

This year's report focusses on the key issues and trends we saw during the year which was, as ever, both a challenging and rewarding one.

Dogs

We rehomed 55 dogs, and provided advice and support to a number of owners enabling them to keep their much-loved pets. Border collies remain the commonest breed we take in for adoption, due principally to the number of working dogs we have on the Island's farms. They are not easy dogs, nor are they particularly 'fashionable', but we do eventually find homes for them.

Our longest stay dogs were Buddy (six months) ...



... and Spot (four months)



An owner's ill health (physical or mental) or death were the most common reasons in 2023 for dogs to be brought in – sometimes for 'emergency boarding', or more often for rehoming.

A Chinese crested 'powder puff', Pixie, outlived her owner ...



... as did this handsome German Shepherd cross breed, Kush



We continue to work closely with the Island's Constabulary – they give us unwavering support if we need assistance with cases of suspected animal cruelty (although there were no successful prosecutions in 2023); and we respond immediately when an owner is taken into custody and leaves pets behind. A Staffie was in our kennels for eleven months before her owner was eventually sentenced to a lengthy jail term, as was a French bulldog. Both dogs were eventually returned to family members after their kennelling fees were paid.

One of our canine highlights of the year also involved the Police: a young and highly trained Belgian Malinois ('mali') called Angel came to us in early 2023. She needed to be a working dog, with a purpose, rather than a pet. Our local Police Dog Unit liaised with their UK colleagues on our behalf ... and after several months of specialist training, Angel is now a fully-fledged Police dog with the Gloucester Constabulary.



Legal matters

The English emergency legislation relating to XL American bulldogs becoming a banned breed, which came into effect at the end of 2023, triggered a law change in the IoM. We don't have a Dangerous Dogs Act, as such, and so the legislative change here simply restricts the importation of this type of dog rather than its ownership.

We anticipated that XL owners in England would see the IoM as a safe haven and that there would be an influx of dogs, but this did not materialise, thankfully.



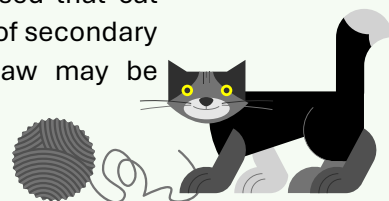
Cats

We cared for 466 cats and kittens in 2023. The reasons for the cats coming to us varied: some were stray or feral, some were born at Ard Jerkyl, and others were gifted to us for a whole host of reasons – owners dying or going into a care home, financial constraints, landlord issues, allergies in the family, or simply because an owner stated that they no longer had enough time for a pet.

105 cats came to us already spayed or neutered, which left 361 requiring an operation. We are incredibly fortunate to have the support of Point of Care vets, and indeed they have undertaken the bulk of routine operations for us since Covid. They perform these operations in a mobile clinic at Ard Jerkyl, which results in significantly less stress for our animals.



Several of our team are qualified to microchip animals, and we continue to advocate for cats to be chipped so that they can be reunited with their owners when they stray. We may see legislation in the future mandating cat chipping, as has just come into law in England, but the 2024 Animal Welfare Bill will need to 'bed in' before that happens ... however, DEFA have advised that cat chipping will be one of the first pieces of secondary legislation, although enforcing the law may be difficult.



Our most unusual Cattery residents in 2023 were two hairless Sphinx cats, Kiera and Narla, who lived much of the time here under a warm blanket (and who could blame them!).



Black cats topped the chart, with 99 coming into our care, closely followed by 82 black and whites and 72 tabbys.

We also looked after 20 Manx cats, including Robbie:





We never cease to be amazed by the Manx community's compassion for our older, sicker animals who need safe havens. Cats like 21 year-old Jess whose owner died, and who was looking for, and found, a tranquil retirement home where she could see out the rest of her days.

Our longest stay was Cauldron, who was with us for 161 days before he found his new family.



Small animals and birds

It's pleasing to see the downward trend in owning rabbits and Guinea pigs continue – so many of them are bought as a child's first pet, and when the novelty wears off they are neglected in undersized hutches. We continue to offer a 'bonding service' so that single rabbits can meet a new companion in a neutral environment, although Millie the moody rabbit took some time to find a new friend (she stayed with us for 340 days).



We cared for 129 small animals during 2023, including 'exotics' like a snake and 13 spiders, alongside the more usual hedgehogs and wild rabbit kits.

The team routinely take young animals home with them at night so that they can nurse and feed them. They are a credit to the ManxSPCA.

Our aviary was as busy as ever, housing 229 birds during the year – from herring gulls to owls. Luckily, we did not have any cases of avian influenza, and we maintained high levels of bio-security to guard against it.



Capital projects

We sold the Pascoes site in Tromode in the Summer of 2023, and this enabled us to undertake capital/building projects at Ard Jerkyll – starting with the replacement of our three 20+ year old boilers with ones that can be converted to bio fuels in the future.



Our biggest project was the installation of 46 solar panels on the south facing Kennels roof. Whilst it's still too early to calculate how much of our electricity comes from them, and full cost recovery will take several years, the time seemed right to invest in renewable energy.

Next on the 'green' list is a hybrid ambulance ...



Fundraising and PR

The weekly Courier articles (which are given to us pro bono by IoM Newspapers), and the reach of our social media platforms, allow us to communicate directly with a significant proportion of the IoM's population. We blend articles and posts that are informational and advisory, with ones that profile the animals we have for rehoming. The most popular Facebook post of 2023 was one that featured a black and white cat who had joined an unsuspecting postman on his daily rounds ... travelling in the post van from Douglas to Laxey. We eventually reunited 'Postman Pat's Cat' with his owners!



We attend events, such as the agricultural shows, and hold our own, such as the Christmas Fair, throughout the year. A firm favourite in the calendar is our annual Dress up as an Animal Day. In 2023 26 nurseries, schools and work places took part, raising almost £3,000. Just as importantly, it gives us the opportunity to engage with children about the need to respect all animals.

