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Animal welfare

Owning and caring for an animal can be a source of great enjoyment. It is also a big responsibility. Find out how to take care of animals and what to do if you are concerned about an animal's welfare.

Caring for animals

If you own or are responsible for an animal, you must make sure that all of its needs are met, including:

- a suitable environment
- a suitable diet
- the opportunity to exhibit normal behaviour patterns
- being housed with, or apart from, other animals
- being protected from pain, suffering, injury and disease

The following tips and advice will help you to take care of your pet's needs and also highlights the rules that you need to be aware of in Northern Ireland:

- [Cats](#)
- [Dogs](#)
- [Horses](#)
- [Keeping chickens](#)
- [Rabbits](#)
- [Pet hygiene](#)

If you fail to meet your pet's welfare needs or cause unnecessary suffering, you could be prosecuted.

Parents or guardians of children under 16 are responsible for any animal that child owns or is in charge of. If you can't take care of your animal at any time, you must make arrangements for someone else to look after it.

The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) has produced codes of practice to help you understand your animal's needs.

- [Farmed and non-farmed animal welfare](#) 

If you are unsure about any aspect of taking care of an animal, you should seek advice from an expert. You can find your local veterinary practice using the link below.

- [Find a vet](#) 

If you're concerned about an animal's welfare

If you are concerned that animals, including pets and farmed animals, are not being taken care of properly by their owners, you can report it. You can also report concerns about the welfare of wild animals, wildlife crime or criminal activity involving animals, such as dog fighting.

The organisation responsible depends on the type of animal involved and in some cases, the nature of the welfare issue. Find out who to contact below.

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Animal welfare and pets

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Pets and non-farmed animals – local councils

Contact your local council if you are concerned about the welfare of domestic pets, including horses, and non-farmed animals:

- [Animal welfare - local councils](#)

Farmed animals – DAERA

Contact DAERA if you are concerned about the welfare of farmed animals or animals kept in riding establishments, boarding kennels, pet shops or zoos.

- [Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs](#)

Weekends – contact your local private veterinary practice or police station who will pass the information to a DAERA officer:

- [Find a vet](#) 
- contact [Police Service of Northern Ireland \(PSNI\)](#)

Wild animals and criminal activity involving animals - PSNI

Contact the [PSNI](#) if you are concerned about the welfare of wild animals or suspect wildlife crime, for example:

- badger baiting
- bird of prey persecution
- destroying or disturbing bat roosts
- release into the wild of a non-native species
- trapping wildlife illegally
- trade in endangered species
- poisoning of birds
- deer poaching




Also contact the PSNI if an animal (other than a wild animal) is wandering on the road or if an animal is being used for other criminal related activity, for example, dog fighting.

- [Police Service of Northern Ireland](#)

After you report a welfare concern

Officers investigating complaints can take a range of actions including giving advice, issuing verbal and written warnings, issuing improvement notices, taking animals into their possession and prosecution.

More useful links

- [Animal welfare and pets](#), includes tips on caring for dogs, cats, chickens, horses
- [Advice on buying a pet](#) 
- [Animal welfare and wildlife crime](#) 
- [Pet Advertising Advisory Group](#)  - if you've bought an animal from a classified advert or website that has turned out to be a poorly or problem pet or are concerned about a pet being advertised for sale, find out how to report it

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Related sites

[gov.uk](#)



Animal welfare - local councils

Contact your local council if you are concerned about the welfare of domestic pets, including horses, and non-farmed animals.

Belfast City Council

- phone: 028 9027 0431
- email: animalwelfare@belfastcity.gov.uk
- website: [Report an animal welfare issue](#)

Eastern region

This region covers Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council; and Ards and North Down District Council.

- phone: 028 9049 4567
- email: animalwelfare@castlereagh.gov.uk
- Lisburn and Castlereagh website: [Welfare of animals](#)
- Ards and North Down website: [Animal welfare](#)

Northern region

This region covers Mid and East Antrim District Council; Causeway Coast and Glens District Council; and Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council.

- phone: 028 2563 3134
- email: animal.welfare@midandeantrim.gov.uk
- Mid and East Antrim website: [Animal Welfare](#)
- Causeway Coast and Glens website: [Animal Welfare](#)
- Antrim and Newtownabbey website: [Animal Welfare](#)

Southern region

This region covers Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council; and Newry, Mourne and Down District Council.

- phone: 028 3751 5800
- email: animalwelfare@armaghbanbridgecraigavon.gov.uk
- Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon website: [Animal Welfare](#)
- Newry, Mourne and Down website: [Animal Welfare](#)

Western region

This region covers Fermanagh and Omagh District Council; Derry City and Strabane District Council; and Mid Ulster District Council.

- phone: 028 8225 6226
- email: animalwelfare@fermanaghomagh.gov.uk
- Fermanagh and Omagh website: [Welfare of Animals](#)
- Derry City and Strabane website: [Welfare of Animals](#)
- Mid Ulster website: [Animal Welfare](#)

In this section

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- [Government departments in Northern Ireland](#)
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Office hours and emergencies

Note that all emails sent to the above email addresses will only be responded to during office hours: Monday to Friday, 9.00 am to 5.00 pm (excluding public and bank holidays).

For emergency welfare cases out-of-hours, call the numbers above and you will be directed to the out-of-hours service.

Farmed animals

If you are concerned about the welfare of farmed animals or animals kept in riding establishments, boarding kennels, pet shops or zoos, contact the [Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs](#).

If it is an emergency outside normal office hours contact, your local vet or the PSNI:

- [Find a vet](#) 
- [Police Service of Northern Ireland](#)

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