

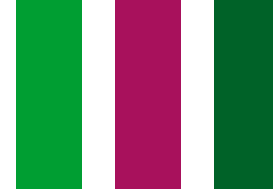
# Animal Welfare Report 2020



Department of  
**Agriculture, Environment  
and Rural Affairs**

[www.daera-ni.gov.uk](http://www.daera-ni.gov.uk)





## Introduction

In Northern Ireland, the welfare of animals is governed by the Welfare of Animals Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 (the 2011 Act). The 2011 Act includes a duty of care in respect of all animals under the permanent or temporary control of a person. Responsibility for the welfare of an animal remains with the relevant owner at all times.

The review of the implementation of the 2011 Act which took place in 2014 to 2016 recommended that the then Department of Agriculture and Rural Development publish an annual report setting out information relevant to animal welfare enforcement. This is the fifth report published using information provided by the three enforcement bodies and detailing the range and level of animal welfare enforcement activities that took place during 2020.

## Background

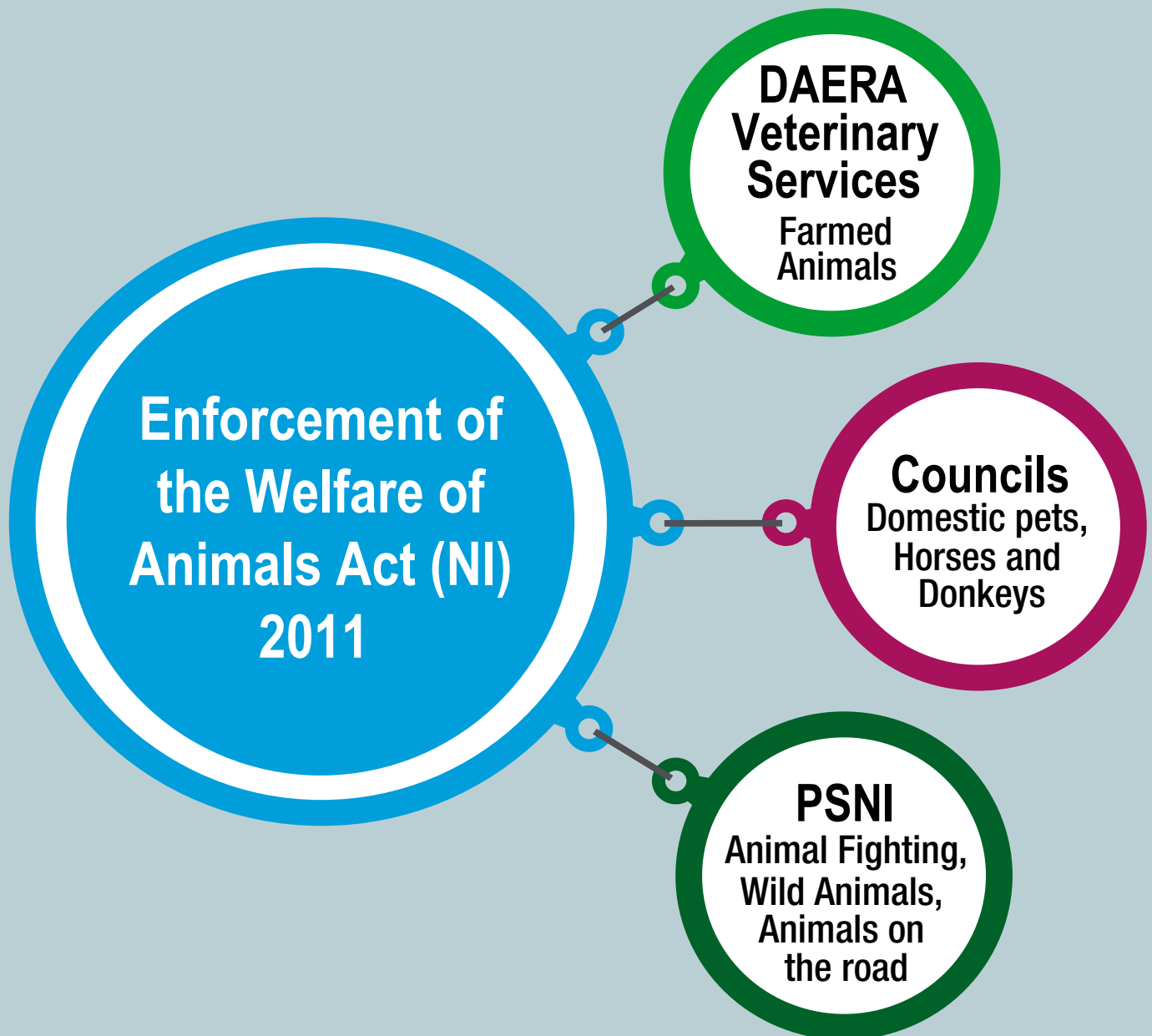
The 2011 Act provides the same level of protection for both farmed and non-farmed animals and sets out the five needs of an animal.

The vast majority of owners and keepers comply with their duty of care. However, there are occasions when owners fail to do so and 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 or to take action, or fail to take action, that causes an animal to suffer unnecessarily.





Responsibility for the enforcement of the 2011 Act has been conferred on three enforcement agencies; Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA), Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) and local councils.



If a member of the public has any concerns regarding the welfare of an animal they should contact the relevant enforcement body. Contact information can be found in the [nidirect.gov.uk Animal Welfare section](https://nidirect.gov.uk/Animal-Welfare-section). Full details of all complaints will be recorded and passed to enforcement officers who will investigate and take action to ensure the owner or keeper complies with his or her obligations.



DAERA enforces the Welfare of Farmed Animals Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012 which were made under the 2011 Act. The work is delivered by DAERA Veterinary Service Inspectors and Veterinary Officers located across Northern Ireland in 10 local DAERA Direct offices.

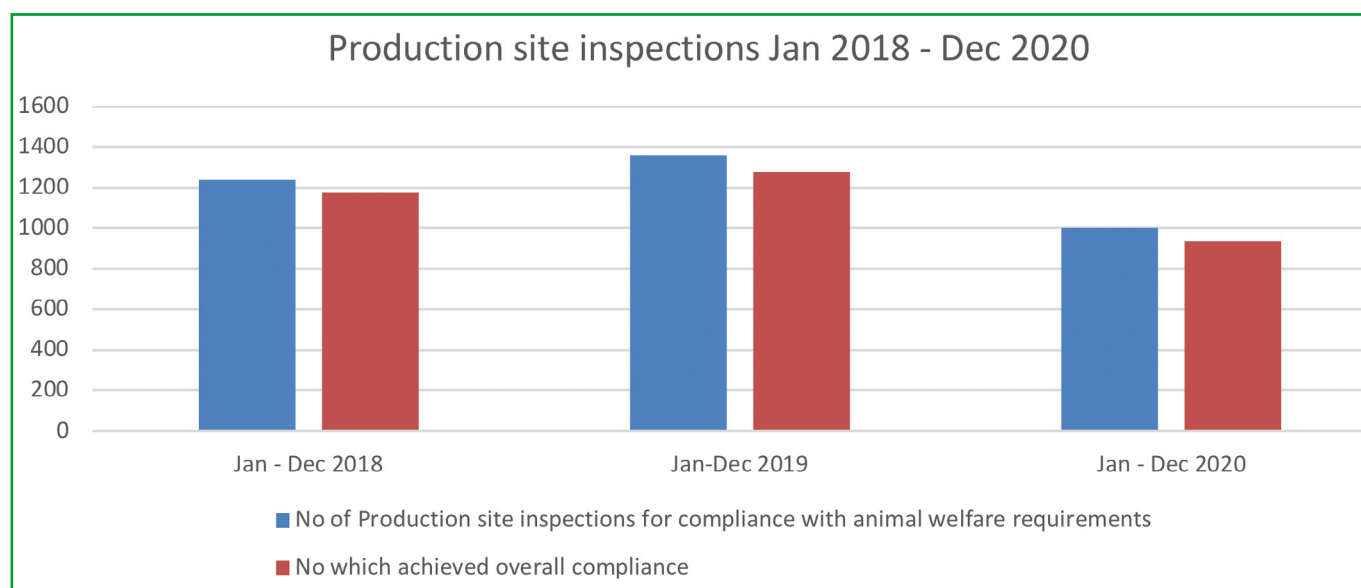
DAERA also has responsibility for the licensing and inspection of pet shops, animal boarding, riding and zoological establishments under the Welfare of Animals Act (Northern Ireland) 1972.

Veterinary Service Inspectors may utilise a range of options when dealing with an animal welfare case. For example, they may provide advice, give a warning, issue the owner with a legally binding Improvement Notice or initiate a prosecution.

The following information outlines the enforcement actions taken by DAERA during 2020.

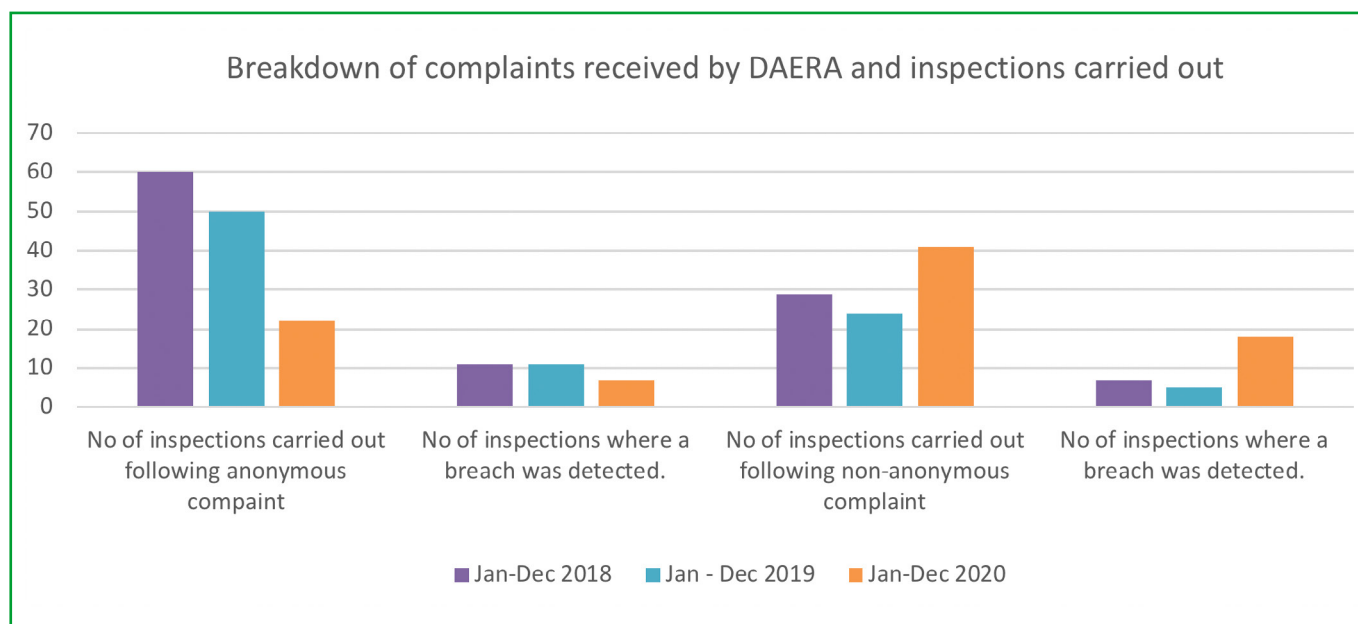
## Farmed Animal Welfare Inspections

From 1 January 2020 to 31 December 2020, 1003 production site inspections for compliance with animal welfare requirements were completed. Some of these inspections were at randomly selected sites. The overall compliance rate was 93%. This was a decrease of 1% when compared with the period from 1 January 2019 to December 2019 and a decrease of 2% when compared with the period from 1 January 2018 to 31 December 2018.





| Breakdown of complaints received by DAERA and inspections carried out.        | Jan - Dec 2018 | Jan - Dec 2019 | Jan - Dec 2020 |
|---|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Number of inspections carried out following anonymous complaint.              | 60             | 50             | 22             |
| Number of inspections where a breach was detected on anonymous complaint.     | 11             | 11             | 7              |
| Number of inspections carried out following non-anonymous complaint.          | 29             | 24             | 41             |
| Number of inspections where a breach was detected on non-anonymous complaint. | 7              | 5              | 18             |
| Number of convictions.  | 7              | 5              | 0              |
| Number of welfare seizures  | 0              | 0              | 0              |
| Total number of animals seized.   | 0              | 0              | 0              |



## Welfare of Animals investigations closed during period 1 January 2020 to December 2020

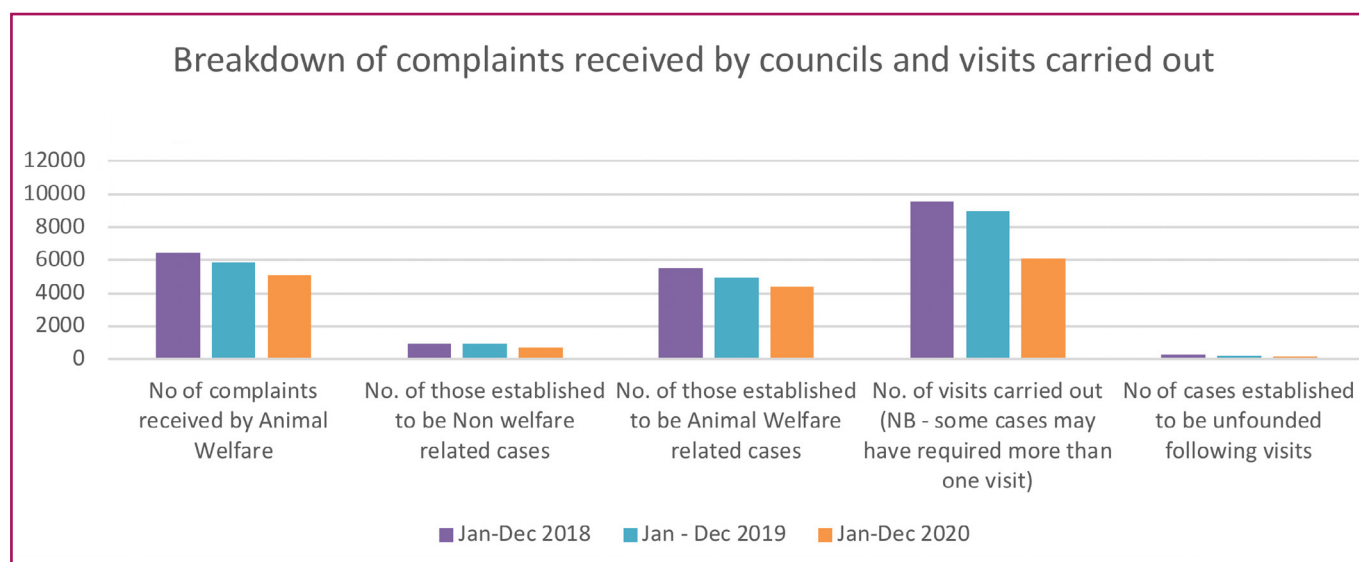
| Case withdrawn | Compliance achieved | Warning letter issued | Formal caution delivered | Convicted in court | Dismissed in court | Total |
|----------------|---------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-------|
| 2              | 1                   | 0                     | 0                        | 0                  | 0                  | 3     |



## Regional Councils' Animal Welfare Service

The 2011 Act requires local councils to enforce animal welfare requirements 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 its animal welfare service with nine appointed Animal Welfare Officers enforcing the Act. These officers have statutory enforcement powers and can take a range of action to improve the welfare of non-farmed animals including: providing advice; issuing improvement notices; taking animals into their possession (in extreme cases of suffering), and initiating prosecution action. The following information outlines the enforcement action taken by local councils during 2020.

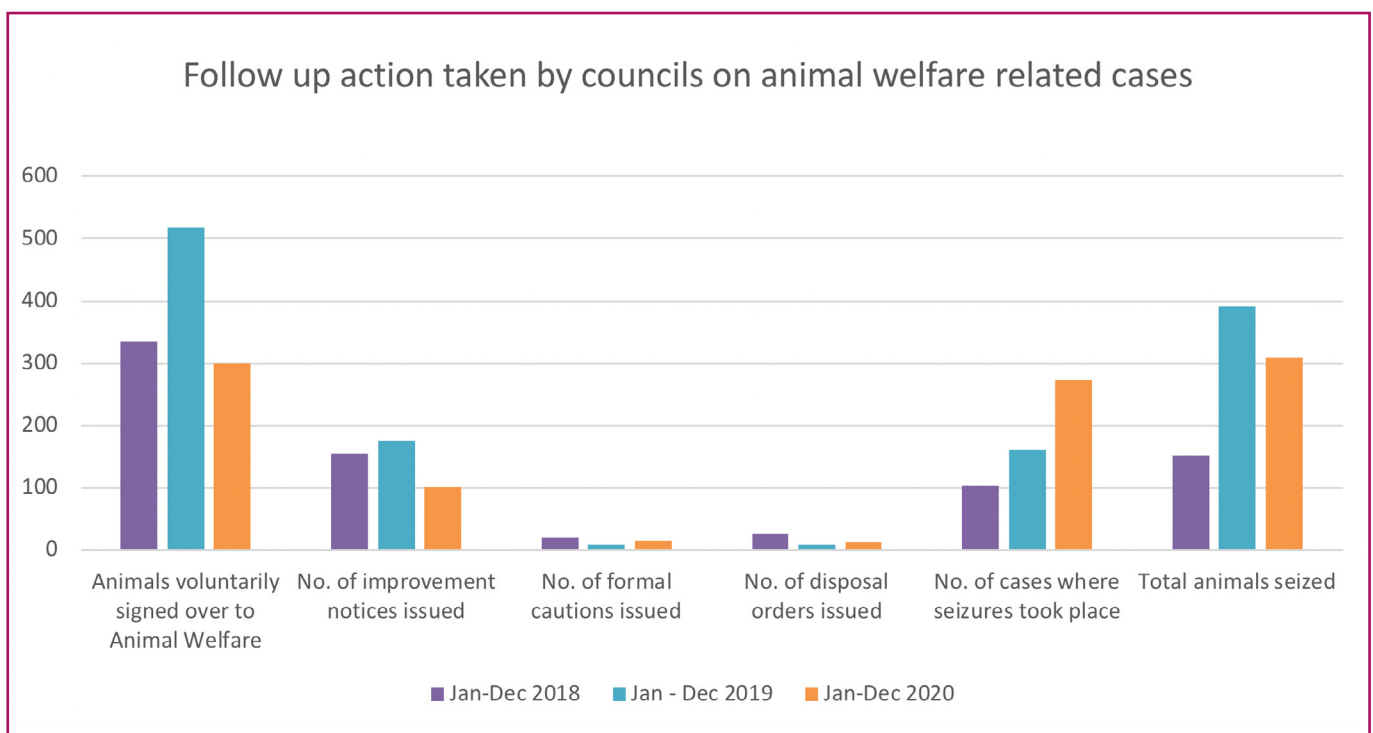
| <b>Breakdown of complaints received by Animal Welfare sections of local councils and visits carried out.</b> | <b>Jan - Dec 2018</b> | <b>Jan - Dec 2019</b> | <b>Jan - Dec 2020</b> |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Number of complaints received.   | <b>6480</b>           | <b>5885</b>           | <b>5105</b>           |
| Number of complaints received established to be non-welfare related cases.                                   | <b>948</b>            | <b>911</b>            | <b>742</b>            |
| Number of complaints received established to be animal welfare related cases.                                | <b>5532</b>           | <b>4974</b>           | <b>4363</b>           |
| Number of visits carried out (some cases may have required more than one visit).                             | <b>9553</b>           | <b>8998</b>           | <b>6107</b>           |
| Number of cases established to be unfounded following visits by animal welfare officers.                     | <b>300</b>            | <b>232</b>            | <b>182</b>            |





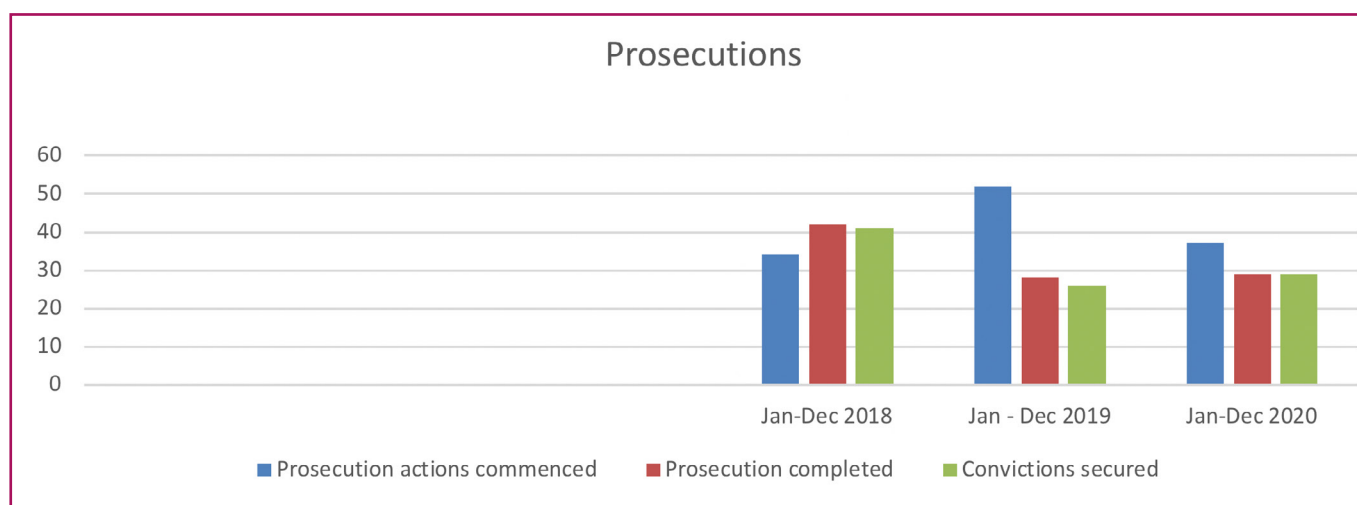
| Follow up action taken by Animal Welfare sections of Councils on animal welfare related cases. | Jan - Dec 2018 | Jan - Dec 2019 | Jan - Dec 2020 |
|--|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Animals voluntarily signed over to local councils.   | 334            | 518            | 300            |
| Number of improvement notices issued.  | 156            | 176            | 101            |
| Number of formal cautions issued.  | 21             | 9              | 14             |
| Number of disposal orders issued.  | 25             | 9              | 12             |
| Number of cases where seizures took place.   | 104            | 161            | 273            |
| Total number of animals seized.  | 152            | 391            | 309            |

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





| <b>Prosecutions by councils.</b> | <b>Jan - Dec 2018</b> | <b>Jan - Dec 2019</b> | <b>Jan - Dec 2020</b> |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Prosecution actions commenced.   | <b>34</b>             | <b>52</b>             | <b>37</b>             |
| Prosecution completed.           | <b>42</b>             | <b>28</b>             | <b>29</b>             |
| Convictions secured.             | <b>41</b>             | <b>26</b>             | <b>29</b>             |



Prosecutions completed may refer to prosecutions commenced in a previous year.

The 29 convictions in 2020 resulted in a variety of penalties comprising of fines, liability for costs, community service, conditional discharge, restrictions or bans on keeping animals and custodial sentences.

| <b>Breakdown of follow up action taken by councils on non-animal welfare related cases.</b>                 | <b>Jan - Dec 2018</b> | <b>Jan - Dec 2019</b> | <b>Jan - Dec 2020</b> |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Number referred to DAERA, (e.g. farmed animal complaints).  | <b>75</b>             | <b>60</b>             | <b>48</b>             |
| Number referred to dog wardens (e.g. stray dogs).   | <b>342</b>            | <b>329</b>            | <b>299</b>            |
| Number referred to Environmental Health (e.g. dirty yards/noise complaints).                                | <b>35</b>             | <b>32</b>             | <b>33</b>             |
| Number referred to PSNI (e.g. animal fighting/snared animals/straying on roads).                            | <b>48</b>             | <b>43</b>             | <b>48</b>             |
| Number classified as others (e.g. queries relating to rehoming or adopting referred to animal sanctuaries). | <b>448</b>            | <b>447</b>            | <b>314</b>            |





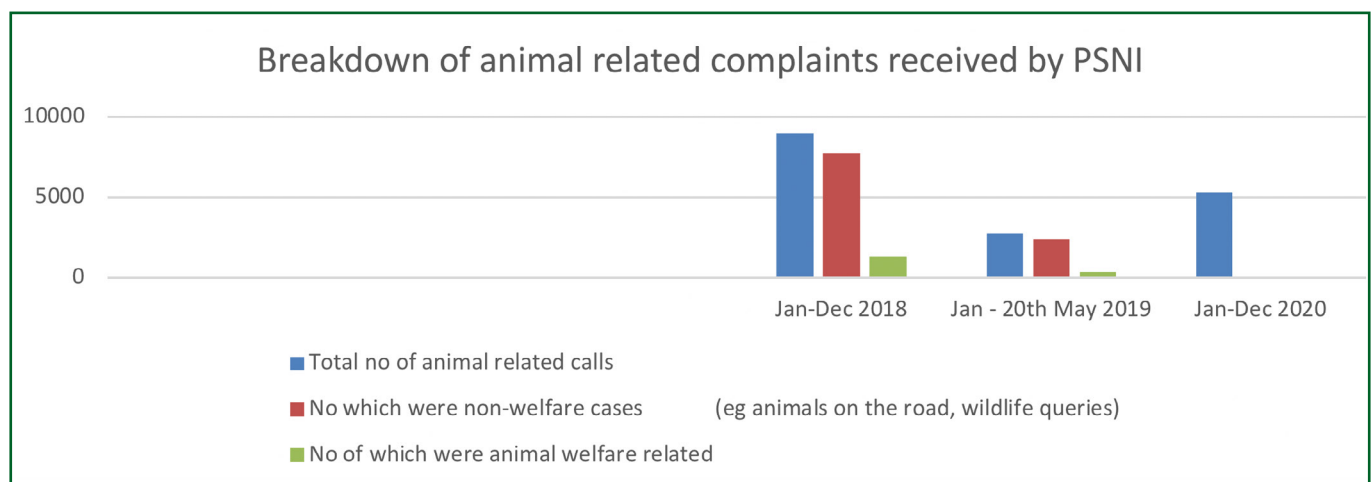
## Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI)

The 2011 Act gives the PSNI power to deal with animal fighting. In addition to its responsibilities under the 2011 Act, the PSNI has responsibility for animals on roads and wildlife crime. It also deals with offences involving wild animals and other animal-related criminal activities.

| <b>Breakdown of complaints received by PSNI and enforcement action taken.</b>                                 | <b>Jan - Dec 2018</b> | <b>Jan - 20th May 2019*</b> | <b>Jan - Dec 2020*</b> |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------|
| Number of complaints received which were in respect of animal related incidents.                              | <b>8957</b>           | <b>2688</b>                 | <b>5226</b>            |
| Number of complaints which were in respect of non-welfare cases (e.g. animals on the road, wildlife queries). | <b>7696</b>           | <b>2342</b>                 | <b>Not available</b>   |
| Number of complaints which were established to be animal welfare related.                                     | <b>1261</b>           | <b>346</b>                  | <b>Not available</b>   |

\*Unfortunately due to changes in the PSNI computer system, PSNI have advised that it is unable to provide statistics for:

- complaints for the period 21 May to 31 Dec 2019;
- a breakdown of types of complaints for the period Jan - December 2020.





| Follow up enforcement actions taken by PSNI.       | Jan - Dec 2018   | Jan - Dec 2019 | Jan - Dec 2020 |
|--|--|----------------|----------------|
| Number of incidents which led to seizure.          | 28   | 32             | 44             |
| Total number of animals seized.                    | 106  | 122            | 98             |
| Number of offences prosecuted.                     | 19   | 20             | 21             |
| Number of prosecutions resulting in conviction.    | 11   | 12             | 9              |
| Penalties incurred in relation to the convictions. | <p style="text-align: center;"> <b>1 probation order</b><br/> <b>1 conditional discharge</b><br/> <b>1 monetary penalty</b><br/> <b>5 prison committal</b><br/> <b>1 crown court imprisonment</b> </p> |                |                |

A variety of actions were taken by PSNI on the reported animal welfare/cruelty related cases. For example:

- information/advice dispensed with no visit required;
- visits were carried out and information/advice was dispensed; and
- referrals made to another agency as appropriate e.g. local council or DAERA.

**PLEASE REFER TO THE DAERA WEBSITE FOR FURTHER INFORMATION  
ON ANIMAL WELFARE. CONTACT DETAILS ARE AVAILABLE THERE IF YOU WISH TO  
SPEAK TO SOMEONE ABOUT AN ANIMAL WELFARE RELATED ISSUE**

[www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/introduction-animal-welfare](http://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/introduction-animal-welfare)



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