

Changing lives

together

Our impact in
2019



Pets change lives
We change theirs

Who we are

Blue Cross is a charity that has been helping sick, injured, abandoned and homeless pets since 1897. Pets help us in so many ways and they depend entirely on us. That's why at Blue Cross we believe in helping pets because pets help us.

We help thousands of pets every month and with your support we can give back to more pets in need.

Rehoming

We find homes for homeless and abandoned cats, dogs, horses and small pets across the UK

Veterinary

We care for sick and injured pets when their owners can't afford private treatment

Behaviour

We help pets with behavioural issues to have happy, healthy futures

Education

We educate current and future pet owners by giving talks and offering advice

Pet bereavement support

We support people struggling to cope with the loss of a much loved pet



Thank you



5,000 volunteers
(4,327 in 2018)
469,829 hours
dedicated
(454,743 in 2018)

2019 was an incredible year.

A year when we made a huge difference to pets in need. We know that none of it would have been possible without the help of supporters like you; our generous donors, volunteers, legacy pledgers and corporate partners.

So this isn't a report about Blue Cross's impact as a charity. It's a report about the impact we make together.

Together we changed the lives of many thousands of sick, injured and homeless pets in 2019. We should be proud of what we've achieved – and with your support we will continue to make a difference to pets in need and their owners.

While this is principally a review of 2019, we can't ignore the unexpected and unprecedented challenge we are currently facing as a charity. The Covid-19 outbreak has had a huge impact on the way we work and our income. Our reliance on voluntary donations has become even greater during this emergency, so I'd just like to say a special thank you to all of you who have helped us through this difficult time.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Sally de la Bedoyere'.

Sally de la Bedoyere
Chief Executive



41,755

pets helped by
Blue Cross



1,639

Petwise MOTs



2,801

pets given short-term
foster care



133,004

people reached
through
education



Together

we made a big difference

in 2019

580

pets helped by the
Emergency Care
Fund



80,000+

signatures handed in to
10 Downing Street
on our #endBSL
campaign



2,362

behaviour consultations
to help pets and owners
who need support



14,209

calls and emails
answered by our
Pet Bereavement
Support Service



190

attendees at the
Link in the Chain
cross sector
conference and a
further 400
viewing the
live stream



9

Pet Advertising Advisory
Groups running across
Europe with support of
Blue Cross*



Helping pets in need

Rehoming

We find homes for thousands of homeless and abandoned cats, dogs, small pets and horses across the UK – and our Rehoming Team was very busy in 2019. Thanks to your support, 9,023 pets were helped by our Rehoming Services, a 2.5 per cent decrease on 2018. This was largely due to staff shortages and restructuring, which meant we could only maintain our high quality care by helping slightly fewer animals.

The number of pets helped included 1,850 rehomed through our Home Direct scheme – which allows pets to make a smooth transition to a new home directly from one home to another or via one of our foster carers. An amazing 1,429 pets were helped via our national rehoming network and in total the pets helped by our agile rehoming services was up 25 per cent on 2018.

It was also a successful year for rehoming horses, with 194 horses finding permanent new homes.

9,023
pets helped by
our Rehoming
Services

Jake

Jake's loving his new life

Jake was found helplessly wandering around in woodland, starving and alone. He was one of the most emaciated strays our team had ever seen, so rebuilding his strength from so little was a challenge. Food needed to be gradually introduced to avoid causing other health complications.

Slowly but surely, Jake made progress, but what he really needed to fully recover was a loving home. And after 25 days in our care that's exactly what he found. These days Jake is thriving – and loves long walks through the rolling Somerset countryside.

You can read more at bluecross.org.uk/our-stories



Veterinary

Your support made a lifesaving difference in 2019, enabling our four hospitals and network of clinics to help 32,732 pets overcome illness and injury (31,321 in 2018). This included 92,204 consultations and 6,814 operations (93,339 and 6,685 in 2018).

We continued to support owners who can't afford emergency treatment for their pets by forging more partnerships with private veterinary practices. In 2019 our Emergency Care Fund helped more than 580 pets (352 in 2018) who may otherwise have gone without lifesaving treatment.

We also launched online vet consultations in partnership with Pawsquad to provide expert pet advice 24 hours a day, helping pet owners in financial hardship to access support more easily.

32,732
pets helped by
our Veterinary
Services

Behaviour

Some of the pets we take in and help inevitably have behavioural or emotional issues.

With your support in 2019, our experienced Behaviour Team provided 1,243 consultations to help pets in our care (up from 867 in 2018) and 1,119 for pets in their own home (up from 933 in 2018).

The dedication of our Behaviour Team is one of the reasons why a very low percentage of pets are returned to us once they've been rehomed.

2,362
behaviour
consultations



Developing understanding

Education

An ongoing pet welfare priority is to increase knowledge and understanding of a pet's needs.



We continued to promote responsible pet ownership in 2019. We offered pet welfare advice and education for current and future pet owners at shows, on our website, and through YouTube videos and community talks.

Our Education Team and volunteers reached 133,004 people last year compared to 112,660 in 2018.

Improving knowhow

When families welcome a new puppy or kitten into their homes, the first few months are crucial to their development as happy, well adjusted pets. To help owners we launched our Puppy and Kitten Knowhow programmes – encouraging people to register for advice emails focussed on the first year of their new pet's life. The idea proved highly popular, with 7,100 sign-ups to Kitten Knowhow and 13,000 sign-ups to Puppy Knowhow.



This included reaching 14,304 people through our work with partners such as the Safety Alliance, who deliver pet safety information when schools visit their sites.

One important message we introduced is the three Cs of canine choice – allowing a dog to decide if they want you to greet them or not.

- **Check** with the owner whether it's alright to meet the dog
- **Call** the dog over with a friendly hello and patting your legs
- **Count** up to three if the dog comes, then leave them to get on with their day

Munroe

When kittens Munroe and Stevie arrived at our Grimsby hospital, they had one of the worst cases of a life-threatening stomach parasite that we'd ever seen. Our team of vets and nurses gave them emergency treatment and, thankfully, they pulled through.

The brothers were transferred to our Lewknor rehoming centre, but they kept falling ill. It was upsetting and frustrating for our team, but they were determined not to give up on the kittens. And, after more than 230 days in our care, both Munroe and Stevie were at last well enough to go to the loving homes they deserved.

You can read more at bluecross.org.uk/our-stories



Pet bereavement support

2019 was the 25th anniversary of our Pet Bereavement Support Service and this was marked by a 9.6 per cent increase in the support we give to people who have lost a much loved pet.

Throughout the year we continued to offer online courses and face to face training to help veterinary professionals improve the way they support bereaved pet owners. To date we have trained 688 animal care professionals.



Promoting the value of pets

Pets have the power to transform our mood, keep us active and give us company when we're on our own. They can change our lives!

The positive impact of pet ownership is something we want more people to enjoy, particularly those struggling with isolation, loneliness and mental health issues.

Our Link in the Chain conference and report, launched in November 2019, highlighted the enormous difference pets can make to people's lives. For example, how the companionship of a pet can be incredibly beneficial for people struggling with poor mental health. And how contact with pets can alleviate feelings of loneliness – particularly for the elderly.

Tackling financial hardship

Too many pets around the country don't receive veterinary care when they urgently need it because their owners are struggling financially. Thanks to your support, we already do a lot to assist impoverished pet owners. But that doesn't mean more can't be done. The *Link in the Chain* report identified that the support provided is not nationwide, so we'll be looking at ways to reach more pet owners when they need us most.



New partnerships and projects

We can extend our reach by exploring dynamic new ways to bring the life-changing benefits of pet ownership to more people, especially those struggling with isolation, loneliness and mental health issues. Partnerships are key to achieving this goal.

We are working with a number of organisations that help communities interact with animals. Many of these initiatives already make a difference to vulnerable people – and we're learning from these partners to develop our own projects.

We are also forging partnerships with housing organisations, particularly those providing housing for the elderly, to help them develop and introduce pet friendly policies.

As part of this goal we were delighted to welcome Anchor Hanover, England's largest provider of care and housing for older people, at our Link in the Chain conference – and we are looking forward to working with them in future.

Another initiative involves working with the West Midlands Police to give dog owners whose dogs have committed a lesser offence the opportunity to attend our course on responsible dog ownership instead of going to court.

Jasmine

"We rescued each other"

Blue Cross rescue horse, Jasmine, is a perfect example of the life-changing difference animals can make. When Amanda rehomed Jasmine in 2014, she was struggling to cope with the loss of her daughter.

As it turned out, Jasmine became a lifeline when Amanda needed it most. Helping Jasmine recover from the mistreatment she'd suffered in her previous life gave Amanda the focus she needed. As she says: "We rescued each other in our time of need".

You can read more at bluecross.org.uk/our-stories



Overcoming challenges

We are always looking to the future and planning how we can use your support effectively to overcome challenges and change the lives of as many pets and people as possible.

Technology

The world's changing fast and we need to keep up in order to give more pets the chance of living a healthy life in a happy home. That's why we're embracing new technology, so that more pet owners and potential owners can easily access our services and advice online. Our website advice pages had 6,868,048 views in 2019, a 45 per cent increase on 2018.

Online pet sales

As the unregulated pet market continues to grow, more people are unwittingly buying unsuitable, ill or poorly bred pets. We continued to address the problem of online pet sales in 2019, working with nine Pet Advertising Advisory Groups across Europe to influence policy changes.

Economy

The unsettled UK economy created a highly competitive environment for charities in 2019 – and in 2020 we're facing even tougher challenges!

It's crucial that we develop new, varied and sustainable income streams – and find innovative and effective ways to fundraise, both nationally and locally.

We also need to ensure we work cost-effectively, using your support efficiently, whilst ensuring we don't compromise the welfare of the pets that need us. For example, our agile rehoming services helped 25 per cent more pets in 2019, compared to 2018, at a lower cost per pet helped.

Covid-19

Covid-19 has created considerable challenges for the charity in 2020. Government restrictions forced the temporary closure of all 56 Blue Cross high street shops, the postponement of major fundraising events and stopped us from raising support directly with the public in high streets or door-to-door.

We remain committed to helping pets in need during this outbreak and have put in place a range of measures to ensure that we continue to deliver on our charitable objectives.



*(2018: £5.15)

Environmental impact

We know that running a national charity has an environmental impact, so it's important that we continue to take steps to minimise our carbon footprint. That's why we're looking at ways to be more energy efficient, as

well as making more use of renewable and clean energy technology for our buildings and vehicle fleet.

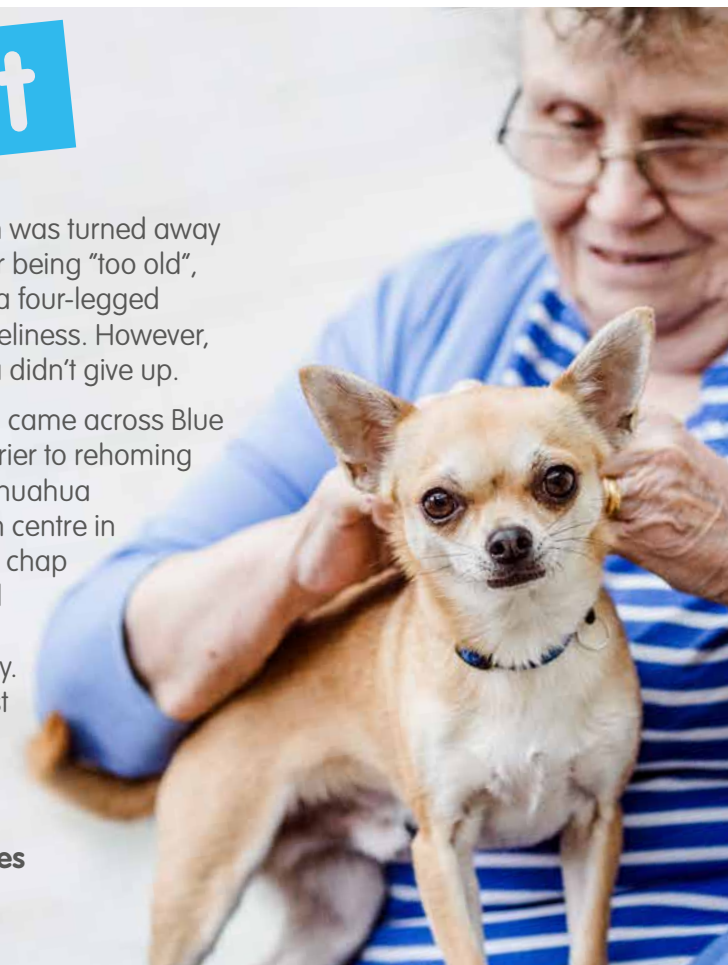


Bandit

When 81-year-old Maureen was turned away from a pet rescue centre for being "too old", she lost all hope of finding a four-legged companion to ease her loneliness. However, Maureen's daughter Emma didn't give up.

It wasn't long before Emma came across Blue Cross, where age is no barrier to rehoming a pet. She also found a Chihuahua called Bandit at our Tiverton centre in Devon, described as a "tiny chap with a big personality". And when Maureen met Bandit, the pair hit it off immediately. "He's just adorable, the best thing that's ever happened to me," Maureen said.

You can read more at bluecross.org.uk/our-stories



Making plans a reality

You've been a big part of our work in 2019 – and we hope you share our ambitions moving forward. Here are just a few of our plans for the future.

New ways to rehome

We're always looking for more dynamic and efficient ways to rehome pets, and our rehoming and advice units are a great example. They are smaller and cheaper to run than traditional rehoming centres and located in busier areas, making our services more accessible.

Another rehoming success is our Home Direct scheme, which rehomes pets directly from one home to another or via one of our foster carers. This not only reduces the workload for our rehoming centres, it's better for the pet's welfare too. Rehoming services like Home Direct will be regularly reviewed in order to maximise their impact on pets and people.

Affordable pet care

We already do a lot to support pet owners struggling financially, but we're determined to reach even more pets and people. A new affordable pet care service is currently in development, which will be provided in partnership with private veterinary practices in 2021. This exciting new service will focus on the veterinary services that are most needed and can have the greatest impact on the health and welfare of pets.

Influencing policy

During 2019 we investigated the important role pets can play for people living with mental health issues, in poverty or struggling with loneliness. One of our key priorities is to influence changes to policies in workplaces, social housing and healthcare, so that more people can enjoy the positive benefits of pets.

Education online

A focus going forward for our education work is to ensure we can get our message out to as many children as possible and that means being flexible. In 2020 we are developing our online resources for teachers and parents and also piloting digital talks for groups we cannot reach through visits. In addition, we are continually refreshing and extending our online pet advice to provide a comprehensive resource for pet owners.

Our future

In November we launched our new three year strategy which illustrates the steps we are taking to achieve our vision: that every pet will enjoy a healthy life in a happy home. It has three clear goals; to **provide**, **protect** and **promote**. Please visit bluecross.org.uk/publications for more information on this, in our impact framework and our annual report.

Jumping for joy

Mr McGregor and Bobtail were abandoned outside one of our rehoming centres in a small carrier, with a note to say their owner could no longer care for them. Not knowing if they were indoor or outdoor bunnies, or what food they liked, made it harder for our team to know how best to help them. Thankfully, the pair were resilient and their friendly, loving nature soon started to shine through.

The two friends soon found a new home, but sadly we had to take them in again when their owner had to move. Luckily, sisters Ali and Katie were on the lookout for a pair of rabbits at just the right time. The sadness of the rabbits' past is now a distant memory. "They've brought a lot of love to our lives. They just make me happy whenever I see them," said Ali.

You can read more at bluecross.org.uk/our-stories



Rescued

When six ponies arrived at our Burford horse unit in Oxfordshire, it was clear they'd been cruelly neglected. They had been left to fend for themselves on a barren patch of land next to a busy motorway. Pregnant mares were found with several foals still suckling from them, and no energy to wean them.

Thanks to supporters like you, our dedicated team got to work nursing the ponies back to health. Most of them were understandably nervous and frightened, so the grooms began the slow process of building trust with them. In spite of the ordeal they've suffered, we're hopeful that all the ponies will go on to have happy and healthy futures.

You can read more at
bluecross.org.uk/our-stories



Thank you

We don't receive any government funding, so 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're part of something special.

Together we change the lives of thousands of pets. Thank you!

If you would like further information about our work, please call our Supporter Care Team on:

0300 790 9903 or visit: bluecross.org.uk