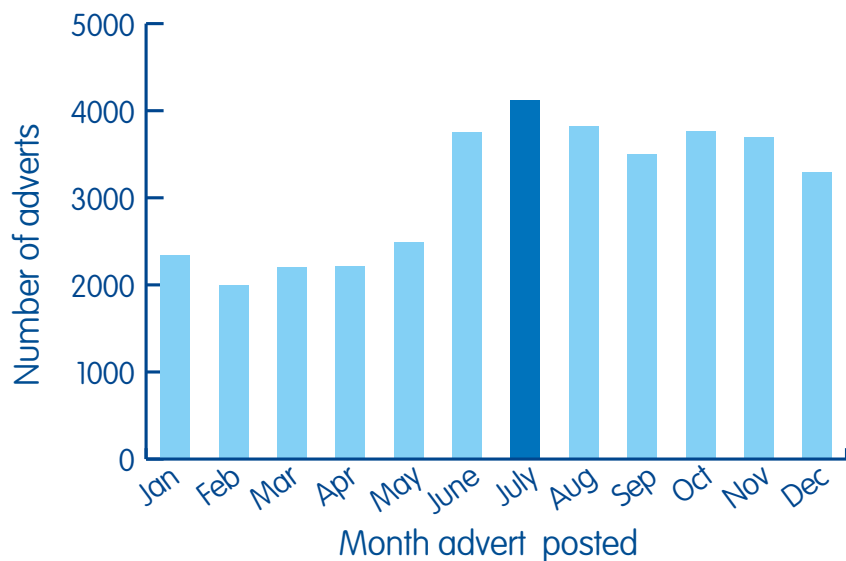


Adverts posted for cats, dogs and rabbits in Wales in 2017 by region.³

North Wales	3,690
Mid and West Wales	7,037
South Wales East	9,260
South Wales Central	8,918
South Wales West	8,274

³Data provided by Hindsight

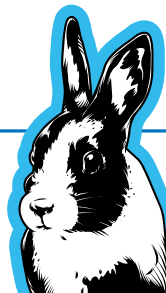
Welsh pet adverts by month



422



2,499



228

Average number of adverts posted in Wales each month

From our sample of 2,000 Welsh adverts we found

Reason given for advertising:					
CATS		DOGS		RABBITS	
Rehoming	29%	Rehoming	23%	Rehoming	39%
Breeder/seller	67%	Breeder/seller	73%	Breeder/seller	52%
Rescue	1%	Rescue	2%	Rescue	1%
Unknown	38%	Unknown	3%	Unknown	8%

- 45% of rabbit owners would consider rehoming their rabbit on social media or a classified website. This is considerably higher than cat or dog owners.
- 39% of adverts rehoming a rabbit offered the hutch as well
- Our public poll showed 38% of rabbit owners did no research into suitable housing

“ Rabbits need to run, jump, stretch up, dig and forage. It is often impossible for them to do this in a hutch. Far too many rabbits are being sold with their existing hutches which do not meet their welfare needs and in some cases compromise the Animal Welfare Act. ”

Blue Cross Senior Animal Behaviourist.

Age of animal when rehomed					
CATS		DOGS		RABBITS	
12 months or less	43%	12 months or less	49%	12 months or less	44%
Over 12 mths	14%	Over 12 months	15%	Over 12 months	17%
Over 24 mths	19%	Over 24 months	17%	Not clear	39%
Not clear	23%	Not clear	19%		

“ Experiences during the first year of a dog’s life make all the difference to future temperament and character. Multiple changes in homes can be extremely stressful for young dogs and can result in owners not being able to deal with their behaviour and needing to rehome them. ”

Blue Cross Senior Animal Behaviourist.



£831 is the **average cost** for a dog listed by a breeder/seller

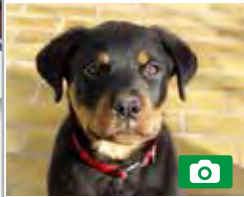
£566 is the **average cost** for a dog listed for rehoming



French Bulldog

Barry, Wales

He was bought for me (I did not want another dog) and now I have been left with him after a break up. He has been with me since he was 7 weeks old. French bulldog, 13 weeks.



Male Rottweiler

Holyhead, Anglesey

Male rottweiler puppy for sale through no fault of his own. He is 8 weeks old very lively and happy puppy I got him thinking my other dog needed some company but turns out 2 dogs is more of a handfull than I thought. Any questions or anything please message me for more details.

Age: 8 weeks

Most common reasons for rehoming:

Rabbits:

1. Not enough time
2. Rabbit is no longer wanted
3. Moving house

Cats:

1. Not accepted by others in household (pets or people)
2. Moving house
3. No longer wanted for breeding/giving up breeding

Dogs:

1. Change in circumstances
2. Not enough time
3. Not accepted by others in household (pets or people)

Our public poll showed:

- 78% of owners did not receive any information on the pet's suitability to live with other animals on purchase
- 40% of dog owners underestimated how much time it takes to look after a dog
- 54% of dog owners and 51% of cat owners believe the cost of owning their pet is more than they anticipated

Top three breeds advertised:

Rabbits:

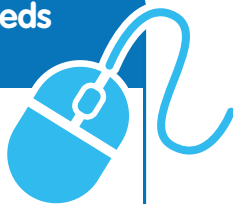
1. Mini lop
2. Lionhead
3. Netherland dwarf

Cats:

1. Bengal
2. British short hair
3. Ragdoll

Dogs:

1. French bulldog
2. Chihuahua
3. Pug



Baby bunny

Bridgend

Had this lovely rabbit about 3 months now and the kids have just lost interest so want her to go to a home that can give her more attention. Comes with cage and food

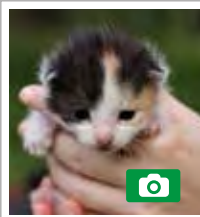


Akita Pup

Isle of Anglesey

It is with big regret we have to sell our Akita pup we've only had her 2 weeks the problem is she's attacked the cat and if me and a friend hadn't intervened she would have killed it so it's not fair on the cat to keep her in case it happens again.

Now



Kitten

Conwy

Beautiful 9 week old kitten. Loving nature. Great with children. Litter trained. Comes with new cat carrier. Litter tray. Toys. Food. Sadly rehoming due to older dog not accepting kitten

Now

Age: 9 weeks | Ready to leave: Now



Bulldog

Rhyl

Chunk has had his turn of bulldog problems. He has had 2 cherry eyes removed. He has had a face lift to lift his folds off his eyes. Might need a little one again in the future.

Age: 9 months | Ready to leave: Now

- 1 in 5 pet owners didn't receive any information about their pet at the point of sale

- 86% of ads for purebred dogs did not state if either the parents or puppy had been tested for hereditary conditions
- Our public poll found 36% of dog owners are not aware of hereditary health conditions associated with the breed they purchased

* All photos used in the adverts are stock images however the text is from genuine online adverts posted in Wales in 2017