

ManxSPCA Operations Report 2019, plus update on progress to-date in 2020

Welfare issues in 2019

We receive hundreds of calls every year from members of the public who are concerned about an animal's welfare. The majority of these concerns are not ones that require any follow-up, with common misconceptions being:

Dogs	'The dog next door is barking all the time and is obviously in distress' 'The dog next door never goes out'
Cats	'A cat keeps coming into my house and eating my cat's food, so it must be a stray' 'I have a skinny cat in my garden and so I've been feeding it – it must be lost'
Birds	'There's a young seagull in my garden and its parents keep swooping down – you need to come and take it away because my children are scared' 'There's a cockerel/peacock in the field next door and it's a nuisance – you need to catch it and take it away'
Horses	'I'm worried about a horse that doesn't have a rug on, when the others in the same field all have rugs' 'I'm worried that a horse is dead – it's lying down and isn't moving. I thought horses only slept standing up'

Concerns like the ones above are generally not a real cause for concern, and they are simply a misunderstanding of an animal's behaviours, a manifestation of a neighbourly dispute, or a call for an 'inconvenient' animal to be removed.

However, rabbits and other caged creatures are often hidden away and so we believe their welfare issues are under-reported. This emphasises the need for education about 'small furries' given they are often bought as a gift for small child, who quickly loses interest in their daily husbandry requirements.

In 2019 we actively investigated concerns about the following animals:

Dogs - 25	Rabbits - 4
Cats - 10	Reptiles - 4
Horses - 8	Other - 7
Birds - 7	
	Total - 65

Some of these investigations involved a succession of visits to see the animals' owners, to ensure that our advice was being taken and they were attending sufficiently to their animals' wellbeing. On several occasions we encouraged owners to gift their animals into us, so that they had less to care (and pay) for. However, we also liaised with the Isle of Man Constabulary, Milan vets (and in the case of the horse, a local farrier) to bring three successful prosecutions:

Neglect of 4 cats and 2 dogs	10-year ban imposed
Neglect of horse (see below)	Fine imposed
Neglect of reptiles and birds	Fine imposed



The horse's hooves were massively overgrown, he was chronically underweight and had a huge worm infestation.

Cattery

- 174 cats were adopted
- 151 kittens were adopted
- 62 feral cats were Trapped, Neutered and Returned (TNR)
- 29 stray cats were reunited with their owners

The public's response to our social media appeal to help fund surgery fees for Ghost (pictured) was immense, and we raised almost £1,000.

Ghost had been attacked by a dog on the farm where he was born, and he was lucky to survive. His jaw was partially reconstructed and he went on to be rehomed as a happy and healthy kitten.



Small Animals Unit

Almost 60 'small furrries' were adopted during the year – mainly rabbits and Guinea pigs. We firmly believe that rabbits are social animals and so should live in pairs, and so our bonding service continues to be in great demand. We also rehomed several snakes, terrapins and axolotls.

Approximately 50 hedgehogs were cared for, along with several pole cats (like the one below), and then soft-released (i.e. with a food source and shelter) back into the wild.



The owners of His Royal Highness Thumper (pictured), a regular visitor to Ard Jerkyll, kindly paid for a new roof for the Small Animal Unit's conservatory, making it warmer in the winter and cooler in the summer.



Aviary

Although we encourage the public to take injured wild birds directly to a vets for treatment we still have a large number of birds brought, or reported, to us that have broken wings. Sadly, the kindest thing we can do is ask a vet to euthanise them – heart breaking as this is.

On the positive side, we have great success with young ducklings and herring gulls, and soft-released almost 150 of them during 2019.

Kennels

51 dogs were adopted during the year, and 40 stray dogs were re-united with their owners – all apart from little Gwen (below, left) who was found at the Grandstand during TT. Despite endless appeals for her owner to come and claim her, nobody did – a real mystery (if only she'd been microchipped). She is a very sweet dog and we found her a new home very easily.

Blue (below, right) was with us all year because he needed a lot of rehabilitation, having spent his first four years living with constant uncertainty with an owner who was in and out of prison and often homeless. He enjoyed Christmas with us, and has now found a stable and supportive new family to live with – his 'forever home'.



Fundraising

Generating enough income to fund our running costs continues to be a challenge, and we are very grateful for the Scheinberg family's continued support.

An active calendar of car boot sales, bag packs, fairs and fun shows helps to keep us in the public eye, but we are still very reliant upon legacies to fund our running costs and, more than ever, we need our supporters to remember us in their wills.

Our Tearooms and shops make an important contribution, as do our volunteers who provide us with their invaluable time and energy.

But that was then, and this is now ... 2019 seems to be a long time ago, when the world was a different place pre-COVID-19.

When the pandemic struck, we had contingency plans in place to help us to keep people safe, but as the Island's only 'all animal' rescue charity we couldn't simply close our doors and work from home! So, we continued to provide a welfare service, implementing the new health and safety precautions, and we carried on taking in and placing animals for adoption.

Our Tearooms and shops had to close for several weeks, and then were able to open on a limited basis. They are all now fully up and running ('back to normal') and customers have flooded back to support them, which is wonderful.

But the pandemic has affected our income, not least because our boarding facilities lie empty ... and they are destined to do so until the Island's borders re-open.



So, whilst we continue to review our costs we are also trying to replace lost income with new ventures, the most significant of which is our day care for dogs service which has just opened. It makes full use of the Play Barn, and offers a professional service to dog owners as they go back to their workplaces.

Our overflow car park was completed just before lockdown, which will make it much easier for the public to attend our events at Ard Jerkyl - the first one being a table-top sale in July which raised £550.

We are confident that we have weathered the storm, and that we are well-placed to continue with our work, rescuing and rehoming animals in need. Thank you for your continued support.

