

Summary:  
South of England

# PAW

PDSA ANIMAL WELLBEING

# REPORT

# 2018

The essential  
insight into  
the wellbeing  
of UK pets

# Methodology

This summary provides an overview of key findings for pets in the South of England from our 2018 PDSA Animal Wellbeing (PAW) Report.

We surveyed a demographically representative sample of 4,639 UK pet owners in partnership with YouGov for the main Report, and we present here the results for the subset of these owners living in the South of England.

Our total sample size was 1057 dog, cat, and rabbit owners; aged 18 or over; and living in the South East and South West, but excluding London and the East of England ("the South"). Fieldwork was undertaken between 9th and 19th January 2018. The survey was conducted online and statistically analysed by YouGov.

Percentages were rounded to the nearest whole number. A minimum sample size of 50 was set to ensure robust results.

UK figures are taken from the main PAW Report and full methods are detailed therein. They have only been given for comparison where regional results are **statistically significantly different** from them. These have been highlighted in bold for clarity.

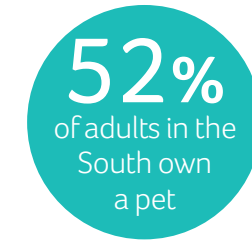
## In the South of England we surveyed...

428 dog owners  
529 cat owners  
100 rabbit owners

You can download the full PAW Report from our website [pdsa.org.uk/pawreport](https://pdsa.org.uk/pawreport)

# Population

These estimates are calculated using a combination of data collected for the PAW Report, a nationally representative survey of UK adults, and official government statistics.



When calculating population figures in the rest of this report we've taken the population figure here, multiplied it by the percentage, then rounded to two significant figures.



23%

of adults in the South own a dog  
(1.9 million dogs)



29%

of adults in the South own a cat  
(2.9 million cats)



2%

of adults in the South own a rabbit  
(200,000 rabbits)

# 100 years

As the UK's leading veterinary charity, PDSA is committed to identifying and addressing barriers to pet wellbeing. After 100 years of working every single day to improve the lives of our nation's pets, we can reflect on how far we have come, and how far we still have to go.

The findings of our PAW Report continue to provide a valuable insight into the wellbeing of our nation's pets. We're incredibly proud that over the last eight years these findings have helped form the basis of campaigns and collaborative initiatives across the animal welfare sector and veterinary profession, to help improve pet wellbeing and give our nation's pets the great lives they deserve.



# The 5 Welfare Needs

This report is structured around owners' knowledge and application of the Animal Welfare Act and the 5 Welfare Needs that are enshrined within them.

## In the South of England ...

37% of owners state they are familiar with the Animal Welfare Act 2006

24% of owners feel very informed with all 5 Welfare Needs

but only

13% of owners are able to correctly identify all 5 Welfare Needs



Similar to UK figures, owners in the South of England feeling very informed of the 5 Welfare Needs did not translate to the ability to correctly identify them from a list and few were familiar with the relevant Animal Welfare Act.

# Pre-purchase

Despite pre-purchase research being a vital part of responsible pet ownership, 23% of pet owners in the South of England did none at all before choosing a pet.

## In the South of England ...

**Only 34%** of pet owners visited their pet on more than one occasion before taking them home

**15%** of pet owners would consider buying from a puppy farm

## Top places owners in the South of England got their pet ...

30%  
dog owners

Breeder of  
one specific  
breed

33%  
cat owners

Rescue or rehoming  
centre / shelter

40%  
rabbit owners

Pet shop / garden  
centre

## Costs of pet ownership

**67%** of dog owners in the South underestimated the minimum lifetime cost of dog ownership

**96%** of cat owners in the South underestimated the minimum lifetime cost of cat ownership

**89%** of rabbit owners in the South underestimated the minimum lifetime cost of rabbit ownership

For details of how we calculated the costs of ownership and what owners were asked to include in this estimate, please refer to the full Report available online at [pdsa.org.uk/pawreport](https://pdsa.org.uk/pawreport)

## in summary ...

Owners in the South of England display short-comings in pre-purchase research and consistently underestimate the cost of pet ownership, reflecting the same problems as the rest of the UK.



## Environment

Results in the South are similar to UK averages, with many owners who walk their dogs expressing concerns about it

- 270,000 dogs (14%) are walked less than once a day
- 54% of owners have one or more concerns about walking their dog

## Diet

Results in the South are similar to UK averages, with dog obesity remaining a key problem

- 16% of dog owners matched the shape of their pet to an overweight or obese silhouette (body condition score (BCS) 4/5 or 5/5)
- 36% of owners did not know the weight or BCS of their dog

## Behaviour

Results in the South are similar to UK averages, with a high proportion of dogs showing fearful or troublesome behaviours

- 9% of dog owners (170,000 dogs) haven't trained their dog in any way
- 80% of dog owners (1.5 million dogs) report that they would like to change at least one of their dog's behaviours
- 1.6 million dogs (83%) are reported to be afraid of something (e.g. fireworks, thunder and lightning)
- 780,000 dogs (41%) are afraid of fireworks

## Companionship

Results in the South are similar to UK averages, with a high proportion of dogs being left alone for longer than advised

- 460,000 dogs (24%) are left alone for 5 or more hours on a typical weekday
- 8% of owners report that they'd like to change their dog showing signs of distress when left alone

## Health

Fewer dogs in the South are missing out on their primary vaccination compared to the UK average, though the proportion is still worryingly high

- 7% of dogs (130,000 dogs) aren't registered with a vet
- 38% of dogs (720,000 dogs) aren't insured
- 110,000 of dogs (6%) aren't microchipped
- **20% of dogs (380,000 dogs) aren't vaccinated with a primary course when young (better than the UK average 25%)**

## in summary ...

Dog owners in the South of England echo national short-comings in meeting their dogs' Welfare Needs. Following recommendations made in the main Report could help improve canine welfare across the region.



# Cats



## Environment

Results in the South are similar to UK averages, with a lack of resources a major problem

- In homes with multiple cats, owners aren't providing enough scratching posts or water bowls for their cats (recommended minimum is number of cats + 1)



## Diet

Results in the South are similar to UK averages, with lack of awareness of body shape reflecting a problem with feline obesity

- 52% of cat owners matched the shape of their pet to an overweight or obese silhouette (body condition score (BCS) 4/5 or 5/5)
- 61% of owners don't know the weight or BCS of their cat



## Behaviour

Results in the South are similar to UK averages, with many cat owners reporting problematic and fearful behaviours

- 79% of cat owners (2.3 million cats) report that they would like to change at least one of their cat's behaviours
- Top three behaviours that owners wanted to change were scratching furniture, scratching carpets and begging for food
- 2.5 million cats (87%) were reported to be afraid of something. The top three fears were vacuum cleaners, loud noises and fireworks



## Companionship

Results in the South are similar to UK averages, revealing poor owner understanding of cats' solitary natures

- 1.3 million cats (44%) live in a multi-cat household
- 21% of cats live with another cat or cats that they don't get on with



## Health

Owners in the South are slightly better at providing for several of their cats' preventive health needs compared with UK averages

- **15% of cats (440,000 cats) aren't registered with a vet (better than the UK average 19%)**
- **5% of cats (150,000 cats) aren't neutered (better than the UK average 9%)**
- **24% of cats (700,000 cats) aren't micro-chipped (better than the UK average 32%)**
- 31% of cats (900,000 cats) aren't vaccinated with a primary course when young

### *in summary ...*

While owners of cats in the South of England seem to be better at meeting their health needs, there is still much work to be done in line with the recommendations in the full Report to improve cats' wellbeing in the region.

# Rabbits



## Environment

Results in the South are similar to UK averages, with many rabbits facing life in small, barren hutches

- 20% of rabbits are kept in inadequate housing



## Diet

Results in the South are similar to UK averages, where despite some improvement many rabbits are still fed inappropriate diets

- 18% of rabbits are fed rabbit muesli as part of their main diet
- Only 57% of rabbit owners feed the daily recommended amount of hay
- 81% of rabbit owners don't know the weight or body condition score of their rabbit



## Behaviour

Results in the South are similar to UK averages, with many natural behaviours being misunderstood as problems

- 58% of rabbit owners want to change at least one of their rabbit's behaviours
- Top three behaviours owners wanted to change were digging up ground and / or carpets, thumping back feet and chewing furniture
- 66% of rabbits are reported to be afraid of something (e.g. loud noises, fireworks, unfamiliar people)



## Companionship

Results in the South are similar to UK averages; despite being highly social many rabbits are kept on their own

- 59% of rabbits live alone



## Health

Results in the South are similar to UK averages with the preventive health of many rabbits being neglected

- 31% of rabbits aren't currently registered with a vet
- 46% of rabbits aren't neutered
- 45% of rabbits aren't vaccinated with a primary course when young

### *in summary ...*

Serious issues, similar to those highlighted for the whole of the UK, are facing pet rabbits in the South of England. Owner education across all 5 Welfare Needs must be addressed in order to improve their wellbeing.



# Help us improve pet wellbeing

Every year the PAW Report gives us essential insights into pet wellbeing in the UK and this year we have released results for the UK's constituent nations and England's regions to help tailor local strategies.

We'd love for the findings of this year's Report to again be used by the sector to continue to stimulate change – to enable us all to acknowledge the most pressing issues and tackle them head on. This will ensure continued momentum in the drive to improve the welfare of pets in the South of England and across the UK.

Only through hard work and collaboration can we tackle these issues in order to see improvements in key areas such as obesity, loneliness, behavioural issues, pre-purchase decision making and more in future PAW Reports.

**Saving pets is what we do.  
Every. Single. Day.**

Your support today will save pets' lives tomorrow.

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Find out how at [pdsa.org.uk](https://pdsa.org.uk)