



Animal Welfare  
Service Delivery  
Statistical Bulletin  
2016/17



Department of  
**Agriculture, Environment  
and Rural Affairs**  
[www.daera-ni.gov.uk](http://www.daera-ni.gov.uk)



# Background

In Northern Ireland, the welfare of animals is protected by the Welfare of Animals Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 (the 2011 Act). The 2011 Act includes a duty of care in respect of all “protected animals” (i.e. animals under the control of a person whether permanently or temporarily). Responsibility for the welfare of an animal remains with the owner at all times.

The 2011 Act sets out offences regarding animal welfare, for example: it is an offence to fail to take reasonable steps to ensure that the welfare needs of an animal are met; and it is an offence to take action, or fail to take action, that causes an animal to suffer unnecessarily.

The three bodies that are responsible for the enforcement of the 2011 Act are:

- **Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA)** (farmed animals only);
- **Councils** (non-farmed animals, such as domestic pets and horses);
- **Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI)** (wildlife crime, animals on the road and other criminal activity such as dog fighting).

Enforcement officers will investigate complaints and take action to ensure the owner or keeper complies with the legislation.

A review of implementation of the 2011 Act was completed in 2015 and, as a result, a number of recommendations were made regarding the animal welfare service. One such recommendation (recommendation no. 40) is that DAERA should produce an annual report setting out information relevant to the public in relation to the animal welfare service provided by each of the three enforcement bodies. This report is the first such report and reflects statistical information that has been provided to DAERA.

# Department of Agriculture, Environment & Rural Affairs (DAERA)

## Welfare and Enforcement Branch

DAERA enforces the Welfare of Farmed Animals Regulations (NI) 2012 (the 2012 Regulations), which were made under the 2011 Act. The work on the ground is delivered by DAERA Veterinary Service Inspectors and Veterinary Officers (VOs) located across 10 local DAERA Direct offices. DAERA also has responsibility for the licensing and inspection of petshops, and of animal boarding, riding and zoological establishments, under the Welfare of Animals Act (NI) 1972. During these inspections, animal welfare is considered.

Veterinary Service Inspectors have a range of options when dealing with an animal welfare case: providing advice; giving a warning; issuing the owner with a legally binding Improvement Notice; and prosecution.

The following information outlines enforcement actions by DAERA.

### Farmed Animal Welfare Inspections

During period 01 January 2016 to 31 December 2016, 1,100 production site inspections for compliance with animal welfare requirements were completed. The overall compliance rate was 90%, a result which includes risk based and randomly selected sites.

#### Inspections carried out, as a result of a complaint being received:

No. of inspections carried out following anonymous complaint.	<b>125</b>
No. of inspections where a breach was detected.	<b>10</b>
No. of inspections where no breach was detected.	<b>115</b>

No. of inspections carried out following non-anonymous complaint.	<b>101</b>
No. of inspections where a breach was detected.	<b>12</b>
No. of inspections where no breach was detected.	<b>89</b>

#### Welfare of Animals investigations closed during period 01 April 2016 to 31 March 2017

Case dropped	Compliance achieved	Warning letter issued	Formal caution delivered	Convicted in Court	Dismissed in Court	TOTAL
13	2	2	0	20	2	39

The penalties for animal welfare convictions included fines, liability for costs, community service and disqualifications from keeping animals.

# Regional Councils' Animal Welfare Service

The 2011 Act enables Councils to enforce the legislation in respect of non-farmed animals, for example, domestic pets of any vertebrate species and equines. Councils have adopted a collaborative regional approach to delivering the animal welfare legislation, and 9 Animal Welfare Officers enforce the Act. The Officers have statutory enforcement powers and can take a range of action to improve the welfare of non-farmed animals including, providing advice, issuing an improvement notice, taking animals into their possession (in extreme cases of suffering), and initiating prosecution action.

The following information outlines enforcement actions by the Regional Councils' Animal Welfare Service during the period **01 April 2016 to 31 March 2017**.

No. of complaints received by Animal Welfare April 2016 - March 2017.	<b>6332</b>
No. of those established to be Non Welfare Related cases.	<b>1291</b>
No. of those established to be Animal Welfare related cases.	<b>5041</b>

## **Breakdown of follow up action taken on 5041 Animal Welfare related cases:**

No. of visits carried out.* (NB - some cases may have required more than one visit).	<b>9460</b>
No. of cases established to be unfounded following visits.	<b>618</b>
No. of improvement notices issued.	<b>235</b>
No. of formal cautions issued.	<b>13</b>
No. of disposal orders issued.	<b>21</b>
No. of cases where seizures took place.	<b>173</b>
Total animals seized.	<b>283</b>
No. of April16 - March17 cases where prosecution action commenced.	<b>25</b>
No. of prosecutions completed during April 16 - March 17. (NB - figure includes cases commenced prior to Apr 16).	<b>21</b>
Outcome of completed prosecutions during April 16 - March 17.	<b>21 convictions</b>

**\* All contact visits receive informal advice, unless they result in formal action.**

The 21 convictions resulted in a variety of penalties comprising of fines; liability for costs; community service; conditional discharge; restrictions or bans on keeping animals for varying periods; custodial sentences.

### Breakdown of follow up action taken on 1291 Non Welfare Related cases

No. referred to DAERA, (e.g. farmed animal complaints).	<b>86</b>
No. referred to dog wardens (e.g. stray dogs).	<b>499</b>
No. referred to Environmental Health (e.g. dirty yards/noise complaints).	<b>21</b>
No. referred to PSNI (e.g. animal fighting/snared animals/straying on roads).	<b>81</b>
No. classified as others (e.g. queries relating to rehoming or adopting referred to animal sanctuaries).	<b>604</b>

# Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI)

The 2011 Act gives the PSNI power to deal with welfare offences involving wild animals, and offences such as animal fighting, or where other criminal activities are involved. In addition to its responsibilities under the 2011 Act, the PSNI has responsibility for animals on roads and wildlife crime.

The following information outlines enforcement actions by the PSNI during the period **01 January 2016 to 31 December 2016**.

No. of calls received which were in respect of animal related incidents.	<b>8833</b>
No. of which were in respect of non-welfare cases (e.g. animals on the road, wildlife queries).	<b>8109</b>
No. of which were animal welfare/cruelty related.	<b>724</b>
No. of incidents which led to seizure.	<b>6</b>
Total no. of animals seized.	<b>25</b>
No. of offences prosecuted.	<b>13</b>
No. of prosecutions resulting in conviction.	<b>5</b>
Penalties incurred in relation to the 5 convictions.	<b>Suspended sentences</b>

A variety of actions were taken on the 724 reported animal welfare/cruelty related cases which included:

- information/advice dispensed with no visit required;
- visit carried out and information/advice dispensed;
- referrals made to another agency as appropriate, e.g. local council Animal Welfare Officer/Dog Warden/Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs;
- no offence disclosed.

**PLEASE REFER TO THE DAERA WEBSITE FOR FURTHER INFORMATION,  
INCLUDING CONTACT DETAILS IF YOU WISH TO SPEAK TO SOMEONE ABOUT  
AN ANIMAL WELARE ISSUE.**

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





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