

What a difference a year makes

**Our impact
in 2021**



**BLUE
CROSS** 125
YEARS

Pets change lives
We change theirs

Who we are



Blue Cross is a charity that has been helping sick, injured and homeless pets since 1897. Every month we help thousands of pets, and their people, with specialist care. We love the way that pets can make such an amazing difference to the people they live with. So we offer lifelong support and advice to help that unique relationship thrive.

We change lives. For pets, for people, for life. We believe that pets and their people should be able to enjoy lifelong care and support, and we won't rest until that goal becomes reality.

Rehoming

We find loving families for homeless cats, dogs, horses and small pets across the UK.

Veterinary

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

Behaviour

We provide behavioural expertise so that pets, and their people, can live healthy, happy lives.

Education

We give talks and provide advice to people who may need a little help now, or in the future.

Pet bereavement

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



Big changes and brave decisions

As we emerge from the Covid-19 pandemic, we are as determined as ever to provide the vital support, advice and specialist care that vulnerable pets and people need.

If 2020 was a year for responding and adapting to the challenges created by Covid-19, then 2021 was a year for turning what we'd learnt into positive action for the future. During the year we pulled together to transform the way we work and create a more streamlined organisation. We developed our virtual services and laid the foundations for a more sustainable future.

Never before have we restructured our rehoming services in such a significant way. We have also introduced a new payment scheme for our vet services to ensure the service is sustainable and that the people who need us most continue to receive free care. Additionally, our education and behaviour services have evolved to embrace online access.

The big changes and brave decisions we made last year, combined with ongoing Covid-19 restrictions and factors beyond our control, had an inevitable impact on the number of pets we could help – and you can read more about this in this report.

We've come through a very challenging period in our history and emerged stronger and more prepared for the future, but we couldn't have done it without you: our generous donors, volunteers, legacy pledgers, corporate partners and supporters, including those of you on our supporter panel.

What a difference your support makes. Thank you so much.



Chris Burghes Chief Executive



195,197
hours dedicated
by volunteers
(267,529 in 2020)



All figures quoted are 2021,
unless stated otherwise

What a difference
we've made
together



1,533

behaviour
interventions
and helpline
calls

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

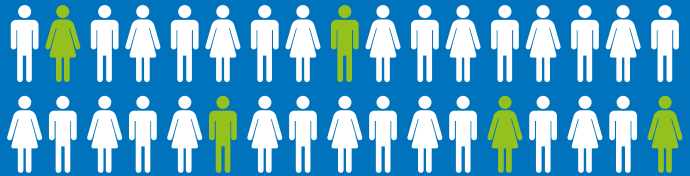


409

pets helped
by the
Emergency
Care Fund

194,197

hours of volunteer time



49,224

people reached
through education



21,144

pets treated in our hospitals



962

horse welfare consultations



3,792

pets helped by our rehoming services



13,639

calls and emails answered by our Pet Bereavement Support Service



Nearly

9 million

visits to our pet advice pages



1,590

pets given short-term foster care

28,873

pets helped by Blue Cross



For information about our activities in 2021, you can read our Annual Report at bluecross.org.uk/publications

We need to evolve to help more pets and people

Every big decision we made in 2021 was for the long-term good of Blue Cross and the pets and people who rely on our services. But change isn't always easy.

Major restructuring of our rehoming services sadly led to the closure of four Blue Cross centres with pet accommodation on site. The closures were part of our shift to combine traditional centres with urban sites without accommodation. These sites not only put us in areas where the need is greatest, they're quicker to set up and much cheaper to run. The savings we make will enable us to invest funds in future services and new ways of working to ensure we can have the biggest impact for pets and people.

Urban centres, offering rehoming via foster carers or our Home Direct service, are already proving highly successful in Newport, Manchester and Sheffield and in July 2021 we opened a new site in Devon.

Operational restructuring, combined with the ongoing impact of Covid-19 restrictions, had an inevitable impact on the number of pets we could help. However, thanks to our dedicated

teams and amazing foster carers, only around 1,000 fewer pets were rehomed in 2021 compared to 2020.

We also needed to make changes to future-proof our veterinary services – to ensure we can continue to offer free or affordable veterinary care to the people and pets who need our support most.

In May 2021 we introduced Pay As You Go (PAYG) treatment fees, which marked one of the most significant ever changes to our veterinary service. Getting PAYG up and running was a huge undertaking for our veterinary teams. Our people needed to be re-trained so that they could deliver the new service effectively, but this had an impact on their normal pet care duties. In addition, the national shortage of veterinary staff has meant we have not been fully staffed at any point over the last two years.

As a result, we couldn't help as many pets and people as we would have liked to last year. However, with PAYG now up and running, and incentives in place to attract new clinical staff, we can push forward and increase the number of pets helped back up to pre-Covid-19 levels by the end of 2023.

For every £1 invested in fundraising we received

£5.36

back

(£6.52 in 2020)

Some of the challenges we're facing

Demand for services

As rising inflation pushes up living costs, we expect to see demand for our services increase in the next few years. We're also aware that Covid-19 could continue at certain times of the year and leave us short of staff and resources. That's why we're putting in plans to make sure all our services are prepared for periods of heightened demand.

Recruitment

Staff recruitment, particularly for veterinary professionals, continues to be a huge challenge for many animal welfare organisations and the veterinary profession as a whole. In response we have developed a range of incentives to encourage people to join the Blue Cross team. We have also registered with the Government to take part in the Kickstart initiative, to create opportunities for passionate and talented young people.

Raising funds

With household budgets being squeezed by rising prices, and many other charities competing to raise funds, it's becoming harder and harder to raise the vital funds we need. Your continuing support will be more crucial than ever to help us through the challenging times ahead.



Halloween kittens

This unplanned litter arrived at our Bromsgrove centre in the run up to Halloween, so they were spookily named Boo, Casper, Spirit, Spook and Mertle. Our Bromsgrove centre experienced an unusual influx of kittens in October, as Animal Welfare Assistant, Caroline, explains:

“Our Halloween kitties came from an unplanned litter, a litter of strays and we also admitted several stray pregnant mums who gave birth on site. We wonder if it's because many owners weren't able to neuter their pets during the pandemic or perhaps took on a kitten in lockdown and weren't aware that cats can become pregnant as young as four months old.”

Helping vulnerable pets and their people

Rehoming

A home environment

Wherever possible we aim to rehome pets from the home environment, which is less stressful for pets, more efficient and eases the pressure on our rehoming centres. In 2021, over 40 per cent of the pets in our care found loving new homes via a foster carer or our Home Direct service, rather than being admitted into rehoming centres.

New facilities

Following extensive redevelopment, our Hertfordshire rehoming centre opened its doors again in August 2021. Out-dated, impractical buildings have been replaced with

purpose-built facilities that enable us to provide the very best care for vulnerable pets.

We also opened a new site in Devon, which offers both a foster and Home Direct service, but doesn't have pet accommodation.

Keeping pets and people together

We will always find loving new homes for pets when there is no other option, but during 2021 our rehoming focus shifted towards prevention. Providing expert behaviour advice helps to improve the relationships between pets and their people – and can prevent the need for rehoming.

Partnerships

During 2021 we continued to develop mutually beneficial partnerships with the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) and Scottish Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SSPCA). Our sites are in regular contact with their local RSPCA centres to help one another with pets in need, and our Devon and Sheffield sites have used RSPCA accommodation at times to enable a quick response for pets in urgent need. We have also worked extensively with the SSPCA on a joint research project on animal welfare needs in Scotland.



Veterinary

Pay As You Go

In May 2021 we revolutionised our veterinary services by introducing Pay As You Go (PAYG) treatment fees. Under the new system, clients either qualify for free or reduced cost treatment after paying a £10 registration fee to join. Around 30 per cent of our hospital clients qualify for reduced cost treatment, with the remaining 70 per cent continuing to receive free care.

PetsApp

We are always exploring innovative ways to make it easier for our clients to manage their pet's health. In November 2021 we launched PetsApp, which is free of charge to our clients and allows them to book appointments and chat with our hospital teams via the App on their mobile phone.

Remote consultations

Our veterinary professionals adapted to Covid-19 by utilising telephone and video consultations in 2020, and we continued to offer remote consultations throughout 2021. When restrictions eased in April 2021, we carried out more face-to-face appointments, but remote consultations were still a convenient option for many people. Of the 66,456 consultations performed at our hospitals in 2021, 22,334 were conducted remotely (43,921 in 2020).

Behaviour services

Virtual consultations

In 2021 the Behaviour Team continued to offer ongoing support to people struggling with their pets' behaviour and virtual consultations proved to be a very popular way to receive expert help and advice.

Extending our reach

We are very aware of the great impact our Behaviour Team can have on pets and people, so we are looking at ways to increase our reach. During 2021 we have been developing a paid for, but affordable, service which will allow more people and pets to benefit from our behaviour expertise.

3,792

pets helped by our rehoming services (4,743 in 2020)

66,456

hospital consultations performed (77,055 in 2020)

512

calls to our behaviour helpline (428 in 2020)

Sharing knowledge

Online education

2021 proved to be another challenging year for our education teams due to ongoing Covid-19 restrictions, which not only limited access to schools but also resulted in a reduction in the number of volunteer speakers available. However, we continued to share our animal welfare knowledge with thousands of children and adults through online workshops and advice, helping to strengthen the special bond between them and their pets.

Super sessions

We continued to embrace new opportunities and 2021 saw us pilot two live online super sessions. The Pets in Spring session focussed on seasonal pet advice and the second pilot was focussed on Animals in WW1, which we ran in the run up to Remembrance Day. Around 7,400 people took part in these interactive sessions, which included quizzes and games.

“Thank you Blue Cross for such an informative and engaging Zoom workshop today. Pupils loved learning facts about the amazing contribution animals made in World War One and demonstrated great teamwork to answer the quiz questions successfully.”

School feedback on Twitter

27,776

people reached through
talks and workshops

21,468

reached through
partnership activity



Caring at a difficult time

Pet bereavement support

Our Pet Bereavement Support Service (PBSS) continued to provide compassionate support to people who had lost or had to give up a much loved pet.

2021 saw us develop this important service, giving people new ways to access vital support at a difficult time. In April we introduced Web Chat, which currently has 809 users and in May we launched a Facebook Pet Loss Support Community that now has over 9,000 members.

Over 500 people from outside the charity signed up to our online training to help them support bereaved pet owners.

The PBSS service received

8,796

telephone calls in 2021
(8,050 in 2020)

Percy and Priscilla

Chinchillas Percy and Priscilla were handed over to our Manchester rehoming and advice unit when their owners could no longer care for them. Initially they had to be separated, as Percy had been neutered and needed time to recover. However, he was clearly upset about being apart from Priscilla, as he stopped eating. So our team hand fed him his food as a paste, a challenge with such a shy pet that hadn't had much handling.

As soon as Percy was well enough the couple were reunited. It was lovely to see them go up to each other nose to nose and snuggle up together. The pair have since found a loving new home with someone with plenty of Chinchilla experience.



Making a difference to those who need us most

Pet food banks

Our research showed that many food banks don't supply pet food and other pet products for their clients. We are looking to build a network of pet food banks across the UK to support people who are struggling to feed their pets. We'll do this by supporting volunteers to source pet food and sharing it with organisations who already support vulnerable people and their pets.

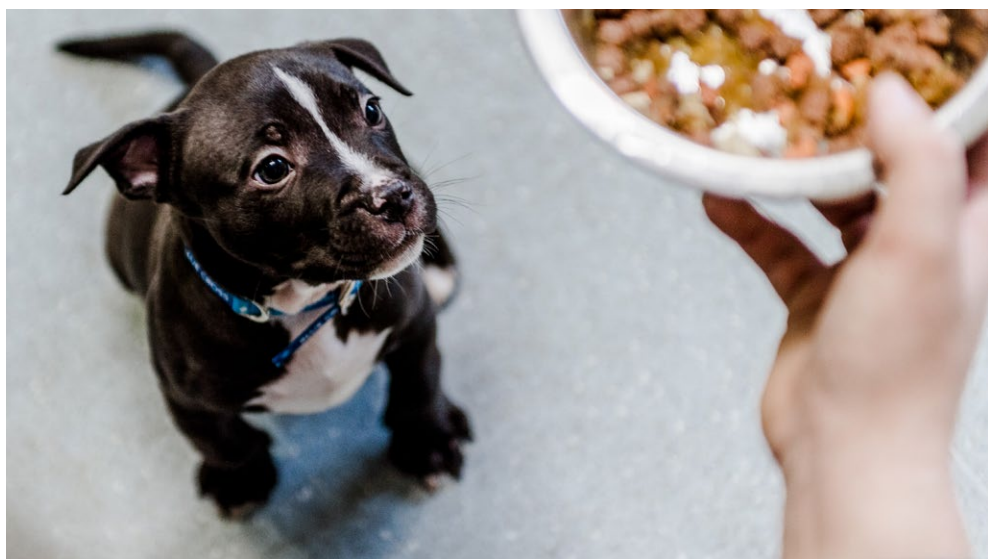
We kicked things off, introducing a pet food bank at our Sheffield centre in November 2020 which gave out over 900kg of dry food and 570 cans/pouches of wet pet food in 2021. Building on the success of our pilot, we launched a pet food bank in Manchester during 2021 and we

plan to roll out the scheme to other UK food bank sites in 2022.

Affordable vet care

With your support we're doing all we can to support people who struggle to afford veterinary treatment, or the pet insurance necessary to provide that care. The introduction of PAYG will ensure that our vet services will continue to be free to the majority of clients, with the remainder receiving reduced cost treatment.

In 2021 we also increased the number of private practices participating in our Emergency Care Fund to 233 (220 in 2020). The fund provides financial support to people who can't afford the cost of emergency treatment for their pet.



Campaigning for change

'End the Trend' campaign

Our #endthetrend campaign aims to raise awareness of the significant health issues faced by brachycephalic breeds and encourage big brands to pledge to stop using images of brachycephalic breeds in advertising. To support the campaign we started a petition in 2021 which currently has over 27,000 signatures.

30 years of the Dangerous Dogs Act

In 2021 we continued our campaign against this outdated legislation. The Dangerous Dogs Act as it stands not only fails to protect public safety, but also forces rescue organisations like ourselves to put healthy animals to sleep. The Law doesn't allow us to legally rehome certain breeds of dog, when in many cases that could be possible with the support of our behaviour specialists.



Over **27,000**
signatures to support our
'End the Trend' campaign

Peggy

Peggy was born at the height of lockdown, so her early experiences of the world were very different to normal. Sadly this led to behavioural issues, including separation anxiety and the guarding of objects and areas of the home.

Struggling to cope and about to return to work, her owners contacted Blue Cross Thirsk for help. After speaking to the centre's behaviourist, they took the difficult decision to place Peggy in our care so that she could get the help she needed to overcome her fears and find a new, more suitable home.

It took our behaviourist a little while to get to the bottom of Peggy's issues, but she grew in confidence and soon showed what a clever and playful little dog she really is. She's now part of a family who can give her all the love and support she needs.

Plans for the future

We couldn't have got through the past two years without you. Thanks to your support we've been able to adapt, evolve and now we can look to the future with optimism. Here are just a few of our plans for 2022:



Our 125th anniversary

With the help of supporters like you, Blue Cross has been caring for the nation's sick, injured and homeless pets since 1897. We will be celebrating our 125th anniversary in 2022 and will use the awareness generated by this milestone to raise vital funds to help more pets and the people who love them.

Over the last 125 years, we estimate we've helped over **38 million** pets and people

Attract more supporters

We can only increase our impact on pets and people with the support of animal lovers like you. In 2022 we will be looking to attract more supporters by raising awareness of the great work we do through a wide range of marketing and public relations activities – and also through our political campaigning on pet welfare issues. Our communications will spread the message that we work for the benefit of all pets and the people who love them.

Launch new services

We will be working hard in 2022 to pilot new services, such as our Behaviour consultations project. We will also research potential new services and explore innovative new ways of delivering our services in the future.

Environmental impact

Our emissions stayed relatively low in 2021, partly due to the impact of Covid-19 on our ways of working. We took positive steps to reduce our emissions and we aim to do as much as we can to reduce our environmental impact in future years.

We continued to make the transition to energy efficient lighting and heating, including the use of renewable energy. To offset our impact on the environment we continued to partner with the Wychwood tree project, planting over 3,500 new trees around the Burford rehoming centre.

At the end of 2021 we formed a new Net Zero working group which brings together people from across our charity to focus on our sustainability targets, the adoption of environmentally friendly technologies and our strategy for achieving them in 2022 and beyond.

Tamsin and kittens

Three-year-old Tamsin was rushed into our Suffolk rehoming centre heavily pregnant. A few hours later she gave birth to five kittens, who our team named Tatiana, Tilly, Tallulah, Theodore and Tabitha.

Our team cared for mum and the five playful youngsters over the following weeks, until they could be neutered and were ready to become part of loving families.



Stan

When Stan came into our care he was very nervous and his coat was so long and badly matted that the only thing we could do was give him a head to toe clip. The clip revealed how underweight he was and how neglected he'd been.

Our team immediately began the process of rebuilding Stan's health giving him vaccinations, health checks, daily feeds and letting him graze on fresh grass. Through patient handling, Stan showed what a friendly, calm character he really has.

It wasn't long before he caught the eye of Evie, whose family had already adopted three ponies from Blue Cross. Today Stan is enjoying the life he deserves with Evie's family and his three new equine friends.



Thank you

As a charity that receives no government funding (with the unusual exception of the coronavirus government grants), 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 make an incredible difference.

Together we change the lives of thousands of pets and the people who love them.

Thank you!

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

0300 790 9903

bluecross.org.uk

info@bluecross.org.uk

