

OUR IMPACT IN 2024



Pets change lives
We change theirs

Who we are

We have been changing the lives of sick, injured, and homeless pets since 1897. Pets are at the heart of everything we do and every month we continue to help thousands more.

We love the way that pets can make such an amazing difference to the people they live with. So we offer lifelong support and advice to help that unique relationship thrive.

We change lives. For pets, for people, for life. We believe that pets and their people should be able to enjoy lifelong care and support, and we won't rest until that goal becomes reality.

Rehoming

Finding loving families for cats, dogs, horses and small pets across the UK.

Veterinary

Providing affordable care for sick and injured pets when their family can't afford private treatment.

Behaviour

Providing behavioural expertise so that pets, and their people, can live healthy, happy lives.

Pet loss support

Supporting people who are struggling to cope with the sad loss of a pet through death, theft or having to give up a much-loved pet.

Education

Giving talks and providing advice to people who may need a little help now, or in the future.

Leo

When 10-month-old Leo arrived at Blue Cross as part of a group of rescue ponies, he was unhandled and terrified of people. His natural instinct was to kick out and try to escape, making it a challenge for our team to give initial vet care, including blood testing for any infectious diseases.

It took our dedicated team months of gentle encouragement to build Leo's confidence and trust in humans. Now 20 months old, Leo is completely transformed from the terrified little foal that first came to us. He can now be groomed and cared for by the vet and farrier, and has a bright future. He is happily out on loan in an amazing new home where he can continue to flourish.



Working hard to reach more pets and people

2024 was an extraordinary year for Blue Cross – one marked by remarkable achievements, resilience in the face of challenges, and a focus to our mission. It is also a moment to look ahead, as we continue to deliver on ambitious goals to reach more pets and people across the United Kingdom.

During 2024 we expanded our veterinary services, increased the number of pets helped through our rehoming service, grew our Pet Loss Support service and distributed over 1.7 million pet meals through our pet food banks.

These achievements would not have been possible without the dedication of our people and the wonderful support we receive from people like you.

Beyond our direct services, we actively engaged with decision makers in UK parliaments to fight for the rights and welfare of pets and their owners.

We will not rest until every pet enjoys a healthy, happy life with people who love them. But we can only do this with the continued support of people like you: our generous donors, volunteers, employees, legacy pledgers, corporate partners and supporters.

Thank you!



Chris Burghes
Chief Executive MBE



On average

2,575

volunteers work with us every month

A huge thank you to them all

All figures quoted are for 2024, unless stated otherwise.



Another year of changing lives

3,122

pets helped
by our Veterinary
Care Fund



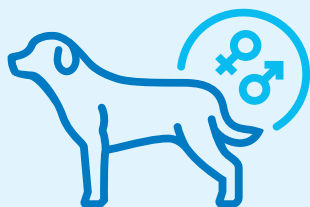
6,898

pets helped
through behaviour
interventions



1,684

dogs neutered
through the XL Bully
Scheme



217,584

hours of volunteer time



140,109

people
reached
through our
education services



3.3m

visits to our
pet advice
pages
on our website



For more information about our activities in 2024, you can read our Annual Report at bluecross.org.uk/publications

27,184

pets helped
by our veterinary services



7,809*

pets helped
by our rehoming and
fostering services



*Figure includes horses helped

30,689†

**emails/calls answered
and online interventions**
by our pet loss team

(including new Facebook group members)



1,005

horses helped

through our home
direct, fostering and
centre based activities



1,738,624

pets fed for a day

by our pet food banks



34,993

pets helped by Blue Cross



Expanding our veterinary services

Thanks to the generosity of our supporters and the commitment of our veterinary teams around the UK, we continued to provide affordable veterinary care to ensure that as many pets as possible receive the treatment they need.

Against a challenging backdrop of national workforce shortages and rising costs, we managed to increase the number of pets and owners we helped.

Supporting our rehoming centres

Vets from our London hospitals have continued to make weekly visits to our Hertfordshire centre, and offered remote consultations, resulting in significant welfare benefits for the pets in our care and substantially reduced external costs. Such is the success of this model that we are exploring expanding the approach to other centres.

Remote consultations

Towards the end of the year, thanks to a generous donation, we expanded the technical provision for remote

consultations at our hospitals with the aim of giving more access for clients, at less stress to their pets. It also provides more flexible working options for our veterinary teams.



Autumn

“Autumn means the world to me.” Coral, a pensioner, is very grateful for the care her beloved 12-year-old elderly collie, Autumn, receives at Blue Cross Victoria animal hospital. Autumn suffers with arthritis and a chronic dry eye condition and recently needed treatment for a urine infection. Medication prescribed by the team at Blue Cross Victoria helps Coral to manage Autumn’s arthritis and eye condition and helps to give Autumn a good quality of life.

27,184

Pets helped by our veterinary services (25,416 in 2023)

including:

3,122

pets helped by our Veterinary Care Fund (1,313 in 2023)

1,684

through the XL Bully Scheme

Veterinary Care Fund

In response to the growing number of people finding it hard to afford veterinary care in the UK, we expanded our Veterinary Care Fund (VCF) during 2024.

To meet the rising demand for low-cost veterinary care, the number of participating veterinary practices expanded from 470 in December 2023 to 1,621 in December 2024. This allowed us to increase the number of pets helped by more than double compared to the previous year.

The incredible impact of our VCF in 2024 is thanks to the extraordinary efforts of our team responsible for processing VCF grants and also supporting teams such as finance.

XL Bully Scheme

We also collaborated with the RSPCA and Battersea Dogs and Cats Home to launch the 'XL Bully Scheme', utilising our extensive network of veterinary practices to help the owners of nearly 1,700 dogs meet the mandatory neutering deadlines of the new legislation.

Based on the postcodes of participating practices, the VCF is now covering
92% of the UK



“

I became disabled and housebound in 2023, and she [my dog] has been my rock. She is elderly and also has a neurological condition, so we try to look after each other. When she became seriously ill, I was very scared about whether I would be able to afford her treatment. She is more important to me than anything. I was so grateful to Blue Cross.

”

“

We could not afford to have the leg amputation that Bertie needed on our own at this time, but Bertie might not have survived much longer while we tried to save for this bill. The fact you contributed £300 towards this meant he could get the treatment he needed a lot sooner and probably saved his life and for that we will be forever grateful.

Bertie has made a full recovery and although is one leg down he's a very happy dog again.

Thank you so much x

”

Increasing the impact of our rehoming and fostering services

Another key strategic goal is to increase the impact of our rehoming and fostering services to help over 10,000 pets a year by 2026. Thanks to the efforts of our amazing people, that goal felt a lot closer by the end of 2024.

We helped 7,809 pets through our rehoming services in 2024 (an increase of 31 per cent on 2023). Foster home placements also increased by 46 per cent year on year.

Cats, dogs and small pets

In 2024 we witnessed the impact of dramatic changes to Blue Cross services that focus on the rehoming of dogs, cats and small pets, with the aim of enabling us to increase the number of pets helped, in a more cost-effective way. As a result, the number of cats, dogs and small pets we helped increased dramatically from 4,999 in 2023 to 6,804 in 2024.

We faced some staffing challenges at the beginning of the year, but thanks to a successful recruitment drive, we ended

the year with a strong team in place across all our sites.

Cat microchipping

Blue Cross has long campaigned for compulsory cat microchipping in the UK, so we were delighted when this came into force in June 2024. To support cat owners, our rehoming and fostering sites implanted 326 free microchips during the year, making it easier for lost or stray pet cats to be reunited with their owners.



7,809

pets helped by rehoming and fostering services (5,966 in 2023)

2,234

pets spent time in foster care (1,525 in 2023)

962

pets helped by Home Direct (830 in 2023)

In 2024 your support also helped us...

- Increase our fostering network, with 585 new fosterers
- Restructure our horse services, resulting in 1,005 horses helped through our fostering, Home Direct and centre based activities in 2024 (up 3 per cent on 2023)

Behaviour services

With demand for our behaviour services increasing, our team worked tirelessly throughout 2024 to support owners by resolving behavioural issues and reducing the need for rehoming.

The rise in cases is driven by a number of factors, including the cost-of-living crisis, which has made it harder for people to access affordable support for their pets. Also, an increase in irresponsible private breeding has resulted in pets that are predisposed to health and behavioural issues. Another factor is the long-term impact of the pandemic, which prevented thousands of UK pets from receiving essential socialisation.

The expansion of our team in 2025, with a dedicated behaviour specialist based at each of our sites, will allow us to help even more pets.

6,898

pets helped through
behaviour interventions
(5,124* in 2023)

* This figure has been adjusted as it was previously understated.

1,387

external consultations
(891 in 2023)

Titch

Having come to Blue Cross after his owner could no longer care for him due to ill health, nine-month-old Titch was understandably stressed and confused. Our team worked hard to help Titch settle into his new environment, and he was also given medication by our vet for his anxiety. Our specialist Rehabilitation Trainer and Behaviour Advisor gave Titch training sessions several times a day to help him with everyday activities from walks and car journeys, to socialising with other dogs. After 56 days in our care, Titch was ready for a fresh start with a new family in nearby Portsmouth.



Growing our Pet Loss Support service

This special service celebrated its 30th anniversary in 2024. It also made a difference to thousands of people struggling with the loss of a pet.

In 2023 we changed the name of this important and valued service from the Pet Bereavement Support Service to Pet Loss Support. We wanted to be clear that we are here for people experiencing every type of pet loss, not just bereavement.

People can call us for support if their situation changes and they have to part with a beloved pet, if they are worried or upset about a missing pet or have pets diagnosed with a life limiting illness.

We responded to 30,689[‡] requests for support during 2024, which has already exceeded our 2026 goal of 30,000 each year.

To meet rising demand, we increased the number of volunteers trained and active to 307 (from 246 at the beginning

of the year). This included more male volunteers handling calls, as we are well aware that pet loss affects men as well as women. We also introduced new initiatives for children in conjunction with education magazines.

In 2024 your support also helped us...

- Introduce specialised grief support training for 132 new volunteers
- Raise awareness of the service through a nationwide media campaign

30,689[‡]

requests for support
(20,381 in 2023)

15,390[‡]

telephone calls and emails
answered (15,330 in 2023)

5,709[‡]

webchat conversations
(5,051 in 2023)

9,590*

new Facebook group
members

*not measured previously



Responsible dog ownership

Responsible dog ownership is key to the prevention of many welfare issues and dangerous incidents involving dogs. That's why another of our big goals is to develop a shared approach to tackling the issue.

Throughout 2024, we continued to work on several fronts to promote and champion responsible dog ownership. We partnered with 40 police forces and local authorities around the UK to implement the Responsible Dog Ownership Course (RDOC). We raised the issue in UK parliaments and we continued to support and educate pet owners of all ages.

In addition, we supported teams of Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) to deliver education sessions in primary schools, with the aim of improving children's knowledge and understanding of how to behave around dogs.

XL bully ban

We feel strongly that breed specific legislation does not work. However, as new legislation came into force in 2024, we continued to work with UK governments and other bodies to minimise the impact of the XL bully ban.

562

people attended a RDOC
(160 in 2023)

30

RDOC courses (13 in 2023)



Pet food banks

Pets at Home and their charity, the Pets Foundation, kindly continued to support our pet food bank service throughout 2024, with collection bins in stores nationwide, where customers could donate pet food.

In addition, Pets at Home and the Pets Foundation ran a highly successful national event in the summer to promote and raise money for the service. Customers could donate directly or purchase pre-prepared food parcels for distribution to Blue Cross pet food banks. The three-week event raised an incredible £456,000[‡] – and 60,000 food parcels were distributed.

Throughout the year our community project team continued to work with our donation points and human food banks in communities across the UK, helping to ensure pet food reached the pets and people who really needed it.

Thanks to your support...

1,738,624
pets were fed for one day
(1,576,805 in 2023).

At the end of 2024 we had:

Blue Cross sites where people can donate goods	35
Blue Cross sites where people can pick up food	6[‡]
Pets at Home stores where people can donate goods	454
Local food banks being supplied with pet food	523[‡]



Education

During 2024 we continued to educate children, young people and adults, helping to create a nation of responsible, caring pet owners.

Online live super sessions

We ran four online super sessions during 2024 – Careers, People and Pet Safety, Animals in WW2, and Christmas. These sessions reached over 31,000 young people.

Life on a lead

In 2024 we held a ‘Life on a lead’ webinar for people who have a dog who has to remain on a lead at all times for behavioural or legal reasons. Over 300 people joined the webinar.

Dotty

Dotty already had nine young rabbits with her when she was brought in to our Southampton centre, and nine days later gave birth to five more.

This big family received lots of care, attention and treatment over the next three months before being ready for rehoming.



Protecting your postie

Dog bites are a recognised risk for postal workers, with over 2,000 cases recorded last year. Working with Royal Mail, we ran three webinars in 2024, educating pet owners on how to protect their postal workers. If a postal worker is concerned about an aggressive dog, Royal Mail will send a letter to the owner explaining that they could have their postal delivery stopped if the concerns aren't addressed and recommending they sign up to a Blue Cross webinar.

Pet Education Partnership (PEP)

Blue Cross is proud to be part of the Pet Education Partnership, an exciting collaboration of eight UK animal welfare charities, working together to educate school children aged 5 to 11. In 2024 we ran two webinars which reached 32,218 children.

62,011

People reached in person
(31,348 in 2023)

72,501

Virtual interactions
(22,062 in 2023)

5,597

Partnerships
(6,996 in 2023)

Campaigning for pets

In 2024, we continued to use our position as one of the UK's leading pet welfare charities to voice our concerns and champion the wellbeing of pets.

Greyhound racing

Blue Cross is proud to be part of the Cut the Chase coalition, in partnership with RSPCA, Dogs Trust, Hope Rescue and Greyhound Rescue Wales. Together, we are calling for a phased end to greyhound racing. The coalition continued to raise concerns in UK parliaments about the inadequate welfare standards greyhounds experience at every stage of their lives. Particularly when it comes to kennelling and the transportation of dogs, as well as the number and severity of injuries sustained during racing.

Throughout 2024 we also continued the Blue Cross 'Don't race. Embrace.' campaign. Over 115,500 people signed our petition calling on the UK government to phase out greyhound

racing over five years and this was handed into 10 Downing Street in October 2024.

In 2024 your support also helped us...

- Raise our concerns in the House of Commons about the negative impact of fireworks on pets and people
- Continue to campaign for a ban on shock collars in England
- Hold an event at the House of Commons to launch our manifesto 'It's a dog's life'. Over 70 MPs attended and engaged in valuable discussion on the issues raised.



Our plans for the future

Thanks to your support, we have increased our impact in 2024. However, we have set ourselves challenging targets for 2025 to ensure that we can have an even greater impact on pets and the people who love them.

Sustainably expand our veterinary services

By the end of 2026 we aim to help over 28,000 pets a year, so we plan to take a positive step towards that goal with a target of helping 27,000 pets by the end of 2025.

Alongside this challenging target, our focus will be on the sustainability of our veterinary services, to ensure we can provide accessible and affordable veterinary care for pets long into the future.

Increase the impact of our rehoming and fostering teams

Our strategic aim is to be helping over 10,000 pets a year by 2026. However, we truly believe this goal is achievable by the end of 2025. New processes are creating a truly client-focused service across the country, enabling us to reach more pets.

Grow our Pet Loss Support service

We have already exceeded our goal to respond to 30,000 calls for support each year, so we will be exploring other ways to help even more people through the difficult experience of losing a pet. This will include increasing awareness of the service through targeted campaigns and partnerships.

We will also be developing new resources to support those grieving the loss of a pet and exploring ways that we can generate income through the service.

Develop a shared approach to tackle the issue of responsible dog ownership

By the end of 2026 we will have developed our Blue Cross approach to tackle the issue of responsible dog ownership and have committed to a long-term plan to achieve it.

The focus in 2025 will be to strengthen partnerships with local authorities and police forces, to deliver impactful education and awareness programmes and expand the reach of our Responsible Dog Ownership Courses.

Your support is vital

2024 has been a year of delivering incredible impact for more pets and people. However, with increasing numbers of owners struggling to afford veterinary care and food for their pets, your continuing support is more important than ever.

Thank you!

For every £1 invested in fundraising we received

£7.77*

(£6.47 in 2023)

*This figure has been adjusted since the first printed version of this report. Please see our annual report for our full financial statement.

Baby and Hope

Caroline registered her beloved cats, Baby and Hope, with our Pet Peace of Mind service. So, when she needed to move into a hospice, we were there to take care of them.

Baby and Hope received all the care and affection they needed while they were with us, but we knew they'd be happiest as family pets once again. Our team worked tirelessly to find them a new home together, and we were delighted when they were adopted as a pair, just as Caroline hoped for.

When Caroline passed away, she left us a gift in her Will, so that we can continue to care for pets like Baby and Hope when their owners no longer can.



Thank you

As a charity that receives no government funding (with the unusual exception of the coronavirus government grants), we are very grateful for your vital support.

Whether you donate, volunteer, raise money in the workplace or have pledged a gift in your Will – you make an incredible difference.

Together we change the lives of thousands of pets and the people who love them.

If you would like further information about our work, please call our supporter care team on:

0300 790 9903

**info@bluecross.org.uk
or visit: bluecross.org.uk**



**Pets change lives
We change theirs**

Blue Cross is a charity that has been helping sick, injured and homeless pets since 1897. Registered charity number: 224392 (England and Wales), SC040154 (Scotland).