



Stray Dogs Survey Report 2017



Contents

1	Introduction	3
1.1	Background and methodology	3
1.2	Objectives	3
1.3	Definition of regions	4
1.4	Interpretation of the data	4
2	Summary of findings	5
2.1	The number of stray dogs handled	5
2.2	Seizing stray dogs	7
2.3	What happens to the UK's stray dogs?.....	8
2.4	Microchipping.....	9
2.5	Ways in which dogs were reunited with their owners	10
2.6	Current set up of dog warden services	11
2.7	Dangerous dogs.....	11
2.8	Conclusions	12
3	Regional summaries	13
4	Our mission	14

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Design: Mike Jefferies Design

1. Introduction

1.1 Background and methodology

Dogs Trust commissions a survey of local authority dog wardens and environmental health officers in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland annually, to investigate what happens to the UK's stray dogs. GfK's Social Research team has been running the Stray Dogs survey since 2003, and was again commissioned to undertake the survey in 2017.

Invitations were sent to all 376 local authorities with responsibility for dog warden services in Great Britain in the week commencing 8 May 2017. Over a period of ten weeks, 309 questionnaires were returned by the deadline.

1.2 Objectives

This survey aims to provide information about the number of stray dogs handled by local authorities in the UK, how these dogs were dealt with and the ways in which they were reunited with their owners. Data is collated at both a regional and a national level.

Table 1: Response rates

TV region	Authorities responding	Total authorities	Response rate
Granada (North West)	28	34	82%
Yorkshire (Yorkshire)	19	21	90%
Central (Midlands)	53	61	87%
Anglia (East & Anglia)	30	37	81%
Carlton (London)	61	70	87%
Meridian (Southern)	33	43	77%
West Country (South West)	14	17	82%
Grampian (Northern Scotland)	8	9	89%
STV Central (Central Scotland)	16	21	76%
Ulster (Northern Ireland)	5	11	45%
Wales	17	22	77%
West	6	7	86%
Tyne Tees & Border	19	23	83%
England	262	311	84%
Scotland	25	32	78%
Northern Ireland	5	11	45%
Wales	17	22	77%
Total	309	376	82%

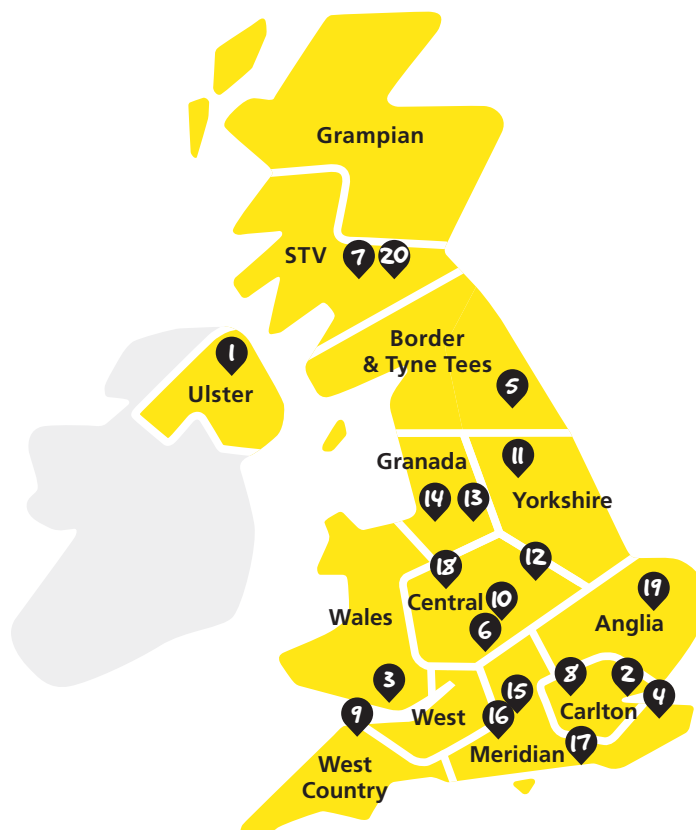
1.3 Definition of regions

The findings are analysed according to 13 TV regions throughout the UK. The definitions are as follows: Tyne Tees and Border (North East), Granada (North West), Yorkshire (Yorkshire), Central (Midlands), Anglia (East and Anglia), Carlton (London), Meridian (Southern), Wales, West, West Country (South West), Grampian (Northern Scotland), STV Central (Central Scotland), and Ulster (Northern Ireland).

The map to the right shows how the regions are split across the UK, and where we have a Dogs Trust rehoming centre.

Dogs Trust centres

- | | |
|--------------------------|------------------|
| 1. Ballymena (N.Ireland) | 11. Leeds |
| 2. Basildon | 12. Loughborough |
| 3. Bridgend | 13. Manchester |
| 4. Canterbury | 14. Merseyside |
| 5. Darlington | 15. Newbury |
| 6. Evesham | 16. Salisbury |
| 7. Glasgow | 17. Shoreham |
| 8. London (Harefield) | 18. Shrewsbury |
| 9. Ilfracombe | 19. Snetterton |
| 10. Kenilworth | 20. West Calder |



1.4 Interpretation of the data

In order to maintain comparability with methods used in previous surveys, the national total is calculated separately from the regional totals. As not all local authorities complete the survey, these totals are calculated by grossing up the figures provided by responding local authorities. The grossing process on a regional level takes into account the average results of other responding authorities in that particular region, whereas on a national level it takes into account the average results for all responding local authorities. As a result of this, the individual region figures do not always equal the all-UK totals. Gross figures have been rounded, so percentages may in places look one number out, but this is just reflective of the rounding process.

Some of the findings in this report are based on the actual numbers reported by each authority, as opposed to the grossed ones; however, at some points reference is made to 'estimated' figures. We have grossed up the reported figures to make approximations for each TV region based on the assumption

that the authorities responding are representative of authorities as a whole.

Due to high levels of non-response to some questions, it is not viable to provide information in terms of percentages (as we do not know for certain whether a non-response means there is no information available, or that zero dogs would fit into that category). In these cases, reported numbers are given instead of reported percentages.

Throughout the report, references are made to 'all responding local authorities'. This refers to the number of authorities that answered that particular question, as not all authorities were compelled to answer every question in the survey.

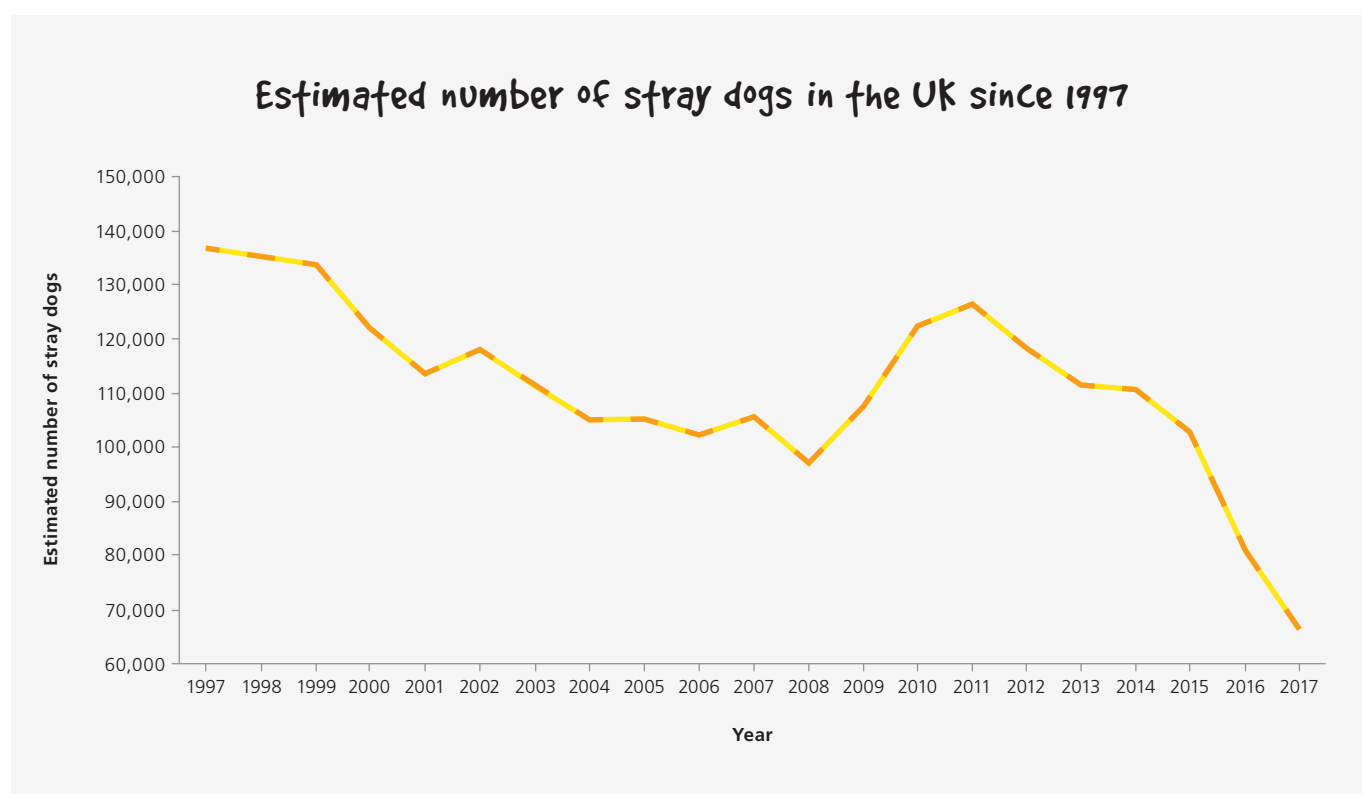
Comparisons are made with previous surveys where appropriate in this report.

2. Summary of findings

2.1 The number of stray dogs handled

Based on all 309 local authorities who responded to this survey before the deadline, an estimated 66,277 stray dogs were handled across the UK between 1 April 2016 and 31 March 2017. This represents an 18 percentage point decrease from the estimate of 81,050 dogs handled during the same period in 2015 to 2016.

The chart below shows the estimated number of stray dogs handled annually across the UK since 1997. The number of stray dogs reported has declined again – for the sixth consecutive year – and now at its lowest point seen since the tracking began, with a slower but continued drop again this year.



Base: All local authorities in the UK (376)

Using the latest available census data recorded in 2011 we are able to estimate the number of people per stray dog across the UK. This year local authorities across the UK handled an average of one stray for every 1,128 people (which has again increased from the one stray per 780 people estimated last year). There are however significant differences within this between regions.

Regionally we see similar patterns to the previous year – with the highest ratio of people to strays being found in London,

with one stray dog to every 2,297 people, and the lowest ratio in Ulster where there is an estimated one stray dog for every 330 people. Table 2 provides the full regional breakdown in terms of the number of strays to people figures across the UK.

The regional differences in the number of stray dogs reported by different authorities will reflect a number of factors, including the population size and the number of dogs owned in the area.

2.1 The number of stray dogs handled (Continued)

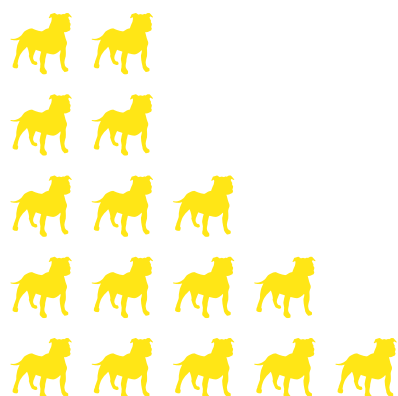
Table 2: Estimated number of people per stray dog by TV region

TV region	Estimated number of strays 2016 – 2017	Total authorities in region	Estimated strays per authority	Estimated number of people per stray
Granada	8,502	34	250	825
Yorkshire	6,147	21	293	1,048
Central	11,217	61	184	817
Anglia	4,139	37	112	1,099
Carlton	7,767	70	111	1,538
Meridian	5,616	43	131	1,080
West Country	2,832	17	167	647
Border	601	7	86	1,052
Grampian	907	9	101	1,533
STV Central	2,000	21	95	1,990
Ulster	5,546	11	504	330
West	1,752	7	250	805
Wales	4,923	22	224	622
Tyne Tees & Border	6,336	23	275	538
UK Total*	66,277	376	176	1,128

Number of stray dogs taken in from 1 April – 31 March

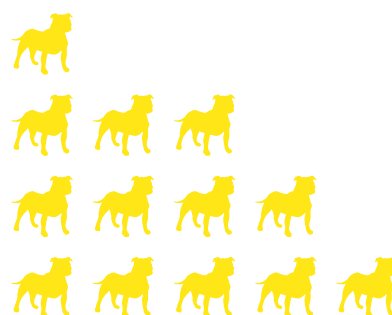
2015–16

81,050



2016–17

66,277



*Please note: in order to maintain comparability with methods used in previous surveys, the national total is calculated separately from the regional total. Therefore totals do not always equal the sum of all regions. All figures shown have been grossed up to represent 100% of authorities within each region.

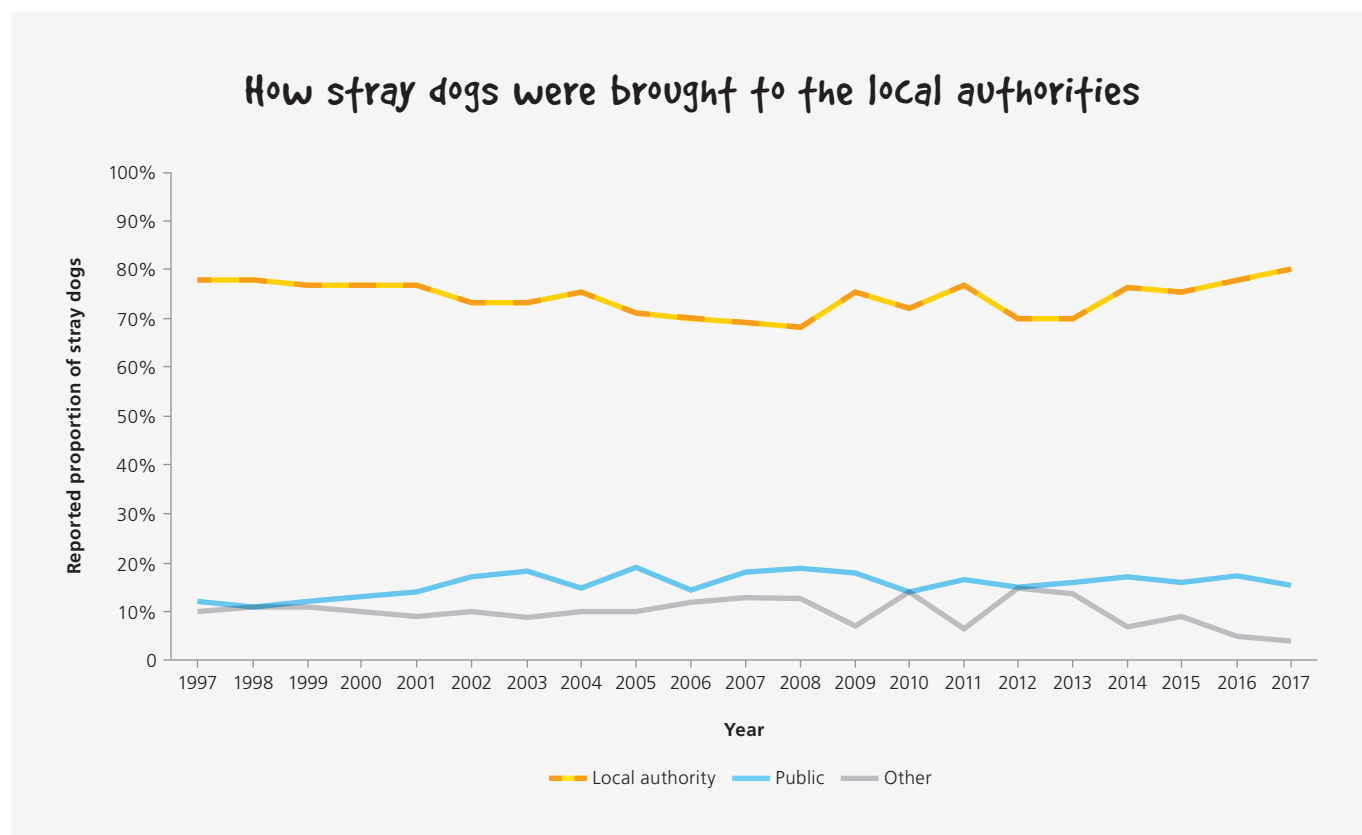
2.2 Seizing stray dogs

The survey first asked local authorities to detail the number of stray dogs that were seized or taken in between 1 April 2016 and 31 March 2017. This was broken down across a number of key sources including: seized by the local authority as strays, brought in by the general public and brought in by the police.

As in previous years, local authorities themselves were responsible for seizing the majority of stray dogs, accounting for

80% of those reported; in line with the 78% identified last year and continuing a slight year on year increase since 2015. Sixteen per cent of stray dogs were brought in by the general public, a figure that has remained stable over recent years.

This chart shows the trends in how stray dogs are being seized since 1997. The figures have remained largely stable over time.



Base: All local authorities in the UK (376)

The 'other' figure shown in Chart 2 accounts for a variety of sources including: dogs brought in by the police (1%), brought in by other means (2%) and dogs already in local authority kennels on 1 April 2016 (1%). Transfers from vets, the RSPCA, dog wardens, and other agencies each accounted for less than 1% of reported strays.

The figure does not, as in previous years, differentiate those brought in under the Dangerous Dogs act, as this was requested differently this year. Instead local authorities were asked to provide how many dogs, of those brought in above, were in response to this act, rather than separating this as a method of seizing. Of those who responded, 38 authorities said at least one dog was seized in response to the act.

2.3 What happens to the UK's stray dogs?

Local authorities were also asked to provide details on what happened to the stray dogs taken in between 1 April 2016 and 31 March 2017.

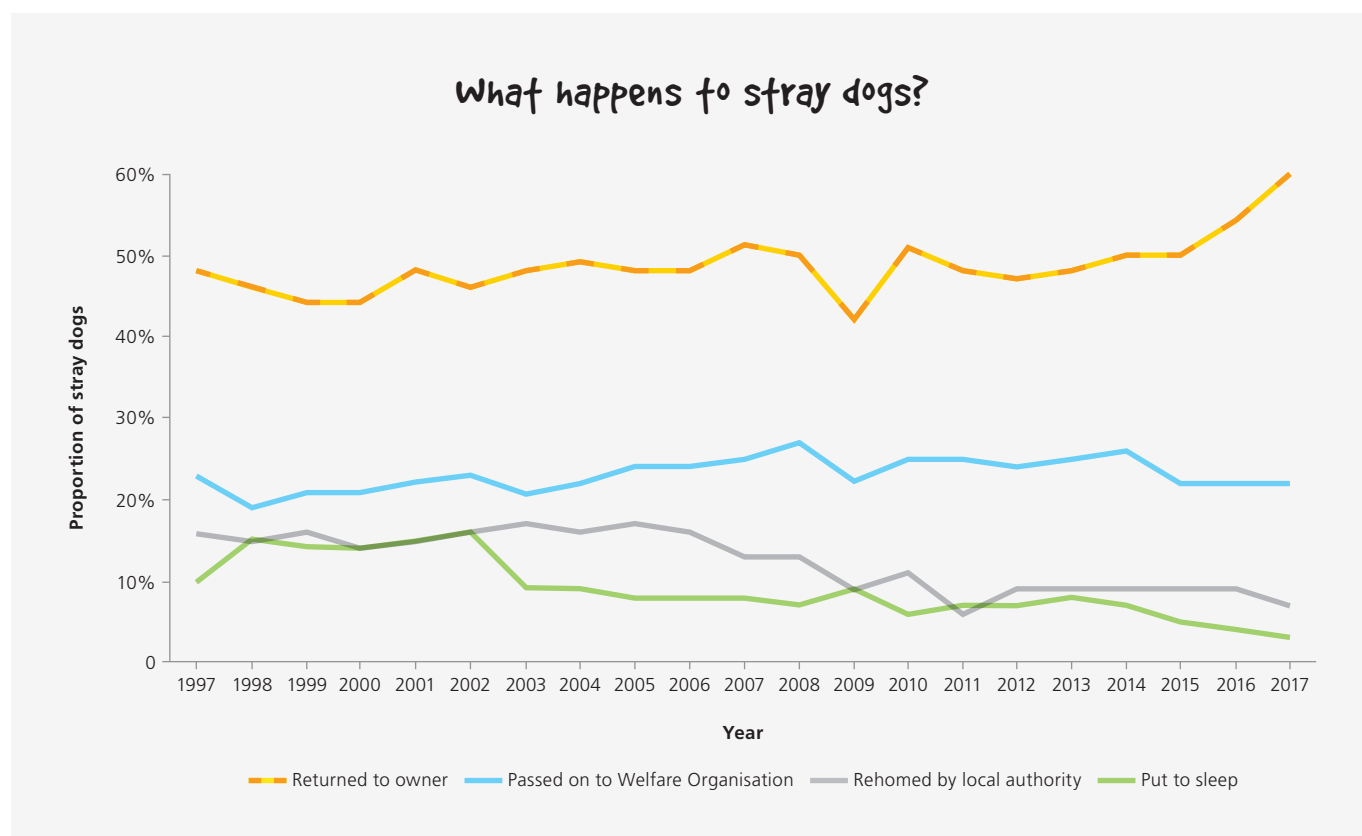
An estimated 60% of stray dogs were reunited with their owners in this period, either by being reclaimed during the statutory local authority kennelling period (39%) or returned directly to their owner without entering a kennel (20%). These figures have remained stable over time.

The reported number of stray dogs re-homed by local authorities across the UK has continued its downwards trend, this time falling from 6,143 in 2016 to 4,512 in 2017. However, this accounts for just a two percentage drop in the proportion re-homed by local authorities (7% in 2017) due to the decrease in the estimated total number of strays. Just under a quarter (22%) of the strays handled were passed on to welfare organisations or dog kennels after the statutory period, the same as last year.

The estimated proportion of stray dogs being put to sleep was 3%, falling one percentage point from 2016 continuing a gradual downward trend. This year 1,819 stray dogs were reported as having been put to sleep by authorities taking part in this survey (from 2,938 last year). From this figure we can estimate that approximately 2,231 dogs were put to sleep in total across the UK during the period of 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017. This compares with an estimated 3,463 put to sleep last year.

Amongst the authorities responding, reasons were given for four fifths of reported destructions (80%). It was reported that 380 dogs were put to sleep due to ill health, 650 due to behavioural problems or aggression, 206 under the Dangerous Dogs Act, and 226 due to being unclaimed / having no rescue available.

The chart below shows the trends in how stray dogs have been handled since 1997.



Base: All local authorities in the UK (376)

In addition to these key outcomes, 1% of strays were also reported as still being in the local authority kennels after 31 March 2017. A variety of other outcomes were also mentioned, including strays being kept or retained by finders and dogs

being seized by or passed onto the police. Details were not given to account for all stray dogs, with about 9% left unaccounted for at this question.

2.4 Microchipping

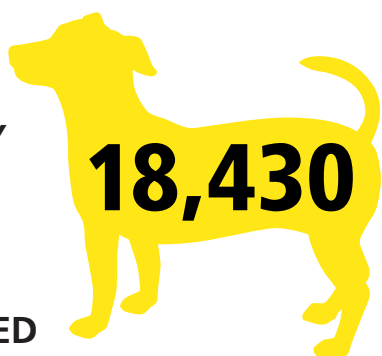
This year dog wardens reported that 18,430 (34%) of the total number of the stray dogs taken in were already microchipped. This compares to 16,447 (29%) of the dogs taken in last year – so a six percentage increase year on year, which continues a rapid rise over the last few years: from 5,920 in 2011–2012, to 10,213 in 2012–2013, to 16,443 in the 2013–2014 period¹, to 17,789 in the 2014–2015 period.

It was reported that of the seized dogs who had microchips who were unable to be returned to their owners, in 69% of cases this was due to incorrect contact or owner details being registered on the chip (up five percent from 2016), and in a quarter of cases it was due to the dog being unwanted by its owner. For 7% of these dogs, it was other reasons, which included having no response from the owner.

Of the 289 local authorities that responded to the question on whether they offered a microchipping service, 164 said they offered such a service, with 32% offering it free using Dogs Trust chips, 9% offering it free at a cost to the council, and 16% requiring the owner to pay. Frequently authorities reported using a mixture, such as allowing free chipping in some cases but requiring the owner to pay in others.

As mentioned previously, the questions specifically asking about the number of dogs taken in with foreign microchips, as well as the number of microchip enforcement notices given out, were removed this year, so no data was collected on either of these issues.

**18,430 STRAY
DOGS TAKEN
IN WERE
ALREADY
MICROCHIPPED**



69%

**69% OF ALL MICROCHIPPED
DOGS WHO WERE UNABLE TO
BE RETURNED TO THEIR OWNERS
HAD INCORRECT CONTACT /
KEEPER INFORMATION**

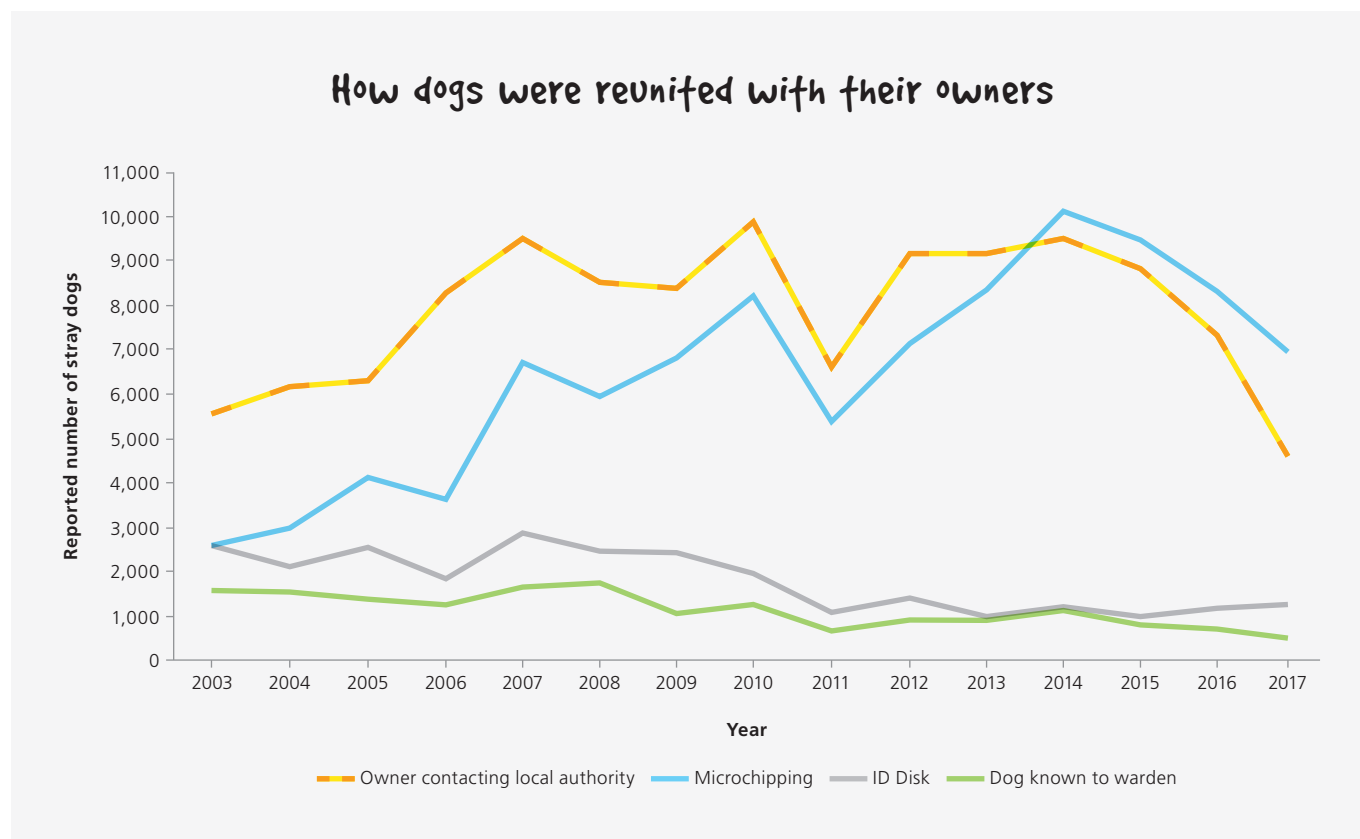
¹ These figures should be treated with some caution as details were only given for around one in five reported strays.

2.5 Ways in which dogs were reunited with their owners

The survey also asked about methods by which stray dogs had been successfully reunited with their owners. This year the methods responsible for reuniting dogs with their owners were given for 14,309 strays, which accounts for 44% of all dogs that were reported returned to their owners (32,434).

It was reported that 4,332 dogs were reunited due to the owner contacting the local authority or pound directly – which has seen a drop since 2016 and now accounts for 30% of all returns.

Microchips alone accounted for 6,910 reunions (a figure which stabilised somewhat in recent years following a peak in 2014: see Chart 4), ID disks (collar and tag) for 1,246 reunions and the combination of the two for 963 reunions. In addition, it was also reported that 456 dogs were reunited due to already being known to the dog warden. These figures remain proportionately the same with previous years.



Base: All local authorities in the UK (280)

Other reasons for dogs being returned to their owners included via other kennels, including private and contractors' kennels and local veterinary surgeries, and in one case partnership with a charity.

2.6 Current set up of dog warden services

In the 2013–14 survey, three new questions were introduced to investigate the set-up of the dog warden services in local authorities in the UK. They were asked how their dog warden service is employed, who handles their strays, and the hours in which their dog warden service operates². This group of questions have been retained again in 2017.

Amongst the 302 local authorities answering these questions, 196 (65%) said their dog warden was employed directly by them, compared to 86 authorities (28%) who contracted the service out.

72% (217) of responding authorities said that private boarding kennels handled their strays; whereas 36 (12%) authorities used

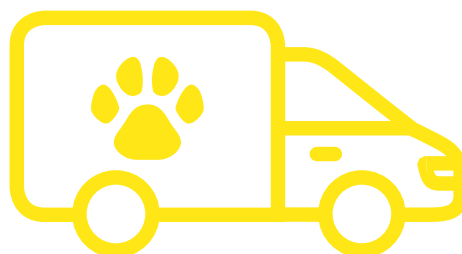
a council-owned pound and 85 (28%) used welfare charity kennels to house their stray dogs. 17 authorities said that they used an alternative option for handling their strays.

Amongst the 301 authorities responding, 294 (98%) reported that their dog warden services were operational during working hours Monday to Friday and 104 during working hours on Saturdays and Sundays (7 day service). In addition, 145 (48%) local authorities had a dog warden service which worked on-call out of working hours Monday to Friday and 153 authorities operated an on-call service out of hours on weekends, with 52% of all local authorities reporting offering an out-of-hours service at any time. These figures are again largely comparable with previous years.

2.7 Dangerous dogs

In the survey this year, the previous question about 'status dogs' was removed, and in its place local authorities were asked to answer about the number of dogs taken in or seized in response to the Dangerous Dogs act. Of the 63 authorities who gave an answer at this question, the most common response was for just one dog to have been taken in / seized for this reason (given by 21% of respondents). An answer of ten or more dogs was given by a total of just seven authorities. 25 authorities answered the question saying that they either did not know or record the exact number.

48%



48% OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES HAVE ON-CALL OUT OF HOURS WARDEN SERVICES, MONDAY–FRIDAY

² As of the 2014–15 survey, the results for these questions have been disseminated by individual TV region. Prior to this, only a minority of local authorities answered these questions so the results were not broken down as far as this. For the past two years, over 80% of local authorities gave responses here.

2.8 Conclusions

The number of stray dogs reported by UK authorities overall has decreased by an estimated 18 percentage points since 2016 (following on from a twenty one percentage point decrease between 2015 and 2016). The grossed number now stands at an estimated 66,277 stray dogs across the UK. Reported figures suggest that the majority (80%) of these dogs were seized directly by the local authority as strays, with a further 16% surrendered by the general public – both figures are in line with previous figures.

Showing a marked increase since last year, 60% of the estimated stray dogs handled in the UK between 1 April 2016 and 31 March 2017 were reunited with their owners. Showing more uniformity with previous years, just under one quarter (22%) were passed on to a welfare organisation or dog kennel for possible rehoming in 2017, and a further 7% were re-homed by the local authority.

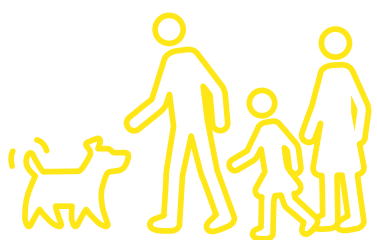
When methods used to return stray dogs to their owners have been identified (for 14,309 dogs – a dip since the 2016 figure of 18,978), this year it was reported that 6,910 reunions were due to the dog being microchipped. This compares to 8,284 reunions reported last year. The proportion has remained stable over recent years after a rapid increase immediately prior to 2014.

An estimated 3% of strays were put to sleep this year, another slight decrease of one percentage point since last year (following the same dip from 2015 – 2016).

Response rates for the questions about the local authorities' dog warden services were high again this year, following an increase in the response rate in 2016, with 302 local authorities across the UK giving details. Amongst those answering, over half (65%) reported that their dog warden was employed directly by them and that they used private boarding kennels to handle their strays. The majority (294) reported that their dog warden service operated during working hours Monday to Friday, with 104 operating during these hours on the weekend. In addition, 145 said their service operated on-call out of working hours during the week and 153 offered this service over the weekend. There has been a continued increase in the number of local authorities offering out-of-hours services over a 7 day period.

The number of dogs taken in or seized in response to the Dangerous Dogs act is low – with responses from just 63 local authorities on this question, and 31 of these saying that they seized or received fewer than ten dogs in the period for this reason, and 25 saying that they either do not know or store this information.

**60% OF
STRAY
DOGS WERE
RETURNED
TO THEIR
OWNERS
– THAT'S
MORE THAN
EVER BEFORE**



60%

**1,189 DOGS
WERE SADLY
PUT TO
SLEEP**

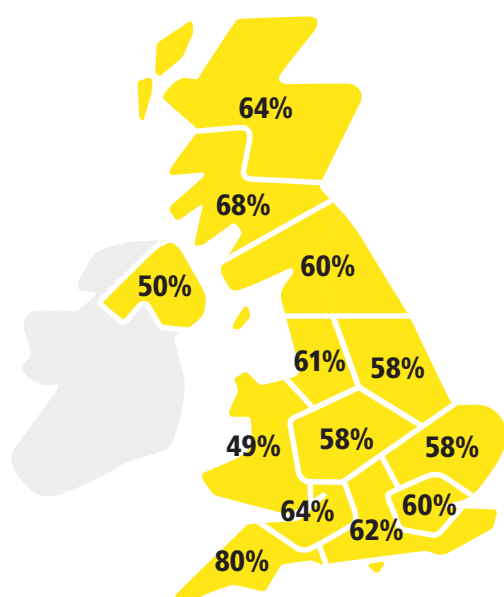


3. Regional summaries

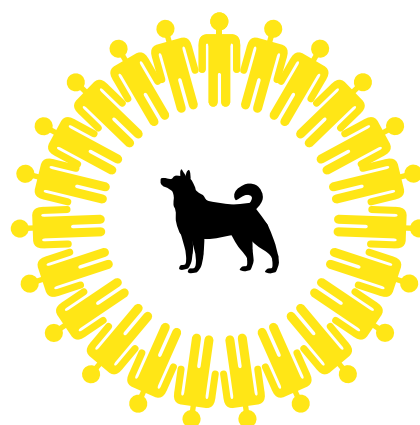
Table 3: Key estimated figures by TV region

TV region	Base	Response rate (%)	Total strays	Put to sleep	Reunited with owner	Passed on to welfare orgs	People per stray
Granada	28	82%	8,502	316	5,187	1,808	825
Yorkshire	19	90%	6,147	431	3,555	1,282	1,048
Central	53	87%	11,217	556	6,539	2,084	817
Anglia	30	81%	4,139	102	2,385	1,117	1,099
Carlton	61	87%	7,767	278	4,629	2,194	1,538
Meridian	33	77%	5,616	48	3,462	947	1,080
West Country	14	82%	2,832	26	2,251	316	647
Grampian	8	89%	907	24	581	74	1,533
STV Central	16	76%	2,000	21	1,364	392	1,990
Ulster	5	45%	5,546	141	2,785	495	330
West	6	86%	1,752	78	1,118	426	806
Wales	17	77%	4,923	61	2,419	2,102	622
Tyne Tees & Border	19	83%	6,336	51	3,799	1,537	538
Total*	309	82%	66,277	2,231	39,467	14,741	1,128

Dogs reunited with owners by region



Number of people per stray dog (UK average)



1,128 people to every 1 stray dog

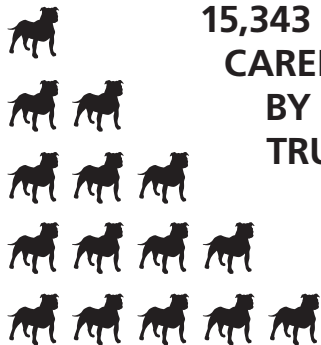
= 50 people

*Please note: in order to maintain comparability with methods used in previous surveys, the national total is calculated separately from the regional total. Therefore totals do not always equal the sum of all regions. All figures shown have been grossed up to represent 100% of authorities within each region.

4. OUR MISSION

We are working towards the day when all dogs can enjoy a happy life, free from the threat of unnecessary destruction.

15,343



15,343 DOGS
CARED FOR
BY DOGS
TRUST IN
2016

107,826



107,826 DOGS MICROCHIPPED
BY DOGS TRUST TEAMS IN 2016

107,000



OVER 107,000 FREE
HEALTH CHECKS TO
DOGS COMING TO
OUR FREE 'RESPONSIBLE
DOG OWNERSHIP'
COMMUNITY EVENTS

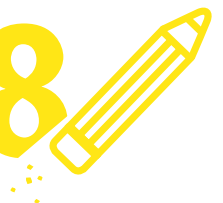


33,457

33,457 DOGS GIVEN A SUBSIDISED
OR FREE NEUTERING DOGS TRUST
VOUCHER IN 2016

290,398 CHILDREN TOOK
PART IN A DOGS TRUST
WORKSHOP IN 2016

290,398



104 DOGS
FOSTERED
THROUGH
THE FREEDOM
PROJECT
IN 2016



1,900

1,900 VETERINARY TREATMENTS FUNDED
FOR DOGS BELONGING TO HOMELESS OWNERS